

## November 8, 2022 Panel Discussion – China's New Politics What have we learned from the 20th Party Congress

– Good evening, everyone. It's wonderful to see a full house here at this forum here at MERG, and I also want to wish a good evening, or for those of you who chose to get up very early in the morning, a good morning, , to all of you in Asia who are choosing to tune in to the live webcast. I'm Mark Wu. I am the director of the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies here at Harvard, and I have a pleasure of welcoming all of you to one of our showcase events this fall, a discussion on China's new politics. What have we learned from the 20th Party Congress? I'm gonna take a minute first just to introduce the panelists. Our wonderful experts we have here at the Fairbank Center and at Harvard, and then I'll also take a couple minutes, recognizing there are students here in this audience, not all of you follow Chinese politics at a sort of day to day sport like level, just to make sure that everyone understands what transpired over the developments of the 20th Party Congress, and then I'll open it up really for just a conversation amongst our panelists, and we'll have plenty of time for questions. For all of you at the back, there are still a couple of empty seats here in front, so please do come down and take advantage. I know the habits of not wanting to sit in front row are hard to break for students, but definitely I think this is one you'll want to be more in the room here for, and definitely there's still plenty of empty seats out here in the front row. So I'm just gonna introduce my panelists in order here. To my left, first, is Joseph Fewsmith. Joe is the Professor of International Relations and Political Science at Boston University. He's also a center associate here with us at the Fairbank Center. He's the author of "Rethinking Chinese Politics" and also more recently, "Forging Leninism in China". To his left is Lucy Hornby, who's a visiting scholar here at the Fairbank Center and also a Nieman Fellow here at Harvard. She covered Asia for 15 years for the Financial Times, including serving as the Deputy Bureau chief in Beijing. To her left is Anthony Saich, the Daewoo Professor of International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School, the director of the Rajawali Foundation Institute for Asia, and the former director of the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation. He is the author of "From Rebel to Ruler: 100 years of the Chinese Communist Party." And to his left is Yuhua Wang, the Professor of Government here at Harvard and the author of a forthcoming book, "The Rise and Fall of Imperial China", as well as "Tying the Autocrat's Hands". And so I just want to say, for those of you who are looking to build out your Amazon book wish list, for those of you looking to buy holiday books for friends who are interested in Chinese politics, hopefully I just made your lives a little bit easier. I also wanna draw your attention to a new infographic that we've created here at the Fairbank Center with kudos to James Evans, our communications director, as well as Angela Wong, and several students who were involved in the research for this effort. I see

several of you breaking out your phones, but I just wanna make you aware that if you go on the Fairbank Center website, you can easily download this infographic, and will come into much sharper resolution, and you can also still post this on your Instagram or other as you may like. One of the things about this infographic is it will show you, sort of in visual format, who's who within both the core leadership, as well as the Politburo Standing Committee, as well as the Central Committee, and it's broken down also by functions, as far as we understand it. Many of these functions, of course, will be determined formally in the spring once the second of the major events takes place. To contrast this, James and I have also created an infographic of the CCPs leadership prior to the 20th Party Congress, so you can also download that infographic at the Fairbank Center's website, and that also allows you in an easy visual way to sort of do a compare and contrast between those as well. So I'll leave this up because we may refer to certain individuals during the course of today's talk, but let me just take a couple of minutes just to set the stage, especially for those of you who may not follow Chinese politics in as close form as those sitting here, or those of you in the audience who are choosing to focus on this for your dissertations, your senior thesis papers, and the like. Basically, China's Communist Party holds a Party Congress every five years. This is a major event that determines the leadership structure for several key organizational parts of the Chinese Communist Party. It includes a general secretary's report, which provides a vision and direction from the general secretary as to the CCPs direction for the next five years. It also determines a Politburo Standing Committee, which has been seven members for both this current term as well as the previous term. It had been as large as nine previously. There was a Central Committee this time, which was reduced from 25 members to 24 members, and then there is the Politburo structure, which is all elected and put into place. It does also touch on reports concerning the military and party discipline. Other key parts are internal party matters. I wanna contrast this with the state. We oftentimes refer to the Chinese party state. The meeting in the spring will determine the formal roles within the state structure, so this will include determination of the premier, the vice premier, and various members within the State Council structure, and that's still to come, but this is of course the preview event that does highlight several things to be expected about what we can expect in the next term. Now, I think it came as no surprise to any of us that Xi Jinping was reappointed for a third term as a general Secretary of the CCP. However, there were several norm busting elements of this congress, one of which is of course that there were no women on the Central Committee. The other...

– The Politburo.

– Sorry, on the Politburo. Yes. The other is of course that some were surprised that an informal norm of retirement at age 68, but staying on at 67, the *qi sang ba xia* norm, did not apply to certain members,

including most pointedly Le Keqiang, who stepped down as premier, which was to be expected, but some premiers have then moved on to take on other roles within the Standing Committee, and then Wang Yang, who also had not reached that age and some had expected that he might possibly stay on within the Standing Committee. There were others on the Standing Committee who did reach retirement age, and then of course Wang Huning and Zhao Leji stayed on the Politburo Standing Committee, and then there were four new members who were appointed, each of which have ties, very strong ties to Xi Jinping himself. The other parts which I think will be discussed or highlighted is of course the emergence of Li Qiang, the party secretary in Shanghai as the number two ranking member, came as a surprise to some. He of course is also then slated to likely become the premier, and should that be the case, it would be the first premier in some time, I believe, since Li Peng, who will not previously have served as a vice premier, and I believe also the first premier since Zhao Ziyang to have not taken on a formal role within the State Council. There are of course other matters which our experts will highlight in the course of all this, but I wanna start out with a very general question. Several of the developments, and in particular the appointment of who stood on the Standing Committee and who was appointed to Politburo and the absence of perhaps some individuals such as Hu Chunhua, who had been the former vice premier, but tied very closely to the Communist Youth League faction, and so forth, of not being on the Politburo, some of this came as a surprise to those who watched the developments very closely. So I just wanna start by asking each of you, on a scale of one through ten, how surprised were you, with say, one being not very surprised at all, ten being absolutely surprised, and what came as the biggest surprise for you? So why don't we just sort of go down in order, Joe, starting with you.

- Well, actually, I don't think that the results of this meeting were very surprising at all. There were a few things like the absence of Hu Chunhua that were a bit surprising, but I think we expected Xi Jinping to totally dominate the proceedings, as he has Chinese politics for the last 10 years. I think, by the way, if you look at the age composition of the Central Committee, the likelihood is that he will be here for another 10 years. Whether he decides to go on after that will presumably be his own choice. To me, the really interesting story of this is that in the past, the press has always said, "Unprecedented third year," or third term. What we're doing is going back to normal politics. With all due respect to your title, it's not what's new about politics, it's what's old. This is a return to old politics. Mao Zedong didn't step down, Deng Xiaoping didn't step... well, sort of did, but he kept on, the '92 southern trip and so forth. Jiang Zemin was told to step down. Hu Jintao had no choice. So they didn't voluntarily step down, and so what we're returning to is sort of the norm of lifelong tenure. Deng Xiaoping, I think, had really made an effort to say, "Jiang Zemin for 10 years, and over to Hu Jintao. Don't pick your own successor." That was the key for him to the over

concentration of power under Mao, and Xi Jinping is the anti-Deng Xiaoping. He has decided to go back to picking your own successor, if he ever lives long enough to pick his own successor, but in any case, to me, that was the really bottom line of this Congress.

