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12 July 2022

ICA 2022-14218

Chinese Communist Party Strengthening Control, Countering Threats Through 2027

(U) This Intelligence Community Assessment was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for East Asia. It was drafted by the National Intelligence Council [REDACTED]

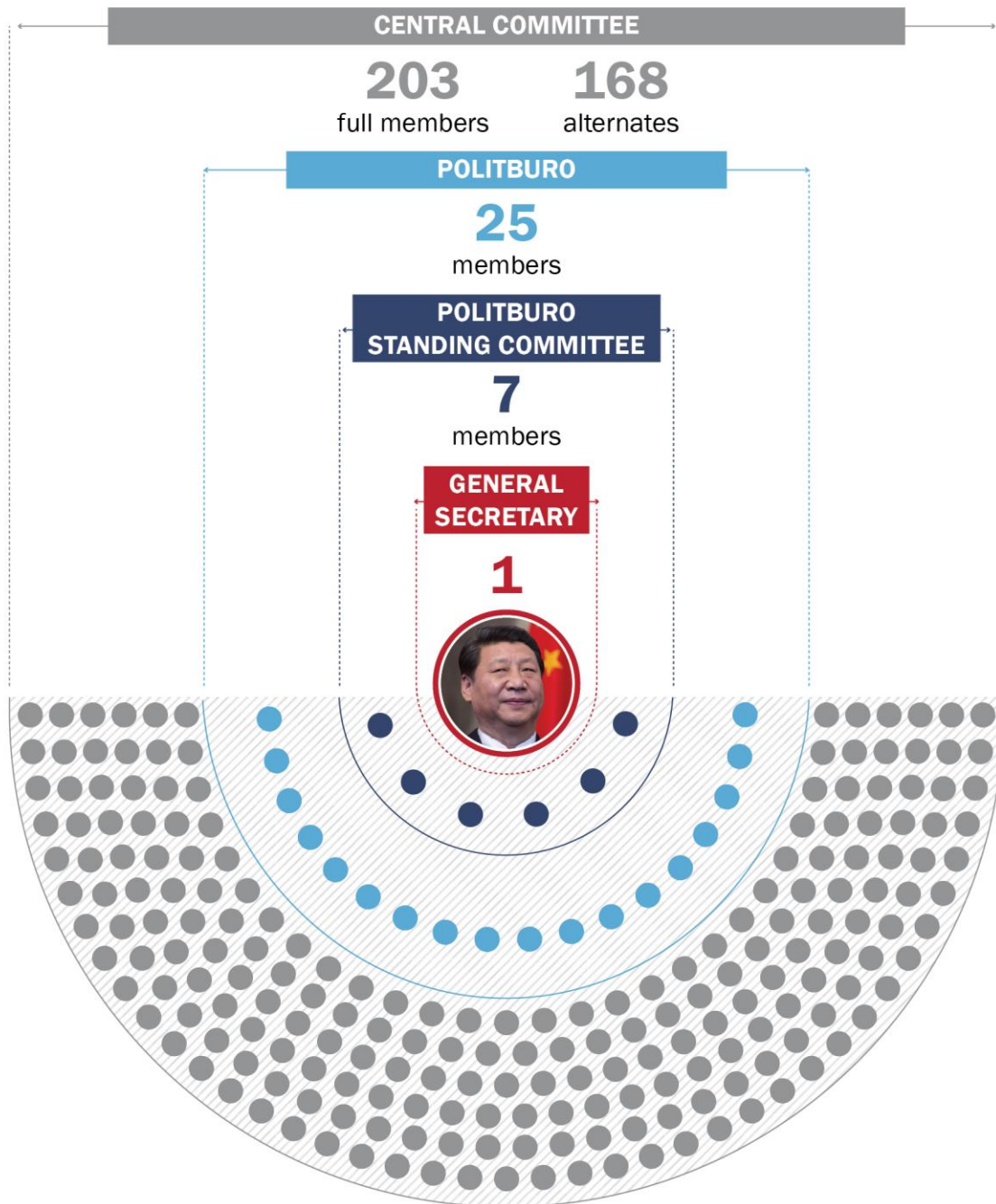
Classified By: [REDACTED] | Derived From: [REDACTED] |

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(U) Chinese Communist Party Hierarchy

(U) The Chinese Communist Party is run by a series of increasingly elite executive bodies, led by the General Secretary.

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(U) Key Takeaway

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is making substantial efforts to strengthen itself and its rule within China, even as China's global activities increasingly command international attention. CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping and other CCP leaders are gambling that greater centralization will improve the Party's hold on power and position it to weather any forthcoming popular, economic, or foreign policy headwinds.

- The IC assesses that during the next five years, the Party's focus on increasing control over all aspects of China's state and society will generate manageable risks at home while increasingly challenging US and other countries' interests abroad and constricting opportunities for engagement.
- We have moderate confidence in these judgments

Key Judgment 1: We assess that the CCP during the next five years will continue strengthening top-down control of its members and policy implementation to address past weaknesses and to better position the Party to handle coming challenges. In recent years, CCP statements and reforms have stressed the leadership and preeminence of the Party in law-based governance across every field, cementing a vision that the CCP should be involved in every aspect of society and reversing the earlier generation's efforts to separate governance spheres for the state and the Party.

