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The Chinese Communist Party's Operation of Convergence Media to Consolidate Xi Jinping's Re-Election at the "20th Party Congress"

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Topic: CCP Politics

1. News Highlights

On the eve of the 20th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), CCTV presents a 16-episode large-scale TV special feature film, "Navigator," at the 8 PM prime time slot from October 8 to 15. The series highlights Xi Jinping as the core of Chinese leadership, "reflects the historic achievements and changes that have taken place in the CCP and the country since the 18th Party Congress," and "presents the happy, beautiful life and good spirit of the people in the new era." The series "sparked strong resonance of cadres and people," according to Xinhua report.¹

With the 20th Party Congress and Xi

Jinping actively seeking a third term, the CCP is facing challenges from multiple internal and external sources, such as the war between Ukraine and Russia, the COVID-19 epidemic, and the strategic competition between the US and China. Under these crises, this article argues that Xi Jinping attempts to build his personal image and highlight his leadership position through "convergence media" manipulation.² In addition to emphasizing his connection with the CCP and gaining support from the inside Party, he also focuses on the "national" level to seek support from the general public. In this way, Xi Jinping will bolster his own voice and power as a basis for legitimacy for a

1. "Feature Film 'Navigator' Triggers Strong Resonance among Cadres and Masses," *Xinhua Net*, October 12, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/O4ORrA>.

2. "Convergence media manipulation" refers to the CCP's efforts to change, generate, or reinforce positive public perceptions of the Party through integrating traditional and emerging media resources.

third term.

2. Security Implications

2-1. "Convergence media" manipulation on "the Party": emphasizing Ideology and "Xi Thought"

On November 12, 2021, the CCP passed "The Resolution of CCP Central Committee on the Major Achievements and Historical Experiences of the Party's Centennial Struggle"³ in unanimous applause, without objection, to establish Xi Jinping's position of power within the Party and his place in the Party's history. In this context, Xi Jinping focuses on the "convergence media" manipulation to further stress his connection with the Party and advocates "Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" ("Xi Thought" thereafter) and recently emphasizes more on "historical confidence."

After the CCP included Xi Thought

in the party constitution at the 19th Party Congress, it has been continuously promoted through "convergence media" and other propaganda, education, and research institutions to pave the way for Xi's arrangement in the 20th Party Congress. On September 2, 2022, the director of Xinhua News Agency wrote that the 20th Party Congress should "do a good job of publicizing and reporting on General Secretary Xi Jinping and his socialist thought with Chinese characteristics for a new era."⁴ On October 3, CCTV launched a "convergence media" production titled "Chasing the Light" to further promote Xi's "ideology of building a strong army" and released it simultaneously on TV and various new media platforms.⁵

In addition to emphasizing his personal leadership, Xi has recently mentioned the term "historical confidence" frequently, highlighting the CCP's historical experience and mission as the basis for his long-term rule. On

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3. "Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on the Major Achievements and Historical Experiences of the Party's Centennial Struggle," *People's Daily Online*, November 11, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/jGApKq>.
 4. "On the eve of the 20th CCP Party Congress, Xinhua News Agency Director Writes An Article Reiterating the Importance of Promoting Xi Thought," *Central News Agency*, September 4, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/O4OLQg>.
 5. "Thought Interpretation Type of Convergence Media Film 'Chasing the Light' to be Released Soon," *Xinhua Net*, October 3, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/MNexWp>.

August 10, 2022, *People's Daily Online* launched the "Database for learning Party history with the General Secretary," which systematically presents Xi's speeches, writings, and activities on CCP history through a categorical search. The database also includes a column titled "the General Secretary's red footprints," highlighting Xi's identity as the General Secretary and containing reports and videos of Xi's visits to revolutionary shrines and other commemorative locations.⁶

2-2. "Convergence media" manipulation on "the country": emphasizing Xi's governance ability and pro-people Image

On September 1, 2022, the CCP held a symposium on the publication of the fourth volume of "Xi Jinping on Governance," compiling his 109 talks, speeches, and instructions along with 45 pictures from February 2020 to May 2022 into 21 topics for the "convergence media" to further publicize.⁷ Significantly larger

than the first three published by the CCP, the fourth volume shows that the CCP is tackling an increasingly heavy burden of governance issues. In the meantime, Xi, as the country's leader, is actively asserting his power internally and demonstrating his governance ability to the Chinese people as well as the international community.

