

## PRESIDENT XI'S WORK REPORT AT 20TH NATIONAL CONGRESS: KEY TAKEAWAYS

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



The 20th National Congress (NC) of the Communist Party of China (CPC) opened on October 16 with a two-hour speech by the current General Secretary Xi Jinping, also President of China. NC is the most important political gathering in the five-year political cycle of the CPC. This time, the NC meeting is being attended by 2296 delegates representing all provincial organisations and non-CPC parties, among others.<sup>1</sup> The five-yearly NC gathering has a defining impact on the future course of China's domestic policies and external outlook.

### ***National Congress: Choosing New Top Leaders***

The foremost task of NC is to elect new members of the CPC Central Committee. From 2296 delegates, 205 will be chosen to join the party's central committee through voting among the delegates. Nearly 170 alternate members will also be elected. After that a meeting of the new Central Committee will be convened to elect a new 25 member CPC Politburo, seven-member Politburo Standing Committee, and the General Secretary of the CPC. The seven-member Politburo Standing Committee is the apex of political power and decision-making in CPC and China's governance system.

At the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress, it is expected that President Xi Jinping will be elected again to the CPC Central Committee, and in turn to the CPC Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee. This will

<sup>1</sup> "Presidium of 20th CPC National Congress holds its first meeting", *China Daily*, October 16, 2022  
<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202210/16/WS634bd0ada310fd2b29e7ccb.html>

enable President Xi Jinping to continue in offices of the General Secretary of the CPC, Chairman of the Central Military Commission and President of China for another five-year term.

After the end of the National Congress, personnel changes will take place over the course of next five months until March 2023, when National People's Congress (NPC) will be convened. The NPC will formally elect new national leadership based on CPC decisions made at the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress.

### ***President Xi's Work Report to 20<sup>th</sup> NC: Key Takeaways***

At the opening session of the 20<sup>th</sup> NPC, President Xi Jinping delivered a two-hour work report of the 19<sup>th</sup> CPC Central Committee. The speech provided a summary of a 15-part comprehensive report, covering domestic and external issues, economic development, peace and security, scientific and technological innovation, and self-governance of the party.<sup>2</sup>

During his speech, President Xi focused on China's development path and underscored that China does not follow traditional western approaches based on capitalism. Instead, China is following a unique model which is maintaining the leadership of the party and realising high-quality growth while achieving 'common prosperity'. This development path, President Xi, underlined is suited for China's unique national requirements, and Beijing does not export its developmental model to other countries.

Meanwhile, President Xi termed China's "great rejuvenation" as an "irreversible historical course"<sup>3</sup> being led by the party in the New Era. He held that in recent decades, CPC, while leading China's development and modernisation, has created a "new choice" for humanity. This was an acknowledgement of China having emerged as an alternative to Western democracies.

On domestic issues such as zero-Covid strategy and economy, President Xi reiterated his commitments. He recapped the success of zero-covid policy and emphasized that while adhering to "dynamic zero-COVID China has achieved major positive results in the overall prevention and control of the epidemic". He, however, did not touch upon the impact of zero-Covid strategy on China's economic, and global supply chains.

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<sup>2</sup> "20th National Congress of Communist Party of China opens in Beijing, Xi Jinping delivers report to Congress on behalf of 19th CPC Central Committee", *Minsitry of Foreign Affairs (China)*, October 16, 2022, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202210/t20221018\\_10785042.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202210/t20221018_10785042.html)

<sup>3</sup> "Transcript: President Xi Jinping's report to China's 2022 party congress", *Nikkei Asia*, October 18, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/China-s-party-congress/Transcript-President-Xi-Jinping-s-report-to-China-s-2022-party-congress>

On economy, he reassured foreign investors and the private sector that markets will continue to play a decisive role as China builds a 'social economic system' and strives for 'common prosperity'. He called for giving the market a "decisive role" in allocation of resources, and giving "better play" to the role of government in the economy. His latest speech, however, did not emphasise much on his earlier policy pronouncement of "dual circulation" i.e., China should rely more on domestic economy for growth while keeping international trade separate.

Beyond this, President Xi underlined that China was ready to play its part in advancing international peace and development through its initiatives like Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Global Development Initiative (GDI). He underlined that China was ready to work with the broader international community to put these two initiatives into action.

On the evolving international strategic environment, President Xi did not refer to escalating China-US strategic competition and nor to the impact of Russia-Ukraine conflict on international peace and security. He underscored that there are "strategic opportunities" present for enhancing trade and ensuring diplomatic gains. However, China needs to be mindful of "dangerous storms" on the horizon. The world has entered a period of "turbulence and transformation". Thus, for China, current times are such that "when strategic opportunity coexists with risks and challenges, and uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising". The latter assessment, however, is relevant to other developing countries, as well.

On the Taiwan issue, President Xi underlined that only China would decide unification. He emphasised that China continues to "strive for peaceful reunification" but reserved the "right to use force and all measures necessary". He stressed that his message was directed at "interference by outside forces and a few separatists seeking Taiwan independence". This reference to external forces and calling out the threat of Taiwan independence indicates that Chinese leadership recognises enhanced priority of the Taiwan issue for the United States and its allies.

Finally, President Xi highlighted that for China time has come to enhance its standing and influence across the world. He noted that a "new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation is underway" leading to a shift in "international balance of power" which presents China with "strategic opportunities in pursuing development". This historic opportunity must not be squandered.

## ***Conclusion***

President Xi's work report to the 20<sup>th</sup> NC of CPC was a look at achievements of CPC and China during the past five years in general, and the past decade as a whole. From 2012 onwards, when President Xi was made General Secretary of the CCP, he led China. He calls the past decade a New Era. During this decade, President Xi's agenda and speeches have focused on "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and in the process reclaiming what CPC and President Xi view as China's rightful place in the comity of nations. This work report reflects policies pursued during the past decade to achieve "great rejuvenation", enhance economic development, and expand China's role in international peace and security. The specific policy implications of President Xi's report will be evident in coming months, as his broad policy pronouncements are turned into policy proposals and legislations. The focus, however, will remain in building economic and military strengths crucial for enhancing China's overall national power.