

Analysis of the Implications of Xi Jinping's Recent Visit to Guangdong

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1. News Highlights

From April 11 to 13, 2023, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), visited Guangdong. This political visit marked Xi Jinping's first trip since the 20th Party Congress in late October 2022, after which he visited Shaanxi and Henan. State media Xinhua News Agency described it as the “first official trip in the year of comprehensive implementation of the spirit of the 20th Party Congress”. According to the official reports released, Xi Jinping visited the Mangrove Nature Reserve, Xuwen Port, reservoirs, lychee plantations, agricultural cooperatives, the

LG Display Guangzhou Manufacturing Base (a foreign-funded enterprise), and the GAC Aion New Energy Automobile Company for research. He also inspected naval officers and soldiers in the Southern Theater Command and received reports from officials of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee and local government.¹

Investigation and research, as the CCP's “treasure”, have been inherited from Mao Zedong's tradition of “no investigation, no right to speak”. Xi Jinping stressed that correct decision-making and implementation adheres to investigation and research during the first Plenary Session of the 19th Party

1. “Xi Jinping Emphasizes Steadfast Commitment to Deepening Comprehensive Reform, Expanding High-Quality Opening-up, and Leading the Construction of Chinese Modernization During Inspection in Guangdong,” *Xinhuanet*, April 13, 2023. http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2023-04/13/c_1129519892.htm; “First Observation: General Secretary Further Elaborates on Chinese Modernization During Inspection in Guangdong,” *Xinhuanet*, April 14, 2023. http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2023-04/14/c_1129521615.htm.

Congress.² Therefore, inspections and research have become important sources of information for the CCP's decision-making and a point of observation for the implementation of central policies. The following analysis focuses on the policy implications and subsequent observations behind this inspection.

2. Security Implications

2-1. The Reform and Opening-up Policy Remains Unchanged

Xi Jinping's choice of Guangdong Province as the location for this inspection signifies the CCP's commitment to the reform and opening-up policy. Since assuming the position of General Secretary at the 18th Party Congress, Xi Jinping has visited Guangdong Province four times. Guangdong, as an important landmark for the CCP's reform and opening-up policy, holds significance as

2023 marks the 45th anniversary of this policy. Xi Jinping's visit to Guangdong sends a signal that the CCP will maintain the reform and opening-up policy for the next five years. Furthermore, during his visit to the LG Display Guangzhou Manufacturing Base, a South Korean-funded enterprise, on April 12, Xi Jinping expressed his welcome to foreign investment and made a commitment that "China's policy of reform and opening-up will remain unchanged and the door of opening-up will never be closed".³

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is the focus of the CCP's deepening reform and opening-up. In Xi Jinping's last speech to local party and government officials during the inspection, he emphasized the need for local officials to implement the decisions of the central party and transform the region into a "great opportunity for deepening reform and opening-up in Guangdong". This effort aims to expand on the major policies

2. "General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Issues the 'Work Plan on Nationwide Investigation and Research'," *Xinhuanet*, March 19, 2023. http://www.news.cn/politics/zywj/2023-03/19/c_1129444703.htm; "Selected Excerpts from General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Discourse on Investigation and Research," *China Huaneng*, April 13, 2023. https://www.chng.com.cn/detail_dcfyq/-/article/QSOA0lb35yvF/v/1150833.html.

3. "Xi Jinping Emphasizes Steadfast Commitment to Deepening Comprehensive Reform, Expanding High-Quality Opening-up, and Leading the Construction of Chinese Modernization During Inspection in Guangdong," *Xinhuanet*, April 13, 2023. http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2023-04/13/c_1129519892.htm.

revealed in the 20th Party Congress, such as “Chinese Modernization”, “New Development Pattern”, and “High-Quality Development”.

2-2. Real Economy and Technological Independence will be the principal Focuses of Future Development

Despite reiterating the unchanged policy of opening-up, the CCP also emphasizes the need for self-reliance. In recent years, the US-China competition has become an influential factor affecting global economic development. While domestic political visits by Chinese leaders may appear unrelated to foreign policy, Xi Jinping’s focus in this inspection was on “Chinese Modernization”, aiming to develop a development path that differs from the West. A key aspect of this path is achieving “high-level technological self-reliance”. During his visit to the Guangzhou Automobile Group (GAC) Research Institute, Xi Jinping emphasized the independent development of crucial core technologies and highlighted the importance of talent cultivation and

education in strengthening technological self-reliance.