With "convergence media," Xi tries to build an image of caring about what people think while probing public opinion through new media platforms; and uses the media to guide opinions, interact with people, and establish a channel for communicating with society. On April 15, 2022, Xi instructed for the first time to use "convergence media" to solicit opinions on the work related to the 20th Party Congress, and people can submit their suggestions through platforms such as *People's Daily Online*, *Xinhua Online*, *CCTV Online*, and the "Learning for a Strong Country" platform.⁸ For example, the *People's Daily Online*'s "Messages for Leaders" combines responses from

6. "'Database for Learning Party History with the General Secretary' Formally Online," *People's Daily Online*, August 10, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/AO5ezE>.

7. "Extracts from 'Xi Jinping on Governance,' Volume IV Publication Symposium Speech," *People's Daily Online*, 5 September 2022, <https://reurl.cc/pMOjeb>.

8. "CCP's 20th Party Congress-related Work Starts Opinion Solicitation Online," *People's Daily Online*, April 16, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/nOK8N2>.

various departments and uses data analysis to present popular topics to understand people's feelings.⁹

For his re-election, Xi manipulated "convergence media" to be seen by the people as a leader who knows how to govern and understands the public sentiment while trying to turn governance-related crises into personal achievements. In *CCTV's* "Navigator" TV series, Xi's achievements over the past ten years are detailed, including "dealing with the US-initiated trade war with ease," "turning chaotic Hong Kong into peaceful," "effectively fighting the epidemic," and more. In the first episode, "Taking the helm for a long voyage," Xi is praised for "playing a key, pivotal role struggling in high winds and devastating waves over and over again..."¹⁰

3. Trend Observation

3-1. The CCP may further manipulate social and economic issues

Through the narrative, presentation, and communication of "convergence media," the CCP packages the domestic social and economic crises as personal achievements of Xi Jinping. For example, CCP official media described Xi's poverty alleviation campaign as an "epic scroll" to highlight his triumphs since the 18th Party Congress. This "convergence media" manipulation that disguises crises as political achievements will be constantly questioned. Predictably, social and economic issues will pose a challenge to Xi Jinping's third term. With the problem insurmountable, Xi will resort to ideological propaganda with the obvious trend of "re-Maoization."¹¹ After Xi's successful re-election, the CCP, with its stable political base, will focus on exploiting the "convergence media" mechanism to enhance its manipulation of

9. "My Suggestions for the 20th CCP Party Congress: Messages for Leaders," *People's Daily Online*, <https://reurl.cc/gMddkb>.

10. "CCP's Publicity Department praises Xi Jinping's Leadership: Propaganda or Implicit Irony?" *Radio France Internationale*, October 11, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/qNEEzg>.

11. "Wu Yushan: 're-Maoization' Appears in China after Xi Jinping's 10-year Rule," *Central News Agency*, October 12, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/yMzjpM>.

social and economic issues.

3-2. CCP's "convergence media" information control still has omissions

With "convergence media," the CCP attempts to fill major traditional and new media platforms with messages of the same caliber to create a tightly controlled information environment. However, such tight control may still have flaws that lead to further concerns. For instance, before the 20th Party Congress, someone hung huge banners on an overpass in Beijing's Haidian district showing slogans like "Strike and dismiss Xi Jinping the treachery dictator," "Reform, not Cultural Revolution," "No more PCR tests, give us more food." The banners were quickly photographed by at least two passersby and uploaded to the Internet; the images were quickly circulated on all major Chinese online platforms and attracted attention from both inside and outside China.¹² Such accidental acts underlined the problem of Xi's governance and the continued deterioration of China's domestic social problems.

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(The contents and views in the assessments are the personal opinions of the author, and do not represent the position of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research.)

12. "Anti-Xi Banners Hung on Beijing Overpass on the Eve of 20th Party Congress, Images Banned on Chinese Internet," *Central News Agency*, October 13, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/nOegK6>.

The Chinese Communist Party's Operation of Convergence Media to Consolidate Xi Jinping's Re-Election at the "20th Party Congress"



Observations on North Korea's Military Provocation and the Situation on the Korean Peninsula

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1. News Highlights

In response to the Korea-US and Korea-US-Japan joint navy exercises, North Korea launched eight medium- and long-range missiles and held three major military exercises (the order of events is shown in the table). On October 10, the 77th anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) publicized the details of two large-scale military exercises. The first was conducted by the "Tactical Nuclear Force of the North Korean People's Army" in northwestern North Korea from September 25 to October 9. This exercise used a South Korean air

base as a simulated target to test strategic and tactical movements, nuclear warhead transport, and missile launch capabilities.¹ The second exercise was a joint firepower drill on the western coast by the "Western Front Long Range Artillery Sector Detachment" (a battalion-level unit) and an "Air Force Wing" from October 6 to 8.²

According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Republic of Korea, the third exercise began at 10:00 PM on October 13. A formation of dozens of North Korean military aircraft from its East and West Air Force Divisions approached the truce line, after which the East and West long-range ground artillery units

1. 〈경애하는 김정은동지께서 조선인민군 전술핵운용부대들의 군사훈련을 지도하시였다〉, 《조선의 오늘》, 2022年10月10日, <https://reurl.cc/Qbzklq>.