- So shall I pick up from there? I think journalists, particularly, like the idea of like, factions battling it out, you know, because we try to make Chinese politics as interesting as we possibly can. When nothing actually changes for five years, but I think that, you know, it was a question of not that Xi would dominate, but as you said, by how much, but this doesn't necessarily end factional politics, right? Because if you look at Chinese history, what happens is one person dominates, they bring in that faction, and then that faction splinters between very ambitious people, right? And I thought it was kind of interesting that Xi Jinping brought his Standing Committee to Yan'an, and specifically he talked about the 1945 Party Congress, which, you know, first of all, his father got elevated then, you know, so it had some personal thing, but it was also the time that Mao brought in his own people, right, and so subsequent factions in Chinese politics were between Mao's followers, but not Mao and people apart from Mao. So I think that that's what we'll be looking forward to going forward, and on that front, the only thing that really surprised me is that, you know, there had been a lot of signaling in the direction of a gentleman named Chen Min'er, who you'll see up there. he's got a JZ next to him, which I'm not sure what that means, but he is-

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- Oh, . So he's up there, Chen Min'er. There had been a lot of signaling that he was Xi's preferred successor. The fact that he didn't jump into the Politburo Standing Committee is pretty interesting, but it also means there's room now for other people to try to out compete him for Xi's favor, and I think this could lead to, you know, some really heavy zigs and zags in Chinese politics as people who want to be Xi's successor compete to look as obedient as possible to what they think Xi wants. So altogether it will make for, I think, a very destabilizing competition going forward.

- Thanks. Well, I identified Chen Min'er at the 19th Party Congress as Xi's likely successor, so what the hell do I know? So if we're just sort of focusing on the leadership, I agree obviously with much of what Joe said. Three things struck me, really, related to it, one of which was a bit of a surprise. The first, however, though, I always thought that whether Li Qiang would be appointed as the potential premier was a real litmus test of how far Xi was going to push loyalty over potentially competence or area expertise, and because of the way that Li Qiang's government in Shanghai so badly mismanaged COVID, it didn't really create a lot of confidence about him being able to manage a very complex economy, but I think the fact that despite all that he's come out as the number two in the rankings tells us a lot

about Xi Jinping's thinking. Hu Chunhua is interesting, and I think the reason he was not included in the Politburo is simply that Xi doesn't want him to be seen as a potential successor, because if he'd remained in the Politburo or had been in the Standing Committee, given his age and expertise, he might have been seen by many to be a potential successor. The one thing that did surprise me was that I don't think anybody analyzing before had anticipated all seven Standing Committee members would be really close to Xi Jinping. I thought maybe six out of the seven, others five out of seven. That was the one thing that surprised me, and it does raise a different set of challenges from what Lucy just talked about, that eventually they're gonna compete with one another to move forward. It is, what do other opinion groups in the party do now, given that they are now completely out of having any formal voice into the most senior parts of the party apparatus. What do they do? I mean, how do they express their opinions, their views? Do they work outside of the system, which of course is very dangerous, or do they just lick their wounds, skulk away, and hopefully something goes very badly wrong with policy where they can reassert some of their influence?

– Well, to answer Mark's question from one impulsive place, I am, I would give a very precise answer. I think 1.43. I'm a quantitative scholar, so I think it's, I'm not surprised by the overall outcome, but I am surprised by some of the personnel changes, for example, Li Qiang, one of the seven Politburo standing for leader, that's why it's one point for series. . I want to highlight one of the things that my panelists have mentioned, I think, you know, in the media, after the Party Congress, you probably have seen this phrase many times, it's called the end of factions, right? And then this is back to a PowerPoint, that is before Xi Jinping, we used to think there has been some arrangement, maybe informal arrangement between the party elders, or there has been some locations of factions studies, for example, you know, and there are different ways to call their names, but for example, the princelings of the Shanghai gang, or the Shanghai faction, and the youth league faction, And then some people, for example, Chang Li and Victor Shih. Political scientists have been using those labels to talk about factional politics in China, and then it seems that the politics at the time, for example, under Jiang, Wen and Hu, was that the party elders will reach some agreement, for example, this time is the youth league, next time is the princelings, right? And then that has been probably the case from Jiang, you know, the Shanghai gang, and then Hu Jintao, the youth league faction, and then probably Xi Jinping, the so-called princeling faction. But then this time, right, it seems that a lot of newspaper articles promise the end of factions, and then because Xi has achieved total dominance on the Politburo standing committee, all the six people on the Politburo Standing Committee other than him are sort of connected to him. We can see probably see factions, right? But I want to make the point that one of the surprising consequences, I guess, in the years to come, is probably the end of factions, but not the end of factional

fights, and that is, when there was rotations, when everybody understands that there might be longer, this time is for the Youth League, next time it's the princelings, every member of the faction knows that there's a chance in the future they might get a permission, because there's this rotation system, and then the party elders have agreement on which faction will be promoted next time, and then, so people know that there's a chance for themselves in the future, and then the number of people in those smaller factions are also smaller. For example, the number of people in the princeling faction, the number of people in the Youth League faction are smaller compared to, for example, the so-called Xi faction. Then the situation, I think, Xi will face, the challenge I think we will face is that all his followers, all his proteges, now belong to this broader umbrella faction called the Xi faction, and everybody thinks that they have a chance of being promoted, and then that will increase the level of competition rather than reduce the chance of competition, because now the number of competitors everyone is facing is increasing rather than decreasing, so I think that, in the next 10 years or 15 years, I think when we see, you know, the Xi faction dominating. It doesn't mean that there will be less factional wars, actually there will be more factional wars.

- I just wanna ask anyone wants to build on or respond to any of the surprises. If not, then let me highlight, Yuhua, what you mentioned, the fact that there's been a lot of media commentary on that, spoken to Western media, but also in the Chinese language press, and if you count what goes on Weibo, on WeChat, and so on and so forth, a lot of commentary and all this. You highlighted one thing that you think is a little bit off on that commentary. I just wanna ask others, are there things that you wanna draw to attention that possibly has become part of the narrative about what unfolded at the Party Congress that you think isn't quite right or something that's been missing from the narrative or think is an important element?