On the other hand, the real economy is the focal point of “Chinese Modernization”. Xi Jinping emphasized that “Chinese Modernization should not deviate from a solid foundation”. Therefore, industries like manufacturing remain central to development. This emphasis can be observed in Xi’s visit to GAC Aion New Energy Automobile Company, which aligns with the recent policy direction of “high-quality development”. Emphasizing the modernization of manufacturing, China aims to build a more internationally competitive industrial system.⁴

3. Trend Analysis

3-1. The Rise of Investigation and Research

To put it briefly, Xi Jinping’s inspection in Guangdong showcased his emphasis on policies such as opening-up, high-quality development, rural

4. “Xi Jinping Emphasizes Steadfast Commitment to Deepening Comprehensive Reform, Expanding High-Quality Opening-up, and Leading the Construction of Chinese Modernization During Inspection in Guangdong,” *Xinhuanet*, April 13, 2023. http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2023-04/13/c_1129519892.htm

revitalization, regional coordination, and environmental protection (Please refer to the below figure for policy information corresponding to the inspection locations). This sends a political signal to local party and government officials in the inspection areas to implement these policies and achieve “Chinese Modernization”. Consequently, recent activities by Huang Kunming, the Secretary of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee, indicate his proactive engagement in subsequent research. For instance, Huang Kunming has recently conducted research in Dongguan, Guangzhou, and Heyuan.⁵ This article believes that, in line with the “Work Plan on Nationwide Investigation and Research” released by the CCP

Central Committee on March 19, 2023, such local officials’ on-site research will become a regular practice.⁶ However, whether it can serve as a driving force for policy implementation and address the challenges of formalism and bureaucracy remains to be observed.

3-2. The Trend of the Southern Theater Command Navy

Furthermore, during this inspection, Xi Jinping also visited the Southern Theater Command on April 11 for observation and research. He underscored the need to “strengthen combat-oriented military training” and stressed the importance of “resolutely defending China’s territorial sovereignty and

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5. “Huang Kunming Conducts Research in Dongguan, Seriously Learns and Implements the Important Speech and Instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Inspection in Guangdong, and Accelerates the Development of a High-Quality Technological Innovation Manufacturing City,” *Guangdong Provincial People’s Government*, April 16, 2023. http://www.gd.gov.cn/gdywdt/gdyw/content/post_4155026.html; “Huang Kunming, Wang Shouwen, and Lin Keqing Inspect Guangzhou Canton Fair Complex, Conduct Research, Make Efforts to Establish Distinctive and High-Quality Standards, Continuously Enhance the Reputation, and Better Utilize the Canton Fair as a Platform for Opening-up,” *Guangdong Provincial People’s Government*, April 16, 2023. http://www.gd.gov.cn/gdywdt/gdyw/content/post_4155028.html; “Huang Kunming Conducts Research in Heyuan, Seriously Implements the Important Speech and Instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Inspection in Guangdong, Focuses on the Key Task of High-Quality Development, and Accelerates the Rise of Green,” *Guangdong Provincial People’s Government*, April 19, 2023. http://www.gd.gov.cn/gdywdt/gdyw/content/post_4156624.html.
 6. “The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Issues the ‘Work Plan on Nationwide Investigation and Research’,” *Xinhuanet*, March 19, 2023. http://www.news.cn/politics/zywj/2023-03/19/c_1129444703.htm.

maritime rights while striving to maintain stability in the surrounding region”.⁷ As the Southern Theater Command Navy, or the South Sea Fleet, is the largest fleet in the Chinese Navy and possesses comprehensive operational capabilities, including strategic nuclear strike capabilities,⁸ its significance extends beyond CCP’s control over the South China Sea region. It also has significant

implications for coordinating operations with the Eastern Theater Command in potential warfare against Taiwan. In recent years, the Southern Theater Command has conducted combat readiness patrols and far-sea training missions in the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific.⁹ The developments and future trajectory of the Southern Theater Command warrant close attention.

Figure: Xi Jinping’s Guangdong Visit

Dates	Locations or activities	Corresponding policies
April 10	Zhanjiang (Western Guangdong) Morning: East China Sea Island Aquaculture Base and Mazhang District Mangrove Nature Reserve Afternoon: Xuwen Port, Xuwen County and Dashui Bridge Reservoir	Environmental protection Water resources
April 11	Morning: Southern Theater Command (Navy) Afternoon: Lychee Plantation in Boqiao Village, Genzi Town, Gaozhou City, Maoming, and Agricultural Cooperative	Troop modernization Rural revitalization
April 12	LG Guangzhou Manufacturing Base in Guangzhou City and GAC Aion New Energy Corporation Limited	Opening-up High-quality development and technological innovation
April 13	Work Report of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee and Provincial Government	

Source: *Xinhua News Agency*, compiled by Ciao-Lin Deng.

7. “Xi Jinping Emphasizes Deepening Military Training and Preparedness, Accelerating Transformation and Construction, and Fully Enhancing the Modernization Level of the Navy during Inspection of the Southern Theater Command,” *Xinhuanet*, April 12, 2023. http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2023-04/12/c_1129516582.htm.

8. “From North Heavy to South Focused: Examining the Deployment of the Chinese Navy,” *Defence International*, August 17, 2022. <https://opinion.udn.com/opinion/story/120902/6542912>.

9. “Southern Theater Command Navy Returns to Port after Far-Sea Joint Training,” *Xinhuanet*, March 3, 2022.

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