2. 〈경애하는 김정은동지께서 조선인민군 전선장거리포병구분대들과 공군비행대들의 화력타격훈련을 지도하시였다〉, 《조선의 오늘》, 2022年10月10日, <https://reurl.cc/zNxjjN>.

began firing training toward the maritime buffer zone near the Northern Limit Line (NLL), and a short-range ballistic missile was fired from Pyongyang. The exercise lasted until the afternoon of October 14. North Korea's General Staff Department of the Korean People's Army said it was a "responsive military operation."³

2. Security Implications

2-1. North Korea's strategic forces may already have precision strike and maneuver capabilities

Through the exercises, North Korea has demonstrated its precision strike capability and determination to defend Pyongyang's metropolitan area, the country's capital. This year (2022) until October 14, North Korea has

launched 22 ballistic missiles and three tactical missiles, 14 of which were from Pyongyang, nine from the northwest or inland areas, and the rest from the northeast. Some launch sites are located at major transportation nodes, while others are military bases that have fired missiles in the past;⁴ the missiles were mostly launched from mechanized vehicles or modified missile trains.

There are two noteworthy points: The first is the two short-range ballistic missiles of different types launched on October 6, 2022. They were not from the Sunan Airport in the Sunan District but from the Samseok District adjacent to Daesung District, the political center. The Samseok District is the location of the Pyongyang Defense Command⁵ responsible for the security of the North Korean metropolitan area.⁶

3. <[연합시론] 9·19 합의 대놓고 위반한 북한, 진정 파국을 원하는가>, 《연합뉴스》, 2022年10月14日, <https://reurl.cc/5pjA0z>.
4. For example, the place "Mupyong-Ri, Chonchon County of Chagang Province" was once thought to have a vehicle assembly or weapons factory. North Korea launched two Hwasong-14 ballistic missiles on July 28, 2017, and one ballistic missile of an unknown type on September 18, 2021.
5. At present, it is known that the superior unit is the Security Command, which is directly under the National Council. Once known as the 91st Capital Defense Corps, the Pyongyang Defense Command conducted "large-scale joint force exercises" with the 105th Tank Division, the 425th Mechanized Infantry Division, and the 815th Mechanized Infantry Division during Kim Jong-un's tenure as the First Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea. Source: <경애하는 김정은동지께서 조선인민군 대원합부대들사이의 쌍방실동훈련을 지도하시였다>, 《조선의 오늘》, 2016年2月21日, <https://reurl.cc/LMRzzK>.
6. <항모 재진입하자 이틀 만에 다시 탄도미사일>, 《MBC 뉴스》, 2022年10月6日, <https://reurl.cc/eO144j>.

The second is the short-range submarine-launched ballistic missile launched on September 25 from the catchment area of a reservoir in Taechon County, North Pyongan Province. Although North Korea claimed it was fired underwater, it could have been launched from a surface vessel,⁷ which is yet to be confirmed. This shows that North Korea already has a diverse and covert means of launch. It could also be an opportunity to validate their new submarine-based vertical launch technology, which would become a serious security threat to South Korea.

2-2. North Korea still has the capability of coordinated warfare of traditional multi-service forces

The North Korean Air Force, also known as the “Korean People’s Army Air and Anti-Air Force,” currently possesses 810 aircraft of all types. North Korea claimed to have deployed more than 150 aircraft simultaneously to participate in the October 8 exercise. Air-to-ground

attack training was conducted under Kim Jong-un’s inspection to demonstrate the logistic, fuel supply, and air traffic control capabilities.⁸ The Korean People’s Army’s “Western Front Long-range Artillery Sector Detachment” also conducted artillery training orchestrated with the Air Force on that day, probably using Russian M-1954 or M-1942 towed guns. Except for the senior commander accompanying Kim Jong-un, all the personnel was seen wearing the new individual gear that appeared at the military parade in the last two years. However, since North Korea only makes the news public with photos this time, the content is yet to be verified.