- Yeah, you know, I do agree, I think, with Yuhua, that it does set up a very unstable situation, because most of those people are gonna feel as though they're equals, in one way or another, even though there is a ranked hierarchy. The thing that struck me about the general secretary's report, and I haven't really seen this covered so much in the press, is that I actually found it a very anxious report, full of anxiety and fears, and also actually a very defensive report. I mean, the way I read it was a lot of it was about how do we confront the threat that we now see coming from America and the West, and I interpreted that in two different ways, one of which I think of as geo-economic risk mitigation, and there, things like decoupling, the dual circulation, the BRI, I think sort of fit into that, and I think China's play there is that they figure great powers are the countries that dominate standards in key industries, and that's what, you know, China's investing heavily in, and they see that as one way of pushing back against US pressure on them, but then of course there's also the

geopolitical risk mitigation, which is behind, one, China trying to take more influence in international forums, and particularly pushing back in those areas where it doesn't agree with the norms, human rights being one obvious one, and of course trying to build coalitions with other countries that don't really sign on to a Western dominated global order. So the most obvious example being being Russia and so forth. So that's something that I saw in the report that I haven't seen commented on so much, that in many ways it's a kind of defensive reaction both domestically but also internationally to the challenges that he sees coming at China in the future, and there were a lot of warnings in the report. He didn't strike me, you know, maybe he's confident in his power, but it didn't strike me that he was a confident leader at the present time.

- Well, judging by the reaction of a lot of Chinese that I know and talk to, he shouldn't be terribly confident. This is, maybe I have a very bad sample. I'm not a statistician.

- Probably the same sample that I talk to.

- Could well be, but there are a lot of people who expected this outcome. but a lot of people who are just not happy about it. There's no enthusiasm for Xi Jinping, and nobody uses the sort of familial Xi Dada anymore. It's all niggling, and all that, you know, very impersonally. He's not somebody who evokes a lot of warmth among the Chinese people. There's no charismatic authority there, and so forth.

- Maybe needs to go back to the bun shop again and buy his baozi.

- Well, he got a lot of good play out of that.

- He did.

- You know, for 15 kuai, he got a lot of publicity. One of the things that really strikes me as I think back over the years is whenever Deng Xiaoping had a problem in the party or internationally, he just said, "Let's grow out of it." Economy is first. Grow out of it and all these ideological problems that you guys are arguing about, the answer will become clear, you'll be friends, and so forth, and Xi Jinping's reaction is totally different. He wants to circle the wagons, you know, the West is an enemy, there are enemies all over the country. You know, I remember reading an article of his a couple of years ago that said, this decoupling sort of stuff that he was talking about, you know, "This is going to cost us more, the economy will grow more slowly, but it's the only way to preserve national security," and he's really put such a great weight on national security, and, you know, I think this does set up real problems for the next few years. The economy has been slowing down for the last several years, it will probably continue to be growing at a fairly low rate, and I think you can only cry out national security so many times before people say,

"Well yeah, it would be nice to eat too." Youth unemployment is way up, things of that nature. So I think there's, especially in the technology field, Li Yuan had a wonderful article in the New York Times this morning, for those of you who've read it, commenting on how the technological entrepreneurs are really increasingly fed up, and or, maybe frightened is the right word to use, that they're looking either to leave China or leave that field, get their families out, get their money out. That's not the sort of investment environment that you want going forward. So I would expect before very long, some of these people on the Standing Committee are gonna say, "Well, don't we have to do something to support high tech?" Which goes along with the technological issues that you're talking about.

– But he sees the answer to that as more state investment into high tech. That seems to be the approach.

– There is a certain amount of state debt.

– There certainly is. I'm not saying it'll be successful, but that seems to be the approach.

– Yeah.

– Lucy, maybe I can turn to you as someone who's covered the economy in depth. I see sort of three different narratives emerging out of this, right? One is the one that Joe just alluded to, which is the Chinese economy is heading for quite a bit of rough waters ahead. This would've been normally the state, even if, right, just as China is growing into a certain stage of development that just becomes more difficult, but then we've got the COVID aftershock, right, of the slowing global economy and so forth, and then just at this critical moment, right, you see talent and possibly capital leaving the country. That's one narrative. I hear a different narrative, which is, you know, this has been the place in sort of slow drips and drabs, this is kind of more of the same, right? Sort of a doubling down, maybe national security, technology, to sort of focus on self resilience. And then I hear a third narrative, which is to say, you know, Xi has wanted to carry out more on the economy that he's been capable of, now he's cleared the deck, and maybe he'll actually be able to take care of some of what he's wanted to do in terms of dealing with the property markets, in terms of dealing with actual investment in certain sectors, in terms of channeling these types of resources, and so, you know, having someone like Li Peng in a key economic role, who has been a key architect of this sort of state led mission, is actually going to sort of accelerate things and possibly be more of a reform type of outlook in the coming years. What do you make of all this, and where does your own instinct sort of take you?

– Okay, so first of all, slowing growth is not a bad thing. Right? So imagine a balloon, right? The balloon is getting bigger, fast at



first, and then as it gets bigger and bigger, it grows more slowly as a percent, right, and so I think that this is kind of a misperception that hangs around the Chinese economy, right? As the Chinese economy gets bigger, you want it to grow more slowly, right? Because in absolute terms, 2% of a much bigger pie is bigger than 10% of a tiny little pie, right? So it's natural that that growth would slow down, okay? The problem China has had was that it was growing quite fast and then it turned the corner to growing quite slowly kind of all at once, right, and in the, over the past 10 years, that's when that transition has happened, and at the same time, the strengthening of the party over the economy has meant that the resources have been channeled away from the private sector. You know, a lot of private businesses, especially very small ones and medium ones have been completely wiped out. A lot of debt has defaulted, and it's defaulted onto the pockets of the Chinese people, right, so those of you who are Chinese nationals, probably you have an aunt or a grandmother or a grandfather or a cousin who's lost a lot of money in the . So it's basically been a giant default onto the middle class, right? So that's the problem, right? It's not that the growth itself is slower, it's that it has slowed catastrophically for certain sectors and at the same time you've had huge resources being channeled into the state's priority sectors, and those tend to be security, and especially with COVID, we've seen a huge buildup of the security state, tech, in the sense that China is doing what to a certain extent the Japanese, the French and the Germans have done, which is identify key tech areas, throw a lot of resources into them, but they haven't necessarily paid off yet, right? So there's a sort of a stasis there. It's a bet that might pay off, but it really might not, too. So, so that's kind of where the issue lies. Now, a second issue is that as you get a mature slowing economy, what you really wanna have is a lot of regional flexibility, right, so think of the United States. We have the Fed in many different cities, and that's so that we can reflect the fact that sometimes, you know, Silicon Valley and California might be doing great, but St. Louis in the middle of the country might be doing terribly, right? So as China becomes a mature economy, you no longer have the situation that you had in the '80s and '90s when every single thing was growing like crazy, everybody was getting a new car, everybody was getting a new apartment. Now you have a situation where you need a more nuanced approach to a very large and a very complex economy. At the same time you have this intense centralization of political power, and you have the attitude that the state should be what's allocating resources, right, not where demand is from people. So that I think is gonna be another huge challenge for the Chinese economy going forward, that there's a real contradiction built in between the flexibility that a big economy needs, and the extreme centralization of Xi and the party's instincts, and that applies to people movement as well, right, and COVID has just exacerbated that people within China find it really difficult to go from one city to the next, right, so you have a very non-fluid labor market, and all of this just makes it much more difficult, and I think you're gonna end

up having a very large economy that's kind of lurching around, rather than necessarily responding flexibly.

– Anyone else wish to weigh in on what the party power means for the economy?

