



Salience of 20th National Congress of CCP

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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Abstract

“Resolving the Taiwan question is a matter for the Chinese, which must be resolved by the Chinese.”
Xi Jinping¹

Xi in his speech had christened seven sectors as ‘emerging strategic industries’ that are central to this opportunity. Those are next-generation information technology; artificial intelligence; biotechnology; new energy; new materials; high-end equipment; and green industry, which needs renewed focus in the next decade. The overall tenor of the 20th Congress clearly expressed the supremacy of party leadership and how to overcome prevailing international environment.

Key Words

Covid, Corruption, Xinjiang, Taiwan, Drones, 36 Strategem, Strategy.

Introduction

The 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), commonly referred to as Èrshí Dà, unlocked in Beijing on 16 October 2022

and culminated on 22 October 2022. The CCP Congress endorsed the membership list of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and elected the 20th Central Committee of the CCP. This is one such exercise that takes place twice in a decade and fills in for the election frenzy in democracies.

The Great Hall of the People, was surrounded by party veterans, the oldest being 105-year-old, Song Ping. Xi amidst this august gathering, presented his vision of endurance with focussing on China’s growth and moving towards a modern society.

Account of Last Decade

Xi Jinping, walked into the portals of The Great Hall of the People, Beijing, to give out the report card of last 10 years and put forth his vision for the next five years and the coming decade. With over 104 minutes of his mesmerising speech, rolled out the story for the for the next decade. While there were cliches in the entire speech, however, Xi glorified the party’s accomplishments under his tutelage, over the last decade. Here are six major key takeaways, covered as under:-

Xi highlighted the success story of poverty alleviation of nearly 100 million people since his term began in 2012. In addition, his ability to overcome the menace of corruption in the decade-long anti-corruption campaign, in which nearly 5 million Communist cadres are under investigation for probity issues.²

Economic Growth Engine

Xi's spoke of the huge inequality gap, with a promise to step up regulation on income distribution and wealth accumulation. Keeping in mind the restrictions on Chinese technology manufacturing, Xi reiterated the countrymen for the innovation in key technological areas to "achieve greater self-reliance".

But Xi's strict "Zero Covid Policy" has been instrumental in bringing down some kind of economic impact and is likely to act as an impediment to the drivers of China's economic growth. It has not only kept China's borders sealed whereas the rest of the world opened up again, but the frequent lockdowns have impacted the industry in a major way. Despite all this, he lauded that the Party has ensured saving and protecting the lives of Chinese from the greatest pandemic of our lifetime.

End to Corruption

Xi's crackdown on corruption campaign resulted in millions of officials being investigated, and many senior officials being either punished or put in jail on graft charges. Xi in his speech highlighted the war against the "war against corruption is likely to continue on a scale unprecedented in our history."³

He ensured through his decade-long anti-corruption campaign, in which nearly 5 million Communist cadres were put through the scanner and under investigation for financial impropriety. Xi exemplified that "As long as the conditions are rife for corruption, the fight against dishonesty will not stop even for a moment."

Understanding Foreign Policy

It is understandable that most of the such speeches the usual audience is domestic, hence Xi without mentioning any individual nation, did talk about her relationship with Russia and the progress of Ukraine war and its likely outcomes.⁴

What is apparent is that China in all probability, is likely to continue with an aggressive and an expansionist Foreign Policy, with the growing Global foot print of Chinese. The Chinese influence and her Comprehensive National Power to shape the world opinion has significantly increased over the years. He said that "China was confronted with radical vagaries in the global landscape, however, we have sustained firm strategic tenacity and shown great fighting spirit."

He indirectly did mention that the contentious issue of his tenure with respect to the Government policies on the Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang Province is China's internal issue. As per UN it is "Crime against Humanity," which is far from the truth.

Environment Preservation

Xi in his speech did spend some time on the biggest threat to humanity being the Climate Change and impact of Pollution. China is definitely going to get impacted as it is endowed with almost 7 percent of global water bodies and 18.47 percent of world population.

China has invested almost \$21 billion in improving the air quality, including modernising 60,000 coal-burning boilers and converting more than 4,000 public buses to run on Compressed Natural Gas. China has pledged that they are likely to peak carbon emission by 2030 and be a carbon neutral country by the year 2060. If China is successful in its efforts, this would alone bring down around 0.2C to 0.3 degree Celsius from global warming projections, thus enhancing the overall image of Xi Jinping, as the world's most powerful and impactful leader.

Xi undertook environmental protection and promoting green lifestyles. “We must remember to maintain harmony between humanity and nature when planning our development.”

Risk Analysis

Crushing of Hong Kong pro-democracy movement was the high point of his term. It had achieved “a major transition from chaos to governance.” He emphatically announced, that the order has been restored in Hong Kong, marking a turn for the betterment for the region and giving an indicative of the future, as well.