According to the General Staff Department of the Korean People’s Army, the military exercise on October 13-14 was in response to a 10-hour MLRS firing exercise conducted by the United States Forces Korea (USFK) on the morning of October 13 in Cheorwon County, Gangwon Province, South Korea, near North Korea’s Pyeonggang County, Gangwon Province front line where the

7. <북한, 세계 최초로 저수지서 SLBM 발사... 우리 군 짐세 못 됐다>, 《한겨레》, 2022年10月11日, <https://reurl.cc/O4OvVX>.

8. <북 전투기 150 대가 동시 출격... 이례적 훈련 나선 까닭은>, 《한겨레》, 2022年10月10日, <https://reurl.cc/5pYyWV>.

North Korean 5th Army Corps is deployed. This should be one of North Korea's rare "cross-regional, multi-service exercises" in recent years, and the number of recent North Korean Air Force sorties has also surpassed past records. In the future, there may be similar large-scale military exercises.

A review of the public records of Kim Jong-un's visits to the Air Force reveals that he has personally presided over the North Korean Air Force's "parade flight training"⁹ and the "Air Force Commanders' Tactical Flight Competition;"¹⁰ he has inspected the MiG-29 fleet and the training process several times and could have piloted an Antonov An-148 jet airliner himself. Kim Jong-un cares no less about the Air Force than he does about the strategic forces and long-range artillery units.

3. Trend Observation

3-1. South Korea will continue to expand its military power to counter North Korean threats

In response to the rising military threat from North Korea, South Korea may be forced to upgrade or expand its military power to cope with it. South Korea has currently expanded the Army Missile Strategic Command and Naval Aviation Command, while the Army Missile Strategic Command and Air Force Missile Defense Command are expected to integrate into a single Strategic Command in 2024 to establish a complete missile response system.¹¹ South Korea released a video of a suspected test launch of the Hyunmoo-5 domestic-made medium-range missile¹² at a military parade marking the 74th anniversary of "Armed

9. <김정은 제1위원장, 北공군 검열비행훈련 지도>, 《통일뉴스》, 2014년 10월 30일, <https://reurl.cc/le17xq>.

10. <북한, 공군 지휘관 전투비행술 경기대회... 김정은 참관>, 《연합뉴스》, 2017년 6월 5일, <https://reurl.cc/3YvIE0>.

11. <국방부 일일 정례 브리핑>, 《대한민국 정책브리핑》, 2022년 9월 15일, <https://reurl.cc/O4ONXv>.

12. The missile that failed to launch and exploded at the Gangneung Air Base on October 5 was a Hyunmoo-2C tactical missile.

Forces Day” on Oct. 1, and President Yoon Suk-yeol declared that North Korea would receive an “overwhelming response” if it were to launch an attack.¹³

In response to a possible seventh North Korean nuclear test, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol said on October 11 that he would consider re-deploying tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea, a statement that immediately sparked a debate among the ruling and opposition parties since it could deepen the confrontation between the two Koreas. The US did not express any specific viewpoint but only emphasized the established non-nuclear principle and its willingness to strengthen the cooperative Korea-US and Korea-US-Japan relationship. It means that the US still prefers the deterrent force based on conventional weapons and diplomatic approaches to addressing the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁴ Most US think tanks also oppose the idea

of “nuclear for nuclear.” David Maxwell, a senior researcher at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), who served as the combat staff of the US-Korea Joint Command, argues that “the current conventional force is sufficient to defend Korea” and that “the US and Korean conventional forces are capable of destroying the People’s Army wherever it may be in North Korea.”¹⁵

3-2. The deception and reality of the North Korean media

According to information from South Korean Joint Staff Headquarters, North Korea launched formations of eight fighter planes and four bombers of unknown types on October 6 from the vicinity of Koksan County, North Hwanghae Province, to the airspace near Hwangju County for air-to-ground attack training.¹⁶ Since the training was close to the “Tactical Action Line” near the truce

13. <[단독] 괴물 미사일은 현무 -5... 지하 100m 김정은 벙커, 한 방에 파괴>, 《조선일보》, 2022 年 10 月 3 日, <https://reurl.cc/3YzV4j>.

14. <미, 전술핵 배치 논란에 원론 답변... 모든 확장역지 약속>, 《연합뉴스》, 2022 年 10 月 12 日, <https://reurl.cc/eO142W>.

15. <전문가들 「한국내 전술핵 재배치, 군사적 실익 적고 미한 동맹에 부담만 가중」>, 《미국의 소리》, 2022 年 10 月 12 日, <https://reurl.cc/pMOjNb>.

