

Reflections on the Importance of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (中国共产党第二十次全国代表大会)

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The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China is scheduled to start on 16 October 2022. Traditionally the National Congress serves as the occasion for the approval of members of the CPC Central Committee and its important bodies, including the Politburo, PSC, Secretariat and the Central Military Commission. These tasks are carried out under the guidance of the Congress' preparatory Committee established by the CPC Politburo and chaired by the CPC's general secretary. In this way the proceedings of the National Congress emphasizes the fundamental representative character of the CPC embodied in the two core principles of democratic centralism and the mass line within the parameters of consultative democracy and as a model for the administration of the nation through its state apparatus under the leadership of the CPC itself.

That alone would be cause enough to demonstrate the importance of this event. The National Congress however, also serves as an important moment where the CPC's core of leadership delivers a work report to the CPC and the nation (and increasingly to the world community) which summarizes the efforts undertaken over the last five years and sets the course for CPC and nation for the next five years. As the highest level expression of guidance to CPC and nation, its content must be carefully studied with the understanding that its guidance will find their way into both the working documents of Party and Nation. As such it may be useful to consider what may the important issues and ideological advances that will be reflected in the report as China continues on the Socialist Path from the Era of Reform and Opening Up and now well into the New Era stage of its historical development.

Here I suggest several key areas where the 20th National Congress Working Report may advance the ideological work of the CPC and lay out the structures for policy focus and objectives for the upcoming half decade. They touch on six critical points that may point to the key elements of Chinese Marxist-Leninism and its expression as state policy for the next half decade. In its essence they reflect the key and important parts of a now mature New Era theory.

1. New Era Thought. The identification of the principal contradiction of the New Era identified in the 19th National Congress Working Report is likely to be further refined. The ideological alignment of socialist modernization with its core socialist purposes will likely be further elaborated under conditions of the current stage of historical development in China. That may continue the process of ideological deepening of the concept of socialist modernization (in light of the current principal contradiction) in the New Era, requiring greater attention to all around modernization to enhance the quality and character of efforts directed toward the realization of the Chinese Dream, as a manifestation of the successful engagement with the principal contradiction of this era. New Era ideology will strengthen its moral, societal, environmental, cultural, international ideology as coordinated parts of a comprehensive unity of national aspirations.

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2. Socialist Legality and Democracy. The Working Report may remark on the realization of a deeper theorization of consultative democracy—a principle identified in the 19th National Congress Working Report—in the form of whole process democracy (全过程民主). Its elements were already previewed in State Council White Papers distributed at the end of 2021. One might expect a refined and more elaborate summary version presented with the 20th Congress Working Report. The alignment of whole process democracy both with the working style of the CPC and with the organization of mass political collectives that represent in the nation in the process of consultation may be highlighted. One might expect as well some reference to the further development of the CPPC as an important apparatus of this system, as well as a refinement of the policies through which the CPC's overall guidance will be expressed in the form of a generalized mechanics of democratic centralism now applied to the administrative apparatus of state as well as to the internal working style of the CPC. From this the structures of Socialist Legality will be further refined. And an effort will be made to further develop the theory of socialist rule of law as a concept and practice distinct from that liberal democracies. Socialist rule of law policies will also be further deepened, with a recognition of the importance of data driven accountability based governance structures commonly references as Chinese social credit systems. The autonomy of Chinese legality from that of liberal democracies will be highlighted and emphasis placed on the further development of an indigenous legality.

3. Socialist Human Rights. In 2021, in President Xi Jinping's remarks to the UN General Assembly, Mr. Xi described China's vision for a Socialist global order. Its principal components included overcoming the challenge of pandemic, pursuing greener and more balanced global development, embracing a revamped ordering of international relations, enhancing global solidarity around concepts of mutual respect and win-win cooperation, and on that of establishing a more refined practice of global governance and multilateralism. To that end President Xi put forward China's Global Development Initiative (GDI). The key elements of GDI were to be centered (1) on development as the center around which the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development might be realized, (2) on bottom up focus on making available the fruits of development, (3) on more horizontal sharing of the benefits of development among all states, (4) on innovation driven development, (5) on emphasizing global environmental governance, and (6) on emphasizing results-oriented action that might be assessable and measurable. This was embellished in an address delivered 22 September 2022 by Foreign Minister Wang Yi in New York at the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of GDI. These concepts are likely to be further refined and policies around them developed in the Working Report. I would also expect a strong use of this conception of Socialist Human Rights to support Chinese internal and external policies.

4. Chinese Socialist Internationalism. In his now well-known 23 March 2013 speech at Moscow State Institute of International Relations, President Xi Jinping elaborated China's vision for a community with shared future for mankind at about the time that China first announced what would become the Belt & Road Initiative. In 2021, President Xi Jinping' further elaborated China's vision of a Socialist global order in his remarks to the UN General Assembly. Its principal components included overcoming the challenge of pandemic, pursuing greener and more balanced global development, embracing a revamped ordering of international relations, enhancing global solidarity around concepts of mutual respect and

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win-win cooperation, and on that of establishing a more refined practice of global governance and multilateralism. These concepts, already announced in the 19th Congress will be further refined in light of Mr. Xi's speeches and essays, especially those of the last several years. Bound up in this will be two sub themes. The first is the strong defense of the Socialist Path made possible under the guidance of the CPC is triumphing over disease and the challenges of changing patterns of economic relations. The second is the further development of ideologies and concepts that can be readily adopted by non/Marxist Leninist states which wish to profit from the Chinese model//the internationalization of whole process democracy, of a prosperity and stability based development focus, and on socialist values may be advanced and are already part of the complex of relations built into the Belt & Road Initiative.

5. Chinese Socialist Ideologies of Sovereign Authority. An important part of the work report may focus on the situation in Hong Kong as an example of the emergence of the doctrine of One Country Two Systems in the New Era. The rejection of internationalism and its inward projection into Chinese territory will be defended, as well as the way that principles of stability and prosperity were applied to apply the new National Security Law in the HKSAR. The focus will be on the application of Socialist Human Rights to the situation in Hong Kong SAR emphasizing autonomy in economic and markets related matters and more conformity in political matters as Hong Kong more deeply incorporated into the organic structures of the Chinese political-economic system. A vigorous defense of Chinese policies in Xinjiang will also likely be emphasized in the 20th National Congress Working Report. It will likely draw heavily from the responsive statement prepared by the Chinese side to the report produced by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and distributed minutes before the end of her tenure. The social case of Taiwan will also be highlighted, though there the emphasis may also foreground the notion of non-interference in internal affairs, the One China policy, and may re-emphasize Chinese notions of the 黑手 [black hand] of foreign interference in its SARs.

6. The path toward the realization of the Chinese dream and the project of national rejuvenation. One might expect as well some substantial attention to guidance on policy, both in terms of emphasis and priority, and to approach implementing the now maturing New Era Marxist Leninist theory. Among these will likely be reference to the dual circulation economy, to the preservation of the integrity of the housing market, to the accountability and discipline of officials who fail in their responsibilities ,and to the protection of a prosperity the benefits of which are more widely distributed. Chinese measures to foster innovation and technological leadership and independence will also likely be emphasized.

This suggests just a glimpse at the quite important issues that may be the subject of the Working Report, Whatever the detail, the certainty is that the Socialist Path already well developed through New Era ideology and a refinement and further step consist with the current historical era will play a large role. At the center of this effort will be the CPC, and at the core of the CPC will be its leadership. The naturalization of democratic centralism, of rank rationalizing the operation of that principle, and of the focus on the moral dimension of socialist modernization will provide the foundation for the many details that will be taken up on the Report.