– I just want to make one quick comment about, there are a lot of predictions about the Chinese economy and some are, because most of them are very pessimistic, but I want to say that, you know, this is why politics is so important to understand economy. Politics is important because the political structure, the number of people in the decision making process can determine how fast the state can make decisions. For example, you know, when I talk about the factions, in the past when a top leader wanted to make an economic decision, right, it's a collective process that is you have to talk to people maybe on the Politburo Standing Committee, or on Politburo, and then get a consensus, right? That's how it works, you know, ideally how it works, and then it means that in that process, it required consensus building and also required negotiating, and also that process means that a lot of people on the Politburo Standing Committee, for example, could say no, right? A single person for example, maybe the prime minister, maybe the Western minister, you know, can say no to a policy initiated, and then what we are seeing now is the public dominance of the Xi faction, for example, and then I think what that means for economic policymaking is what we'll see faster changes in the next 10 to 15 years, which means, you know, whenever Xi changes amount, we'll see policy changes and then there will be very few people, right, on the Politburo who can say no to any ideas that Xi has, and then I think that that's important because it means that it is difficult to predict. You know, my point is it will be very difficult to predict what would happen in the next 10 years because a lot of people will say, you know, this is Xi's policy and then, you know, Xi's preferences will dominate, that's gonna be what's happening in the next 10 to 15 years, but my point is exactly because Xi has achieved dominance, it means that there will be very few people who can say no, who can check the policy, so Xi's mind can change quickly, and then once this man changes, policies will change. So I think my prediction would be, very unpredictable and in the next 10 years there will be a lot of sudden, quick changes in economic policies.

– Yeah, the one thing I would add in is that a lot of what can happen in the Chinese economy and the things that Xi wants to focus on are gonna be out of his control, and I think the Biden administration in October really made it pretty clear their attitude towards Chinese development, with the regulations trying to deal with banning for chips and the whole issues around semiconductors. That will have a major impact on China's development potential, and I think one of the interesting questions that comes out of this is what is Washington's end game? Is this one attempt to try and force China to come to negotiate around things that it's been criticized for from Washington

for a long period of time? But actually, the federal government has a lot of powers. That means there's a lot more things it could do really to undermine the Chinese economy, should it wish to do so, and I think it sets a challenge for China because in one way it has to react, doesn't wanna appear bullied, but things that can react, well, it could say, "We won't export more rare earths." Well, but it can find rare earths in other places, and most of the other things that China can do will also damage itself, so I think there's a very considerable constraint on the growth of the Chinese economy now, which is well beyond Xi Jinping's control.

- Just to add, you know, this idea that Lifeng or somebody else might be the liberal, you kind of reply with Liu He, who was supposed to be the liberal last time, a friend I understand of-

- Kennedy School trained.

- You know, and he seemed to have bent the wind that he was facing. So, you know, maybe Xi Jinping will wake up and be a neoliberal. I doubt it, you know. You can always hope for miracles. You know, I think one of the interesting discussions is, you know, does China really have a sufficient technological base where they can build and develop, innovate in these technologies? And they certainly have a large technological base, but there's a time element involved. How quickly can they come up with new chips and, you know, that sort of thing, and you know, I have to say, I'm rather discouraged by the Biden administration. They seem to really, they really seem to want to challenge China in some very fundamental ways, and there doesn't seem to be a sense that if we constrain them this way, but give them an out this way, that it'll work, that you can lead them to what the United States think would be a more, a friendlier, more compatible polity, and if you challenge China across the board, I think it's ultimately a losing battle that would be unintentionally go into a cold war, which could have some very nasty ramifications.

- So where is that out? Or if you were giving advice to the administration, what would that out path be then? If we look at this board here, right?

- Yeah.

- Who would you be providing an out to?

- Well I guess we better not do it to He Lifeng because you don't want to set up the people that you think are liberal. That's one way to ruin their careers.

- And I don't think very many people in Washington think He Lifeng is liberal or neoliberal.

- No. Whatever. In any case, I don't know. I suppose that, you know, that there are ways of, you know, I mean we have the CFIUS process that China's allowed to invest in some areas and we restrict other areas, and I think that first of all, that that needs to be clear, what areas we welcome investment in, and of course obviously things like trade relations, you know, China wants to participate in the global economy because exporting is a very important part of that economy, and so I think you have to make clear that you're not against China's economic growth, you're against certain things that they're doing in the economy or in the national security area that we don't like. I don't think the Biden administration has been clear about that. I think they've been much more across the board, "We're just against China," and I think that China probably has made a judgment that Washington just doesn't want China to ever rise.

- Yeah, I think that's certainly true. I mean, the only things are gonna work is if it appeals to what people see is in the US national interest.

- Mm-hmm.

- And there, I always kind of think of it in different buckets. You have issues of global commons, where climate change is obviously the most obvious example, but there's also oceans, fisheries, then there's categories of, what do you call it, global engagement in the set of other areas, and global regulations, where it's going to be in the US national interest to at least reach some kind of accommodation with China. Now, whether there's a channel to bring that about, I've very dubious about at the moment, for the reasons I think you say Joe, and you know, colleagues from China have, you know, pretty much been saying to me the general sentiment is no matter what, America is out to crush us. It doesn't matter what we do.

- Yeah.

- You know, that's America's intent. I have no idea whether that's true or not, but that seems a pretty widespread, also on a very low statistical base, idea.

- I think that's a bigger problem, also, is that there's no real vision for what the US wants overall, right? So you're like, "Oh, I don't want China to be so big and powerful." Well, what do you want? Right? And so I think we need a new vision of what the world should be like that has to leave more room for developing countries, right? It can't just be the US and Western Europe and maybe a little bit of Japan running the world, right, and so until the US tries to make a more positive and constructive appeal to the rest of the world, you know, then you're gonna come across as basically trying to rewind the clock with no future vision, and that's not gonna be very compelling to the new markets coming up, right? Africa for instance, or India, or

Southeast Asia, you know, where people need an alternative, right? They need an alternative market than China, they need an alternative investor than China, and they need an alternative vision than China, otherwise they're gonna be like, "Well, you know, okay, you're just the bitter old man and they've got a vision for the future," right? So I think that that is a bigger overall problem that we're facing.

- So just to shift this in to foreign affairs more properly, right, one of the things that came out from this Party Congress is the continuation of Wang Yi as a key figure in terms of shaping Xi's policy. Again, this is somebody who was over the age of 68 and was being kept on. Also on the military side, right? Zhang Youxia being kept on on the military side. So I just wanted to invite you all to comment a little bit on foreign affairs, on military, and so forth. Certainly these are signs of what you all have all highlighted, right? Beijing has read Washington, and perhaps go west as a whole or the liberal alliance that Washington has managed to put together, as we're responding a certain way, and shoring itself up in a certain way, but are there any signs that came out from beyond what you've already highlighted, Tony, in the general secretary's report about the headwinds, about China needing to sort of steel itself for rough waters ahead, on that, you know, that are worth drawing out to our audience?