16. There is one airport with a 2,500m concrete runway in Koksan and Hwangju Counties, respectively, in North Hwanghae Province, while there are five airports with concrete runways of over 2,000m in southwestern North Korea (North and South Hwanghae Provinces).

border, and the South Korean Air Force scrambled 30 F-15K fighters in response.¹⁷ Reviewing the information from North Korea and South Korea's subsequent announcement that F-35A fighters were dispatched on October 8, South Korea may not have released the full information due to certain considerations.

The North Korean air force might have deployed its few remaining MiG-29 fighters, Su-25 attack aircraft, or Il-28 tactical bombers on October 6. As quoted by SBS TV, Korean government sources said North Korea had dispatched only about 100 military aircraft on Oct. 8; many failed to complete their missions and landed at nearby airports, some could not take off, and at least one had crashed.¹⁸ Although North Korea still has many military aircraft from the former Soviet Union and some from China, the aging fleet, fuel shortages, and inadequate training may have forced North Korea to respond to the unexpected situation, such

as the USS Ronald Reagan's visit to South Korea, with a "bluffing" attitude.

The photos of the "Tactical Nuclear Force" firing a missile that hit a target on September 25, published by the North Korean newspaper "Rodong Sinmun" on October 10, were found to be old images from January 27, 2022. In the past, the North Korean media had been found to use old or manipulated photos; the purpose was probably to avoid precise interpretation by the US and South Korea or attempts to exaggerate for propaganda effects.¹⁹

3-3. The Korea-Japan relationship becomes a factor of uncertainty for Korea-US-Japan alliance

With a range of 4,500 kilometers, the North Korean intermediate-range ballistic missile launched on October 4 could reach the continental US and offset the influence of its "nuclear umbrella" in Northeast Asia. To avoid a domino effect,

17. <美항모 왔는데도 北 공세적 모드... 미사일 이어 무력시위 비행도>, 《연합뉴스》, 2022 年 10 月 6 日, <https://reurl.cc/kE619K>.

18. <[단독] 북, 사상 첫 150 대 출격?... 「수치 부풀리고 추락」>, 《SBS》, 2022 年 10 月 11 日, <https://reurl.cc/D3GQr6>.

19. <북한 전술핵부대 타격 사진 또 재활용... 「김정은 업적 부풀리기 무리한 과장 선전」>, 《미국의 소리》, 2022 年 10 月 12 日, <https://reurl.cc/QbzKZ>.

it is necessary for the US to strengthen its security alliance with South Korea and Japan.

Korea has conducted anti-submarine and missile defense exercises with the US and Japan. This is the most significant breakthrough in Korea-Japan relations since April 2017, and it is imperative that the three countries raise the level of cooperation on regional security issues and resume high-level exchanges in the future. However, there are still some

historical issues between Korea and Japan that need to be resolved. In the joint South Korea-US-Japan anti-submarine exercise on September 30, 2022, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) destroyer JS Asahi DD-119 conducted a drill 150 kilometers from Dokdo (Liancourt Rocks); drew strong criticism from South Korean opposition parties and will become a serious challenge to the Yoon Suk-yeol administration and the ruling party, whose support is quite low.

**Table: Timetable of North Korea's recent military provocations
(September 25 to October 14)**

Date	Description	Location	Background
September 25	Two short-range ballistic missiles	Reservoir catchment area in Taechon County, North Pyongan Province	1.USS Ronald Reagan arrives in Busan (9/23) 2.North Korean Tactical Nuclear Force training (9/25~10/9)
September 28	Two short-range ballistic missiles	Near Sunan District of Pyongyang City	Korea-US Joint Navy Exercise (9/26~9/29)
September 29	Two short-range ballistic missiles	Near Sunchon City of South Pyongan Province	1. US Vice President Kamala Devi Harris visited DMZ 2. Korea-US-Japan Navy anti-submarine exercises
October 1	Two short-range ballistic missiles	Near Sunan District of Pyongyang City	South Korea's "Armed Forces Day" commemorative parade
October 4	One medium-range ballistic missile	Mupyong -Ri, Jeoncheon County of Jagang Province	Flew 4,500 kilometers over Hokkaido of Japan and landed in the Pacific Ocean beyond Japan's economic waters.