Key Judgment 2: During the next five years, the CCP probably will grow more successful at preempting challenges to its rule and preventing dissatisfied individuals from mobilizing, even as its sweeping controls alienate some of China's citizens. The CCP increasingly will rely on technical tools to complement robust grassroots efforts aimed at creating a cycle in which the Party gathers information about citizens and uses tailored actions and propaganda to tout the CCP's responsiveness. We judge that this approach will continue to be undergirded by well-financed, repressive tools that probably will preempt challenges long before dissatisfied individuals and groups can pose real threats to the Party.

Key Judgment 3: The CCP's belief that domestic and foreign threats are inextricably linked probably will drive China's more assertive behavior abroad and constrain opportunities for direct US engagement. We assess that the CCP is turning from a reactive defense of China's national security to a more proactive, and at times preemptive approach to tackling threats abroad. As China's bolder actions increasingly touch on other countries' domestic interests, this probably will energize and expand constituencies that will look to work with the United States against China.

(U) Scope Note

[REDACTED] This IC-coordinated Intelligence Community Assessment addresses the prospects for the CCP to enhance its resilience and constrain US and foreign engagement during the next five years as it strengthens control over CCP members and China's Government, security services, and people. In 2021, the CCP celebrated its 100th anniversary, and later this year it will appoint senior leaders for the 20th Central Committee (2022-27). This ICA focuses on the institutional and policy changes that underlie these leadership changes and are designed to strengthen the Party's ability to weather any forthcoming popular, economic, or foreign policy headwinds.

(U) This ICA focuses on the CCP rather than the state to highlight our assessments of the political goals and CCP institutions that will shape the eventual actions by government ministries and other state institutions. The CCP is tightly interwoven into the People's Republic of China (PRC), and some government leaders or offices have concurrent CCP titles or roles. For example, CCP General Secretary Xi is concurrently the President; the CCP's number two leader, Li Keqiang, is concurrently the Premier.

(U) Our key assumptions for this assessment are:

- [REDACTED] The CCP will continue to rule China.
- [REDACTED] Xi will retain power through at least 2027.
- [REDACTED] Senior CCP members view their fate as tied to the Party's and will avoid making any schism public.

(U) Key Gaps

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]



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(U) Discussion

(U) As the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shifts from celebrating its centenary in 2021 to kicking off a new five-year term at the 20th Party Congress this November, General Secretary Xi Jinping's leadership and China's global activities are commanding the spotlight and diverting outside attention from the substantial domestic efforts to strengthen the Party and its staying power. Xi exhibits some traits of a personalist authoritarian leader who concentrates power to serve his interests, but he also believes that centralization will strengthen the Party and be a defining pillar of his legacy. He and other leaders are taking robust strides to lock in corrective measures to address past Soviet and CCP failures to avoid internal decay, popular revolution, and foreign influences. They also seek to create an authoritarian model that they can tout as being responsive to citizens' concerns and more "democratic" than US and European democracies.

Strengthening the Party From the Top

Key Judgment 1: We assess that the CCP during the next five years will continue strengthening top-down control of its members and policy implementation to address past weaknesses and to better position the Party to handle coming challenges. In recent years, CCP statements and reforms have stressed the leadership and preeminence of the Party in law-based governance across every field, cementing a vision that the CCP should be involved in every aspect of society and reversing the earlier generation's efforts to separate governance spheres for the state and the Party,

Tightening Control of Members

Instilling Purpose in People. We assess that the CCP under Xi is reviving its focus on ideological and political loyalty with the goal of increasing accountability within the Party, reversing the loss of purpose, and avoiding the venal self-interest that leaders fear undermines CCP rule. Political campaigns that stress ideological uniformity and Xi's authority complement the CCP's sweeping efforts to strengthen cohesion through Party discipline and monitoring,

- In 2013, the CCP issued a scathing internal criticism that party members had abetted the "infiltration" of US and foreign ideas and values, Since then, the CCP has issued a series of plans for resolving political problems through more rigorous ideological education that stresses Party loyalty, Xi as the core of the CCP, and Leninist deference to orders from the top, according to open-source reporting.
- Xi and other CCP leaders view corruption and weak discipline as existential threats to the Party and since 2012 have waged a high-profile anticorruption campaign that has purged previously untouchable elite "tigers" and investigated nearly one million lower-level "flies," according to open-source reporting. A powerful internal watchdog, strict financial reporting requirements, and roving inspection teams have increased discipline and probably decreased graft, although a steady stream of cases suggests corruption and bribery persist,

(U) A Tale of Two Parties

(U) The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has extensively studied the collapse of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) to try to avoid its fate, refining these takeaways in recent years to emphasize the virtues of CCP authoritarian tendencies and closing the door to political reforms. The CCP celebrated its centenary in 2021 and in 2023 it will outlast the USSR's 74-year run.