- No, I don't think so. You know, what I already said. I mean, I think Joe has also said, or as Lucy, you know, about the obsession with national security. How much can you keep focusing on that? The other interesting appointment though, which I think is gonna be important for foreign affairs, is Qin Gang being appointed. Clearly, you know, presumably, one might think would become foreign minister down the road. That to me highlighted, at least in Beijing, as a recognition of how important the relationship with the US is gonna be, and that they need someone who is very good at defending China's interests, but also knows how to talk to Americans. That struck me as one sort of important issue in terms of appointments.

- Can I say, as a journalist, you know, it's a lot easier to cover Chinese economy than it is to cover the Chinese military. So on the economy, you know, we know the preferences of people down to the vice premier level, or the vice minister level, right? We've often met these people, and of course so have people like Tony and Joe and Yuhua, so these are all known entities. We kind of know their preferences, we know if their child went to the school in the US or not, or you know, like there's a person there. The military, uh-uh, we've very, very little understanding of who these people are, and very little ability to report meaningfully on it, and also very little understanding of how beholden Xi Jinping might be to the military, and I suspect the answer is a lot, but it's really hard to know, and there's really only maybe two reporters, foreign reporters in Beijing,

that cover this with any degree of sophistication, but it's kind of a big black box, I would say, from the media's point of view.

- I've had a couple of interactions with people in the Chinese embassy in Washington recently and it sort of surprised me, because it was very forthcoming, very friendly, none of the wolf warrior sort of stuff, and my first impression was maybe this is wolf warrior stuff didn't get us very far, so maybe we need to set a new tone, and I'm not sure, if that's the case, that it's bubbled up to any higher level. We'll see. I'd like to think that that's the case. On the other hand, what I really worry about is if they're talking to somebody like me, it means they can't get an appointment with anybody important in Washington, and they admit that, that, you know, that they cannot go out and talk to a member of Congress. You're not the ambassador. They'll talk to the ambassador, if you're a senator, but nobody lower than that. So there's literally nothing for them to do. We used to have over a hundred official dialogues with China during the Obama administration. Right at the moment, we have absolutely zero. By the way, our diplomats in Beijing can't talk to anybody in Beijing, so there is a certain equality of the relationship there, which is, it's really terrible. We do need, you know, you ask what can you do? Open up. The idea of talking is really, you know, it's important. It's certainly better to talk than to not talk, and right now we are just not talking, and you know, you mentioned climate and so forth. Not to have any working groups at all, suggested in neither capital is there much enthusiasm to have any talks. Needless to say there should be mil to mil talks. By the way, the other interesting appointment is Wei Fenghe, right, the other person on the military commission with Zhang Youxia. His appointment two terms ago, or two rotations ago, was the western theater, and so the Indians don't like him because they regard him as being behind some of the conflict there, and now the most recent appointment was in the eastern theater, and people in Taiwan are not excited about that. I don't know whether really understanding the Taiwan issue, as he should from a military point of view, that could either be bad, that he is prepared, knows how to attack Taiwan, or whether it's good because he says, "Oh gee, this is a pretty tough battle and I wanna put this off," so we'll find out, but at least you have somebody in there to watch closely to see what he says about issues like Taiwan.

- Yeah, one thing Joe said, and amongst the others, which is very important, is, you know, I'm old enough to have lived through the original Cold War and-

- You're not the only one.

- No, but, you know, even in the worst points of that, there were channels of communication with Soviet Union and they were maintained and they were considered important and there were guardrails built to try and stop things escalating out of control, and what concerns me

most in the relationship is with the arrogance in Washington, the arrogance in Beijing, those channels aren't there, and you can see a situation where you have an incident, an accident at the local level, which can, you know, expand very quickly and no one really knows how to be dealing with it because those channels have not been tried, and in fact they don't actually exist.

- Hopefully we don't have a Pt3. I just, one comment, you know, the Biden administration has cast foreign relations in general, and particularly with China, into this contest between democracy and autocracy. You're not gonna create a peaceful, stable world with that framework. It just will not work, and something that a journalist ought to push back against.

- Well I think it is a problem, right, because there's like good guys and bad guys.

- Yeah.

- In how you cover things, but then that does create a problem for international relations, and I think the sort of democratization of public opinion when it comes to foreign policy could make it really difficult, right?

- Yeah.

- So, you know, witness Obama met, I don't remember who in Asia, and then he got attacked for bowing as he shook his hand. You know, like, it's this very personalized kind of nastiness makes it difficult for politicians to act in the sort of national interest, which is something that MOFA has been saying for a long time about the Chinese, you know, neo-Maoists, and nobody was sure whether to believe them or not, but I think it's definitely a factor in the US. Yeah.

- On Taiwan, I think, I know this is on a lot of people's minds, and then, you know, journalists like to talk about Taiwan because, you know, this is something people want to see, right? You know, war is very terrible, but this is something that people want to see in newspapers. I still think that a war with Taiwan is very, very unlikely, even less likely than for example, China in the 1950s. You know, Mao actually was seriously considering war with Taiwan at the time in the early '50s. I think now it's very, very unlikely. Here are my two reasons. One is, you know, the rationale, you know, so in the last 10 years, this has been a topic in newspapers that, you know, Xi wanted to have a war with Taiwan, and then the rationale, even by a lot of the analysis, is Xi wanted to start a war to justify his third term, right, and then, you know, he wanted to start a war to say, you know, "Now we need a strong leader to lead the war, and we need a third term, fourth term leader," and then now he has a third term already, right? So that reason is gone. So he doesn't need to start a

war to justify anymore. The second reason, I think it's really important, how US has made it very clear that when there's a war between China and Taiwan, US will unequivocally intervene right, on behalf of Taiwan. I think that that has a huge impact on how Chinese government calculates the cost of the war. I think the war with Taiwan will be very, very costly and then China is very unlikely to win. Even they can win, right, the cost of governing Taiwan is very, very high. Just thinking about the cost of governing Hong Kong, right? Think about all the troubles Beijing is having and then, you know, thinking about the cost of governing Taiwan, that is just too much for Beijing.

- Yeah, I think Beijing was really taken aback by the strength of Western unity and sanctions of Russia. I think they thought it was gonna be like Crimea, that, you know, they'll be seeing grumblings and complaints, but after a few months things would go back normal. I think that is a major deterrent. I was just in Taiwan, and it was, people there were much calmer about this than people here, and it was so, "Yeah, but we've been living with us for 60, 70 years." But I thought one of the interesting things that I heard there was somebody said, you know, there's the pressure on domestic tech industries and other significant industries, but they were saying what was interesting to them was there'd been no moves against any Taiwanese businesses, which they felt was sort of reassuring.

- So one last question before I turn it open to the audience. One of the images lasting from this Party Congress was of course the former general secretary Hu Jintao being escorted from the hall, so I just wanted to ask if anyone wanted to weigh in on the tapes, or how you read the videos, which have now been broken down frame by frame, who is displaced by, who threw who down, what and when. Any commentary from this panel?