Observations on North Korea's Military Provocation and the Situation on the Korean Peninsula

Date	Description	Location	Background
October 6	Bombing training of North Korean Air Force	Over the airspace of Koksan County and Hwangju County of North Hwanghae Province	1. South Korea-US-Japan Navy missile defense training 2. North Korean long-range artillery and Air Force strike training (10/6~10/8)
October 9	Two short-range ballistic missiles	Near Muncheon City of Gangwon Province	77 th Anniversary of Workers' Party of Korea (10/10)
October 12	Two long-range strategic missiles	Near Kaechon County of North Pyongan Province	Flew 2,000 kilometers and hit the target in a figure-eight trajectory over the West Sea.
October 14	One short-range ballistic missile	Near Sunan District of Pyongyang City	1. MLRS firing training of USFK (10/13) 2. Land-air joint exercise of North Korea's east and west regions (10/13~10/14)

Source: Information compiled by Chih-Hao Lin from public sources in South Korea and North Korea.

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From “Strategic Reciprocity” to “Strategic Suspicion”: On the 50th Anniversary of Japan-China Rapprochement

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1. News Highlights

Established diplomatic relations on September 29, 1972, Japan and China celebrate 50 years of their rapprochement on September 29, 2022. On the 29th, the Chinese Embassy in Japan held a celebration at a hotel in Tokyo, to which Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi was invited. At the event, Chinese Ambassador Kong Xuanyou stated that he wanted to “build a new Japan-China relationship” with a strong sense of mission and responsibility.¹ On the same day, Natsuo Yamaguchi, the Representative (Chairman) of the Komeito Party, part of Japan’s ruling coalition,

also stated that “a stable Japan-China relationship” should be established.²

It is worth noting that Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was invited but did not attend the event and only exchanged congratulatory messages with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The messages were read out at the event. Prime Minister Kishida said Japan and China have a great responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the region and the world, stressing the need to “build a constructive and stable relationship.” Xi Jinping said, “I highly regard the development of China-Japanese relations,” and expressed his willingness to work with Kishida to lead

1. “Chinese Ambassador Kong Xuanyou Says New China-Japan Relations Need to be Constructed,” *Kyodo News*, September 29, 2022, <https://tchina.kyodonews.net/news/2022/09/3cbdc771aa58.html>.

2. “The Komeito Party Speaks on the 50th Anniversary of the Diplomatic Relation Normalization between Japan and China,” *Kyodo News*, September 29, 2022, <https://tchina.kyodonews.net/news/2022/09/49a534ef82c4-50.html>.

both sides to follow the trend and work together to build a mutual relationship that meets the needs of the new era.³

2. Security Implications

2-1. The atmosphere of commemoration reflects the instability of China-Japan relations

The 50th anniversary of the establishment of relations between Japan and China is an important diplomatic occasion for both countries. However, as mentioned above, the Japanese Prime Minister's absence from the event to which he was invited highlighted the rather strained diplomatic atmosphere between Japan and China at this stage. The Komeito representative, Yamaguchi, even admitted that there are various problems between the two countries and stressed that “the two countries should respond positively to the overall situation.” His comment shows that even

the Komeito, more China-friendly than the LDP, is aware of the tension between Japan and China.⁴

Looking back at the disagreement between Japan and China in recent years, this situation is actually not surprising. Aside from the continued presence of Chinese maritime police vessels in the waters surrounding the Diaoyutai Islands (called Senkaku Islands in Japan), recently, even on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, three Chinese vessels entered Japan's claimed territorial waters on September 28, (the second time that month) and six entered the adjacent area (the largest number of vessels that month).⁵ Not to mention the PLA's ballistic missiles that landed in Japan's claimed exclusive economic waters when PLA conducted military exercises against Taiwan in August 2022. In addition, when the Japanese government held a state funeral for its late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on September 27, China sent Wan

3. “Detailed Information: 50th Anniversary of Japan-China Diplomatic Relation Normalization Held in Tokyo,” *Kyodo News*, September 29, 2022, <https://tchina.kyodonews.net/news/2022/09/44f24bd3571a-50.html>.

4. “The Komeito Party Speaks on the 50th Anniversary of the Diplomatic Relation Normalization between Japan and China,” *Kyodo News*, September 29, 2022, <https://tchina.kyodonews.net/news/2022/09/49a534ef82c4-50.html>.

5. 〈中国海警局に所属する船舶等による尖閣諸島接近（接続水域入域・領海侵入）状況－令和4年9月－（9/30現在）〉，《日本海上保安廳》，<https://reurl.cc/Qb05N9>.

Gang (Chairman of the Chinese “Zhigong Party” and Vice Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference), who is not a Communist Party member, to attend, without hiding its rudeness to Japan’s Kishida government. Since the atmosphere of discord between the two countries was already swirling long before the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, the low-profile commemorative activities and the lack of substantiality in relevant speeches could be expected.