“Taiwan Question” was covered a number of times in his two-hour long speech. While Xi did not announce major changes in the Beijing’s long-term stance of seeking a “peaceful reunification” with Taiwan, however, he made it clear, that use of force would be carried out, if necessary. He was quite aggressive in his language highlighting the role of US in meddling into the issue.⁶ “Resolving the Taiwan question is a matter for the Chinese, which must be resolved by the Chinese.” “Reunification” remained a requirement for Xi’s dream of the “great rejuvenation” of the Chinese nation, which he aims to complete by 2049.

China has decreed the principle of ‘one-country, two systems’ (OCTS) to induce Taiwan to form part of OCTS. Taiwan has been promised to keep its autonomy in administration, if it merged with China, as part of OCTS, which is one of the unfinished agenda of Xi. The 1997 handing over of Hong Kong to China by the UK Government is a test case for the world, how the Chinese Communist Party has governed Hong Kong.

In his speech, Xi countered the global claims that China has always been an hegemonistic and an expansionist power, thus implying that a “strong” China is now merely engulfing the “weaker” countries. Ukraine War has further brought to fore the issue of stronger nations forcibly occupy territory and a case in point is Russia’s aggression in Ukraine, which co-incidentally happened immediately after Russian President Vladimir Putin met Xi during the Beijing Winter Olympics in February 2022.

United States (US) relations with China have deteriorated on account of the Trade War, US blocking the access to technology and to top it, the visits of senior American politicians. US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited the island in 2020 and 2022, which is being perceived by China as granting the Taiwan Government with a semblance of recognition. This has compelled the Chinese Communist Party to block all the forces opposing “Taiwan Reunification” and foreign interference.

In 2021 National People’s Congress had codified the new military modernisation goal to “ensure the achievement of the 2027 centennial military building goal.” Besides being the centenary year, Xi also added 2027 as a short-term milestone for the modernisation of the armed forces. As per Taylor Fravel, China Military Scholar, this implies that 2027 goal act as a waypoint for the 2035 informatisation goal as far as military modernisation is concerned. Thus, the next five years are critical for PLA, and the current CMC will dictate the pace of China’s military reforms and determine the role of the PLA in the PRC’s regional conflicts and disputes.

Xi stated that “The military power needs to be normalised and used in varied ways. China needs to conduct military operations perhaps to create a secure environment, deter and control risks and conflicts or even win regional wars.” In his speech, Xi encouraged the People’s Liberation Army and welcomed new strategies to achieve its objective of becoming a world-class military.

Future Military Strategy in the New Era

Xi announced implementation of a ‘military strategy for the new era.’ This is something Xi has been laying emphasis on, since 2019. It defines the overall war principles in the medium to long term. It lays down the rapid evolution of warfare, to intelligensified warfare, which is on the horizon.⁷ The report of the 20th Congress laid emphasis on development of unmanned intelligensified operational capabilities. This aligns with the Chinese Government’s significant efforts to train drone pilots, and may reflect the fact that the PLA’s

leadership is determined to expand the use of drones in future war. In addition, the report recommends analysing the facets of informatised and intelligentised warfare and innovating 'Military Strategic Guidance.'⁸ This propounds that despite the fervour for drones as platforms of the future, the military leadership is yet to set up a doctrine for waging intelligentised warfare.

Prognosis for India

As far as India - China borders are concerned, which is oft referred to as Northern Borders, a tense Military Stand Off like situation is prevailing since 2020, particularly after the Galwan Clashes. While there has been a forward push on some of the friction points, however the contentious and complex border issues will continue to remain in the future discussions. It was also observed that PLA Commander at Galwan, who got injured in the Black Swan Galwan Clashes, Commander Qi Fabao, happened to be invited as a delegate to the Congress. The violent clashes even featured as an image of the violent clashes in the icy peaks of Eastern Ladakh. Let us not forget 36 Strategem, that the Chinese follow, "Create noise in the East and strike in the West."⁹ China will always retain the element of surprise and will strike when least expected. Deng's wise investment of "Crossing the river by feeling the stones" has allowed China to absorb advanced technologies of the West to steadily building up its own capabilities in a wide range of cutting-edge technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Computing, 5G and Robotics. India must be wary of the economic chasm which makes China less sensitive to India's interests and exhibits a lower threshold of tolerance towards India.

Conclusion

It is a known fact that in CCP, major political and party decisions, which matter for the nation and the world are not made in the Party Congress, but are decided much in advance at the backdoors. It isn't always clear what those decisions might be, until they become known publicly to the world, after having seen its impact globally. The history of CCP is plagued with numerous political and economic crises, the most dangerous of which involved question of leadership succession. Xi's body demeanour shows that he recognizes that the power struggle in the country, is far from over and he has to keep proving to the party and countrymen, that he is numero uno in his country. As far as India is concerned, only time will tell if the measures taken in 20 CPC are one step forward or two steps back, by China.

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