- So having stood where the cameras were standing, I was one of the people looking at all the frames, and, you know, what happens is the Great Hall of the People is really large, first of all, and there's kind of a stage, it's like a huge stage, right, and they're all lined up there, and then there's the ground floor and the second floor and then there's the mezzanine up here, which is what all the journalists are, and so initially when this first broke, and we saw this short clip, I thought, "Wow, that's a really cold move." You know, you wait till the foreign journalists come in and then you kick the old guy out, right? It's almost Shakespearian, and it's theatricality, but now I've seen the longer clips and it looks like what was happening was the foreign journalists, you know, you come in and there's all this clanking around and they're all setting up their cameras and focusing, and you know, they were kind of focusing around and checking out who's who, and you can see in the corner of, I think it's Channel News Asia's camera. So if you wanna see the really extended dance version, you Google Channel News Asia, Hu Jintao, and Hu Jintao keeps like going like this, and then Li Zhanshu takes his stuff and puts it back



down, and Hu Jintao picks it up, and it does look like he thinks he's about to give a speech or something, and Li Zhanshu is really treating him like an old grandfather who's kind of lost it, you know, and I have a family with a lot of elderly people, so I know the body language of this, and then finally Xi Jinping... and unfortunately at this exact moment, somebody walks in front of the camera, but you can see Xi Jinping telling the orderlies to come over, and then explaining to them again about these papers. You know, he's pointing to Hu, and he's like, "The papers, the Hu, the papers, the Hu," and then they come in and take him off. So it really, though I first thought it was premeditated, I have now totally switched my view, and I really think that they were dealing with somebody who, you know, you'd think that these people just sit there like stuffed shirts, but in fact it seemed like he was really confused and that Xi was worried that there was gonna be this commotion next to him throughout the ceremony. So that was sort of my read on the longer one. You have a different opinion?

- No, I don't. I don't see the positive value for Xi Jinping in , you know, having at that point humiliating Hu Jintao who's already humiliated enough, but my view on it is probably as valuable as Chen Min'er at the 19th Party Congress, his successor.

- I think he still might be right about Chen Min'er. Who knows.

- Taking the long view.

- Yeah, I also think, you know, Xi Jinping doesn't need to publicly humiliate Hu Jintao because, you know, kicking out Li Keqiang, kicking out Hu Zhengwai it's already enough to do instead. He doesn't need to, you know, put the drama on the stage at the time, and also, you know, now all the media is focusing on that event, which is, you know, stealing attention from Xi Jinping himself, that's something that Xi didn't want to do.

- I want journalists to take a very strong directional microphone so they can tell what Hu Jintao said to Xi Jinping.

- So let me open up the audience members. I don't know, do we have a roving mic? So if you have a question. I'm just gonna ask, just to get the conversation started, if there are any students in the audience who have questions, let's take a few students questions first, if there are any students. Okay, we will open up to general questions, and again, if you would please identify yourself before asking the question. So we have a question over here.

- We're gonna run the longest way around.

- Just shout.

- Okay, I'm not shouting. and then now I'm a fellow at the Ash Center.

So my question for all today's panelists is say that if you have one minute face-to-face with Xi Jinping and then you have that one minute to make a recommendation about what he or China should do in the current situation, what will that be? And also a follow up to that. Now you have this one minute with Biden. What would you tell Biden?

- Well, I think on the Biden one minute, I think Joe, Lucy and I will pretty much answer that, that it needs a more nuanced and sophisticated approach on how to deal with China, which in, you know, really does go back to what they talked about earlier, you know, being confronted, but also being cooperative. With Xi Jinping, I suppose it would be, I mean, you can't, if you've only got a minute, you're not gonna get into any details of any policies, so I think it would be just be simply to keep himself open to different voices and different opinions, and to try and weigh those seriously.

- That's why you'd only get one minute.

- Well, I don't think I'd even get a minute. I'd get about 10 seconds, I think, you know, having just written 500 pages of historical nihilism, I don't get that at all.

- You know, I mean obviously Xi Jinping would not take any advice from me or my ilk. You know, one of the interesting things about the work report, and there weren't very many, was that he really criticized the weakening of the party in the past, presumably Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, that you were on a downward slope, and I didn't particularly see it that way. There were elements of that around, certainly, but it was also an opportunity for China to really build rule of law, to build a significant state, which is of course what Xi does not want because that means a weakened party, but it seems to me that that would help solve the problems that we've been talking about this hour, as we see, Xi's constricted view of politics clashing probably with some of the economic things that he probably should be doing. So I think he'd say it was a misreading of history and I don't think he would agree at all, and I'd have less time in there than Tony.

- I, you know, I have two versions of this. I think the one version is what I wish to say, and then the second version is what I will actually say. I will say the first version. The thing I will actually say is, stop zero Covid and import a modern health administration. That's what I would say. Then the things I wish would say is, so President Xi, think about your legacy, right? You'll be more likely to be remembered if you, in history, right, be remembered in history if you open up China, right, make China better, and then if you keep doing what you're doing now, you will be hated in history. That's what I want to say.

- Right here.

- [Audience] Hello, I'm a general history student. My question is, there are so many rumors or speculation about the reopening of China these days, but Xi just reinstated the system of the zero COVID policy in the Party Congress, so what do you think of those rumors and what's your own speculation here.

- You think of the what?

- The rumors about zero COVID.

- Yuhua just said.

- So it's important to think about the reasons why they started zero COVID policy. You know, there are a lot of rumors about the reasons why they started zero COVID, but for me, I think one of the most important reasons is, think about, you know, Chinese cities, even some of the smaller cities, and now the provincial capitals, you know, the cities, also the provincial capitals, they have millions of people, then, you know, imagine 10% of those people get sick and then they all go to the hospital. That would crash the local public health system. I think that's probably the most important reason they started zero COVID, and then I don't think that reason has disappeared, right, because, you know, once you open up, there will still be, you know, 5% or 10% of people who get sick, and then they want to go to hospital, so the same worry continues. So I think those rumors saying, for example, one of the rumors say in March, March 2023, they will open up, but I don't think there will be a timeline. I think it really depends on the situation of the pandemic. As long as there's local spreading, and as long as the central government worries about local public power systems, I think it won't completely opened up, but I do think that gradually they can do this, but not very sudden.

- I think you have to remember that from China's point of view, zero COVID has been a real success, right? So the point of zero COVID was to have as few deaths as possible from COVID, and that seems like that. That was what was handed down, right, to everybody. No deaths, no COVID. That's it, right? And, sort of, other things are peripheral problems then. So it's been a success. So what has to happen is to change the metric for what is success, right, so that every local government official now has a different metric, you know, other than stop COVID. So I think that the rumors, and this is why I take them seriously, that what spread on Weibo was a document that said that a committee was being set up or a working group, and that Wang Huning, who is the chief sort of ideologue, would be in charge of it, and what people read into that is that that would be a way that you're shifting the public perception in China and the public messaging from zero COVID to something else, and that there's something else would allow them to kind of back out of the corner that they painted themselves in. That still seems very plausible to me. It's just you don't know when exactly that would happen, but in China, you know, covering

China, things can shift very, very quickly as soon as the KPI or the key performance indicator for the local official changes, and the minute that changes, things will change the next day and it'll be like it never happened, right? So it's just a question of when and how they change that.