2-2. China suggests “new Japan-China relations” to deny Abe’s diplomatic legacy

Another noteworthy point is that China did not reaffirm the “strategic reciprocity” proposed by former Prime Minister Abe in 2006. In fact, “strategic reciprocity” was not mentioned in the telephone conversation between Kishida and Xi on October 8 last year, but only that the two countries should “build a constructive and stable relationship together” (建設的かつ安定的な関係を共に構築).⁶ During the event, the

Chinese side did not mention “strategic reciprocity.” Still, Ambassador Kong Xuanyou proposed to build a “new Japan-China relationship,” and Xi Jinping also said that the two countries should build “a relationship required by the new era.”

It is judged that this is the political message that Beijing wants to deliver: China is abandoning the “strategic reciprocity” diplomatic relationship achieved during the Abe administration. But even if Beijing wants to deny the outcome, there is still no basis for a new relationship between the two countries yet, and it is rather questionable what new one can be founded on in the future.

3. Trend Observation

3-1. Japan-China relationship is difficult to improve with China’s alliance with Russia and confrontation with Taiwan

As mentioned, the existing disagreement between Japan and China over the sovereignty of the Diaoyutai Islands remains unresolved, while the

6. 〈日中首脳電話会談〉，《日本外務省》，2021年10月8日，<https://reurl.cc/D3aKxR>。

conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the confrontation between China and Taiwan have further strained the two countries. The conflict with Ukraine has led Russia to lean on China and look for its support, and this has reinforced Japan's belief that the activities of the Russian and Chinese naval and air forces in its peripheral air and sea domains in recent years are indeed the result of a concerted effort by the two countries to suppress the rise of Japan in the Indo-Pacific region.

Moreover, China's sudden military exercises around Taiwan, while targeting Japan's claimed exclusive economic waters, are tantamount to proving to Japan that “Taiwan's crisis is Japan's crisis.” Since some media reported that Taiwan-made drones appeared on the battlefield in Ukraine and attacked Russian troops, some Russian experts claimed that “Russia should help China subdue Taiwan.”⁷ It is not yet clear how Japan will react to China's message, but it is expected to deepen Japan's concern that “China and Russia could join forces against Japan and

possibly against Taiwan.”

The developments described above will inevitably raise Japan's suspicions about the “China threat,” making it even more difficult to be optimistic about the direction of its relationship with China even after the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic rapprochement. At this stage, it is clear that the relationship between Japan and China has deteriorated from “strategic reciprocity” to “mutual strategic suspicion.”

3-2. Japan's policy stance has become more determined against the China threat

According to the Japanese media, the new version of the “National Security Strategy” currently under revision will not only mention “the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait” but will also include the expression “not recognizing the unilateral change of status quo by force” due to the fact that China is exerting military pressure over Taiwan.⁸ Although the contents of the

7. “Worried about Taiwan-made Drones Boosting Ukrainian Force, Russians Clamoring for China to Fight Taiwan,” *The Liberty Times*, August 28, 2022, <https://ec.ltn.com.tw/article/breakingnews/4039967>.

8. 〈政府、台湾の現状変更認めず 安保戦略文書に明記へ〉, 《共同通信社》, 2022年10月12日, <https://nordot.app/952876002474868736?c=39546741839462401>.

new version are not yet finalized, the new “National Security Strategy” released by the Biden administration on October 12 also emphasizes peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and even spends a whole paragraph reiterating the US position on the Taiwan Strait situation.⁹ Considering the US stance, the aforementioned report on the additional content in the new Japanese National Security Strategy should not be considered groundless.

As the strategic suspicion rises, Japan is more determined to prepare itself against China. In addition, the other two core documents of Japan’s defense, “National Defense Program Guidelines” and “Medium-Term Defense Program,” are also expected to include contents concerning the Taiwan Strait and Japan’s intention not to give in to China.

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(The contents and views in the assessments are the personal opinions of the author, and do not represent the position of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research.)

9. The White House, *National Security Strategy*, October 12, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

From “Strategic Reciprocity” to “Strategic Suspicion”: On the 50th Anniversary of Japan-China Rapprochement



Estimation of the compositional changes to the Politburo Standing Committee of the 20th Party Congress

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Keywords: 20th Party Congress, Politburo Standing Committee

If Chinese President Xi Jinping wins the third term on October 16th, 2022, unprecedented in the history of the Chinese Communist Party, he will become the most authoritative leader since Mao Zedong, abolishing the group-leading limitations set by previous presidents such as Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemi. In that case, it will be the turning point of the CCP regime.

But before the 20th Party Congress opens, some estimation principles are worth examining.

1. Do anti-Xi forces really exist within the CCP?

If anti-Xi forces still exist, the CCP probably hasn't decided on the Politburo Standing Committee members of the 20th Party Congress, or only come up with some possible candidates. If anti-Xi

forces don't exist, Xi Jinping can choose whoever he likes, and the new member list won't change much. In other words, the list is probably decided.

At the 18th and 19th Party Congress, international media such as Reuters and South China Morning Post were fed the news and the list was published very early on. Usually, the news is not far from reality, which shows the leaders of the CCP have a consensus and are united.

If anti-Xi forces exist, now they are under the supervision of Xi, and they can't join forces effectively. They can only take action and vote on important gatherings and meetings. During this process, there should be three chances to influence the 20th Party Congress: The Beidaihe Meeting, the 7th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the CCP, and the 20th Party Congress.

The Beidaihe Meeting ended in the summer. We are not sure if there was a veto or resolution, but from the current situation, the resolution is either non-existent or not followed. Simply put, the Beidaihe Meeting provided a chance for different cliques of the CCP to exchange opinions and reach a consensus. Be it through Song Ping¹ or Li Keqiang,² creating public opinion at a specific time serves a certain political purpose.

Anyhow, if anti-Xi forces exist, will they take action at the 20th Party Congress? Now, we should look at the Presidium of the 20th Party Congress and see if the members on the list come from the main cliques. It can give us hints whether the members will take action or vote.

2. Can there be only five members of the Politburo Standing Committee instead of seven or nine?

When a CCP leader's term is about to end, there is always all kinds of estimation and analysis about who will be on the list of the Politburo Standing Committee and the trend of the cliques.³ But the weird thing with the 20th Party Congress is that there is no such estimation. Usually, the news should be everywhere six to three months before the Party Congress opens, but this year, the media is disturbingly quiet.

But an estimation of the size of the Politburo Standing Committee appeared on the internet and social media: the small one versus the big one.⁴

If the size of the Politburo Standing Committee remains at seven people or expanded to nine people, we can understand it as, on the one hand, Xi is willing to share power with other cliques, but it is more likely he wants to play Yuan Shikai, occupying the high ground. If we look at the beginning of the Republic of

1. 105-year-old Song Ping makes a rare appearance in support of reforms, saying it's "the road of development that China must take," *Ming Pao Daily News*, September 20, 2022, <https://reurl.cc/m313Nj>.

2. Li Keqiang's urgent call for "reform and opening up" triggers a buzz, *Radio Free Asia*, October 3, 2022, <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/zhengzhi/gt2-10032022071316.html>.

3. Such as "Decoding the 20th Party Congress," *Asia Society*, October 2022, <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/decoding-chinas-20th-party-congress>.

4. I would like to express my gratitude for the discussion with the Associate Researcher of the National Security Institute, Dr. Che-Chuan Lee, on the size change of the standing committees.

China, the Zhili Clique and Anhui Clique clashed with each other, but none of them could challenge Yuan Shikai.

If the size of the Politburo Standing Committee shrinks, it will become a centralized battle group. There can be two interpretations: on the surface, Xi's grip on power is tight, and he can do whatever he pleases, but on the other hand, CCP leaders could be compromising. By creating exceptions, Xi can achieve special tasks, what previous CCP leaders wanted but dared not to do, such as invading Taiwan by force. In other words, a Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of five is an exception. If Xi doesn't accomplish the tasks, he won't have the chance to serve another term at the 21st Party Congress.

A list of seven or nine members allows plenty of opportunities for pork barrel and clique fights. But for the list of five members, the estimated and leaked version is Xi Jinping, Wang Yang, Li Keqiang, Ding Xuexiang, and Hu Chunhua. Only the following roles remain in the Standing Committee: General Secretary, Premier, Secretary of the National People's Congress, Secretary of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and the Secretary of the Secretariat. Xi and

Ding play the dominant role, Wang and Li supervise, and Hu learns.

Back to the issue of invading Taiwan by force, the question is, will the war break out? After U.S. House Speaker Pelosi visited Taiwan, despite the China-US confrontation, for Beijing, invading Taiwan means war with the U.S. With the help of the U.S. and NATO, the Russia-Ukraine war is still going on. Even in 2027, does the Chinese liberation army have the confidence to beat the Taiwanese Army with the help of the U.S. Army?

The most rational and pragmatic assumption from the Politburo Standing Committee is to maintain the status quo. However, we cannot rule out the possibility of a change in the size of the Standing Committee due to the build-up of "anti-Xi forces."

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