- The thing I would add to what you guys said is more than the city's problem is the rural healthcare system. I mean, if COVID got loose in the countryside, it would be devastating. You really would be looking at millions of deaths, I think. Then I think there's other things they can do. Vaccine nationalism has made it more problematic for China, that their vaccines work but not work so effectively, so you could improve the quality of vaccines, which would help, and then what they're doing now, having ignored the elderly, they're now rolling out campaigns to get vaccinations for the elderly to provide protection. Then I think what they could do, and I think this is what they will start doing, is I think before the Party Congress, it was, whatever it was, a hundred lockdowns or whatever. I think a lot of that was local officials just showing fealty to Xi Jinping and not wanting to make a mistake as much as doing it out of the kind of health logic, so there, I think Lucy is right. If some kind of metric is laid down, you know, local officials will respond to that and then you might not get so many random severe lockdowns which could improve, gradually, the situation.

- Question back over there, and then if whoever has a second mic, if you wanna hand it to another hand that goes up, that way we can keep the flow going.

- [Audience] Thank you for this grand emporium. I'm at Brown law school. So I have a question about the concept about Chinese modernizations and if this should strengthen my confidence. So the Washington Post commented on this, the China's modernization process, like the party had already created a new choice and narrative with a unique path to modernization a nod to China's image as an alternative to Western democratic. So I was wondering whether this concept could be a key concept which dominated in the following years, both domestically and internationally, and I wanted to hear your understanding of this concept.

- I'm not sure I heard all that.

- Yeah, I'm not sure.

- Yeah, I mean, I don't think that's a new concept. I think it's something that Xi has, you know, made more prominent, but there's always been this notion that China will go its own route, and won't be, you know, upset by western notions of modernization, and so forth. I can recall some of that, certainly in the 1990s, so I think this has been around for a long time. Xi, of course, has made a much bigger

deal, if you will, of maintaining the party in power, which goes back to some of the fears that Tony mentioned, and you know, he's made a much bigger deal of not being upset by the what universal values, so forth. So I think the question is whether there's some compatibility between his notion of Chinese modernization and maintaining a harmonious world order. You know, he really has much more of an anti-western sense than certainly Jiang Zemin or Hu Jintao, not to mention Deng Xiaoping, and so I think that that's the key there in understanding his notions of Chinese modernity, yeah.

- Can I also add that it's not modernization per se, it's modernization in the areas defined by the state. So any of you who have WeChat Wallet versus Bank of America here know that Chinese online finance is really very, very, very much more modern than American online finance, right? WeChat Wallet is so great, and you can do so many things in the WeChat financial universe, and that's really modern, right? It's like ahead of the whole world, but for some reason the Chinese state doesn't recognize that as the kind of modernization they want, right? So they want modernization or science modernization that's very explicitly tied to the state schools but not necessarily tied to the goals of, you know, consumers who use it. So that's sort of an irony that I've always found and never really understood about how China approaches modernization.

- Yeah, but I think in terms of policy, I mean, there's a bundle of things that he's put under Chinese style modernization, all of which have policy consequences. It starts with party absolute leadership then there's common prosperity as a major goal. The state dominance within the economy, and then it talks about whatever the phrase is for all around people's, or complete people's democracy. So he does have like six sort of headings underneath what he says is Chinese style modernization, and those, I think, are indicators of what policy will be moving forward.

- [Audience] First, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity for all the students and scholars to discuss and learn. So my question is short and simple. Very recently the German representatives including a lot of German enterprises, and the Prime Minister of Germany, which just came to China and had a very quick tour, and it seems like they went pretty well on, you know, cooperating in recent issues and then future plans, and I wanna know, do you guys think, is it like a thought camouflage for, you know, like releasing a signal of, "Oh, we're reopening again," or do you think it is really something in the central Politburo, they have some minds changed and they really think about finding something different, as people thought about, you know, getting locked down and getting way back before open to reform economy policy.

- And can you identify yourself?

- [Audience] I'm someone very passionate about what's going around the world. So that's who I am.

- I'm sorry, we do have a rule at Harvard that if you're asking a question, you do identify yourself. So could you please?

- [Audience] I'm a student here in Boston. Yeah. If that's the only matter?

- I'd like to ask. This is an open hall, right? We do have an open discussion system, but that I would like, I mean, unless... if you could just identify yourself by name.

- [Audience] By name? Why?

- Others here have been doing that, right? So, it is a rule that we have here at the Fairbank Center for open discussion, right? It is a rule.

- [Audience] Well I wasn't notified about such a rule. I mean-

- Okay, I mean if you'd like we can move on to the next question then, right? I do want to just state that, right? I mean, we do support an open questioning policy but I do want to just also iterate it is important that we make sure that every speaker is identified when you ask a question, so you don't wish to, so I can move on.

- [Audience] I guess you can call me Ken, if that's possible.

- Moving on.

- Speakers, do you wish to move on, or do you wish to?

- I guess my interpretation, just very shortly, I think my interpretation is, because China knows that US China relations are not gonna improve in the next 10 years, maybe, and then I think Europe will be the next partner, possible partner for China, right, for both trade, you know, for direct investment, you know, technology, so I think that's, and Germany is the leader of Europe, so I think that's my interpretation. It's not about, you know, sending a signal, but just, you know, shifting the target from the US to Europe.

- Okay. Ready for that next question over here. Please again, just, I did state this at the beginning, if you can please identify yourself before you ask your question.

- [Audience] I'm Yu Penglai I'm a student on the Harvard IRA program and my question is about, at some point we mentioned, it looks like a reverse from the rule made by Deng Xiaoping, however, I was wondering what about another perspective that is economy development by the

government, what is the center of policy making and efficiency. Do you think like if we are deviating from that path, also, so would it be sent, would economic development still matter for the CCP, and what will make bring change to maybe the future economic development model? Thank you.

– Thank you.

– I get the economics questions. I think economic development matters very much to the CCP. It's just how they define it, and what they see, right? So, you know, one of the really valuable reforms of the Hu Jintao administration was to try to have Chinese statistics reflect, much better, things that were not SOEs, right? So in terms of the population, right, so not just reflecting their urban SOE workforce but also reflecting migrants, and where they actually are, and then in terms of the SOEs, not just reflecting... you know, I dealt a lot with steel, I covered steel a lot, and you'd see really ridiculous statistics coming out of the China Iron and Steel Association, which only showed the steel that was being produced by SOE steel makers, and 50% of the steel at the time was being produced by private steel companies, right? So I think one of the problems is, you know, when we first learned computer programming in like fifth grade or whatever, and they said, you learned garbage in, garbage out. So you know, I think the Chinese state sees a certain subset of the Chinese economy in very sharp relief, and they have kind of a fuzzy view of the rest of the Chinese economy, and so I don't think it's that economic development doesn't matter, it's just that they're responding to signals that are very distorted from one part of the economy, and I think you can see that behavior, especially as Xi has shut down a lot of these reforms that Hu and Wen tried to put in to give them more visibility. You know, those channels have been shut back down, right? Private industry associations have been kind of shut down. Foreign and Chinese investment banks have been pressured not to give their real opinion. You know, local governments, local officials, they've got to baba, and show they're going by 80%, they can't admit that they didn't grow this year, right? So all of that creates this kind of systemic blindness. So I think Xi probably thinks he is doing the very best thing he can for the economy. I just don't think he's got very good information coming in.

– [Audience] I'm Bill Xiao, I'm retired, but I have a political question, I'm a student of politics. Before the 20th Party Congress, there's great deal of speculation that the Communist Party would change its constitution and put Xi's thoughts and ideology into the Communist Party constitution to make that guiding principle, but that did not seem to happen. What does that indicate to you?

– I remember those rumors, they were around, and there is a rumor that, for whatever it's worth, that the elders somehow blocked that. You know, on the other hand, Xi Jinping has at least one more bite at

the apple. So, you know, hold that rumor, and it may be very useful in five years. It certainly doesn't affect his rule. That will stay the same.

- Yeah, I mean he certainly got in all the key things that were important into the constitution. So at this point I should think he'd be, you know, satisfied with that, and it's not a very, doesn't trip lightly off the tongue, his thought, so I think as Joe says, I mean he is got another several years that eventually it could just be Xi Jinping thought, but, you know, the iterations in which his thought for the new era is being used, confirms that his ideas and his views on whatever the subject is, is the dominant guiding principle for China moving forward.

- So I still see lots of hands in the audience and we can take the two questions over here and if I can ask, we run a mic over to this side of the room, which hasn't had a chance to ask questions. So the two questions here.

- [Audience] Thank you for your speech. My name is Gu Di, I have a question about Taiwan. So yeah, as Taiwan has a very strong semiconductor industry and it contributes to half of the chip production of the world, but due to the tension between the US and China, and considering the security reasons, do you think that the semiconductor industries will be put out?

- And can we take the question from the gentleman in front of you.

- [Audience] My name is Asa Dremner, I'm with the Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement. I'm asking about Burns. I would hopeful that somehow his presence in Beijing would make some difference. Does it, or I am just too naive?

- So, if people wish to take on any of the questions then we'll close the said two questions.

- Go ahead.

- Well yeah, I mean, certainly companies like TSMC are gonna have to reconsider their strategies, and you know, I think we have to be careful when we're talking about the chip production. I mean, what the US is blocking is really the advanced levels, and I was just in Taiwan, as I said, and so I was speaking to some people in this and they weren't really worried. They think, basically, China at best is 10 to 15 years behind, and only if they can bring in the right experts to sort of work on the development. So they sort of feel that they can still keep producing lower grade chips, and that's fine, but more of their advanced production, they're really looking for moving that, or keeping that away from China. On Nick, I guess the advantage with Nick is that, you know, he's just a very senior person, you know, from the



career service. But, you know, in the current situation he has to do whatever it is Washington is pursuing as its policy. He doesn't have a lot of lateral, really, I think, to move within that. As Joe said, there's not a lot of channels of communication at the moment, and he can't really travel around the country either. So it's not much a-

- By consensus, he doesn't have much of a channel to Washington either.

- Well that's part of the problem. I mean, I think, I forget, I think it's when Jim Sasser was appointed, a lot of people said, well, might not know lot about China now, but it's someone who can talk directly to the president and that's really what you want in a position.

- Yeah.

- Can I take the final set of two questions.

- [Audience] My name is from the school My question is to an earlier discussion about proposing a new narrative or framing for US China relations. I wonder, because the current framing is autocracy versus democracy, and I wonder what Taiwan means within this framing, because for decades Taiwan has been emblematic, almost as an advertisement for the US camp as a native democracy, as opposed to China, so I just wonder, any alternative branding, what does that mean to Taiwan? And I was thinking the branding domestically into Taiwan, it means a lot to remind Chinese people or what it is to be protected and preserved beyond this near existence and light. So I just wonder what could be a new narrative, if any is needed, and what does that mean for China? I'll pass onto my colleague.

- [Audience] Thank you. There are several here. Yeah, and my question will be, because now we're trying, we all know that currently war might not be possible, but we're trying to prepare for that, including the war situation, but for us, because war would like change the way we live, so we are trying to find a way to like, or to, by the way, to understand how CCP or Xi will behave in the future. So my question would be, we know that under this circumstances it will be become more difficult, but is this still possible, or how can we like predict the behavior of decision making of CCP or Xi in the future? I wanna ask that is because, maybe currently, now there's no reason for him to raise a war, but that reason might disappear in the future under a different situation, like maybe the economy development or maybe other factors. Yeah, and we know little about the military, the PLA, something, and other different scenario. Maybe the war will be less costly for Xi, or maybe he just want to find something to be his history legacy or something. So, and we all know that it's hard to predict his behavior, just like Professor Wang said.

- Can I ask you to identify yourself?

- [Audience] Oh, my name is Yo Hao. I'm a law student at Harvard. Yeah, thank you. So ask my question again.

- To summarize, what should Taiwan do?

- How to predict what Xi Jinping will do in the future? Read Renmin Ribao. I say that half facetiously, but it's also a medium for the party to signal what its intentions are, and I really think that if you look at the official press consistently, they'll tell you what their priorities are. I don't think this is hidden. I think that if they really wanna attack Taiwan, you'll find some very serious signals in the pages of the official media. The description of democracy versus autocracy, I don't, I mean we went through a whole cold war without using that sort of phraseology. I don't think we wanna put China in a, to be provocative to China. We would like to, I think, defend or have Taiwan defend itself, but I don't think that that framing helps Taiwan at all. It makes it much more the focus of that contestation, and that's not good for Taiwan.

- I think it's a valid point though, right? Because in Washington, especially among the hawks, that becomes the main justification, right?

- I worry about the hawks, and maybe not even the hawks in Washington, using Taiwan to get at China, and that is really dangerous for Taiwan.

- I think I really admired the creativity of Taiwan over the last 20 years, and its public global persona, and you know, I think the extent to which you can build that sort of soft power and popular goodwill is very helpful in not having politicians think that Taiwan is a bargaining chip that could be bargained away, right? Because you're however many tens of millions of real live people, right? So, you know, I think Taiwan's been really creative doing that so far, and it's a tough job, but I think that that's, you know, helpful to the extent it can be done, right, to create an identity for Taiwan and a perception that Taiwan is a place with an identity. I think that that's helpful in terms of the public debate.

- So then I wanna take a moment to thank all of you for coming out on this Tuesday evening to be here with us. Let me make three announcements before I close. The first is there's been quite a bit of discussion about US China relations. I just want to remind all of you that the Fairbank Center, along with the Ash Center at the Harvard Kennedy School will be hosting a conference next Friday. It will also be live streamed, but please do register. That's focused on Coexistence 2.0, the US China relations.

- Is there a fee for registering?

- No, this is an open-

- Free.

- It's a free open conference, but I need to know, for those of you who have not registered to please do so, okay. The second point that I just wanna make is we've got a lot of discussions about the Chinese political system and we have several experts here who've written widely about it, and so forth, but I do want remind all of you in the audience that today's election day in the United States and the polls remain open, and for those of you who have not voted, please do do so, because democracy depends on all of us participating as active citizens. The third thing is to just note, for those of you who have voted, there is a set of drinks outside for you to continue the conversation. So please do join me in thanking all of our panelists today. Thank you very much, and thank you, and good day for visiting online.