(U) The CCP has concluded that the CPSU lost its way because of internal fights over ideology and ultimately caved to external pressure. Xi Jinping has encapsulated this view throughout his tenure in speeches, saying that no one was "man enough" to stand up for the CPSU, and exhorting CCP cadres to more assiduously defend the CCP.

- (U) A recent CCP documentary about the fall of the CPSU blamed former Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts to introduce Western democratic reforms and former Russian President Boris Yeltsin's efforts to privatize state-owned enterprises, underscoring the CCP's renewed commitment to tight political and economic controls.
- (U) Some academics argue the CPSU lost popular support, but recent CCP academics argue that any public dissatisfaction was stoked by foreign forces, stoking nationalist defenses of the CCP and possibly blinding CCP leaders to domestic sources of discontent.
- (U) The CCP is also wary of the pitfalls of the CPSU's sclerotic leadership and uses formal and informal age limits to minimize the risks of a gerontocracy and to keep younger leaders engaged. Since the 1990s, the Politburo for the most part has followed a "seven up, eight down" norm of retiring members who turn 68 by the quinquennial Party Congress, but the average age of top CCP leaders has been creeping upward in recent years.



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- [REDACTED] The CCP has increased administrative, managerial, and ideological training for members while sharply curtailing overseas training, judging from academic research, possibly to minimize foreign influence. CCP efforts to inculcate ideology and require members to publicly affirm it are increasingly entrenched, even though vague or patronizing ideological training probably bores members, [REDACTED].
[REDACTED] We assess that this will boost the Party's capacity to push policies from the center while slowing the advance of what academic research suggests are marginally more liberal economic views among younger cadres.

[REDACTED] Building Change Through Institutions. We assess that China's leaders have expanded and strengthened the core CCP institutions responsible for recruiting, training, and overseeing personnel, probably making the CCP less vulnerable to the vagaries of individual leaders. Even at the apex of the Party, where Xi holds outsized sway, the CCP has routinized the processes for adjudicating interagency interests, [REDACTED] thereby centralizing decisionmaking higher in the bureaucracy. Critically, these institutions are designed to constrain downward and have little or no ability to check the exercise of power by senior CCP leaders.

- (U [REDACTED]) The CCP has formalized and elevated several commissions and central leading groups responsible for issues such as cyber, foreign affairs, and national security, ensuring that more leaders regularly oversee cross-cutting discussions that previously waxed and waned, judging from open-source reporting. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(U) Membership by the Numbers

(U) The CCP is the world's second largest political party after India's Bharatiya Janata Party, and CCP leaders have increased efforts to ensure that self-interested members do not weaken it from within. The CCP has more than 95 million dues-paying members, less than 7 percent of China's population. China's eight token non-CCP political parties, which are required to accept CCP leadership, have about 1.3 million members, according to China's State Council.

- [REDACTED] At one of the first Politburo meetings under his rule, Xi stressed the need to make the CCP more selective, and the acceptance rate for members temporarily plummeted. The application process takes several years and requires extensive training and sponsorship, [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] Despite the high-profile anticorruption campaign and more intense political scrutiny, membership applications have steadily increased in recent years and members still identify professional success and career advancement as key motivations for joining, [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] In 2019, for the first time more than half of CCP members were university educated and 80 percent of new members were under 35 years old. These new trends reflect CCP efforts to attract talent as well as reforms that curtailed the Communist Youth League's elite fast track to refocus it on youth outreach, [REDACTED]
- (U) Party membership notably diverges from China's gender demographics as women constitute less than 30 percent of the Party, only 8 percent of the Central Committee, and a single woman sits on the 25-person Politburo. No woman has ever been selected for the Politburo Standing Committee.

- [REDACTED] CCP leaders are expending considerable resources to deter Party members and government officials from feigning compliance with policy priorities, [REDACTED] In 2018, they created the National Supervisory Commission as a new branch of government interwoven with the CCP's internal watchdog, the Central Discipline Inspection Commission. This expansion along with a 2020 law effectively extended party oversight to all civil servants, according to open-source reporting.
- (U [REDACTED]) CCP Organization Departments at each level of party, state, and local government have expanded oversight of promotions and transfers including evaluating views from senior officials, poor performance by subordinates, and failures in past posts, according to academic research. We

assess that these measures narrow the loopholes that had enabled corrupt networks, scapegoating, and short-term schemes that hurt the CCP's governance and credibility.

[REDACTED] Stressing Top-Down Implementation

[REDACTED] **Elevating Decisionmaking and Oversight.** We assess that CCP efforts to strengthen central control of local and lower-level officials are improving policy alignment with central government intent. Steeper penalties for perceived deviations or failures probably are stifling some local innovation and undermining what has been a key source of CCP resilience, but leaders are gambling that they can incentivize sufficient action through more intense supervision, [REDACTED]

(U) Following the Leader

During the next five years, we assess that the CCP probably will continue a secretive and diffused approach to succession that maximizes political control. The CCP lacks rules for General Secretary succession and Xi Jinping has not publicly tapped a successor, probably to avoid creating a competing center of power and to keep options open while testing several younger leaders. We assess Xi will begin a third term as General Secretary in 2022 and will seek to retain preeminent influence even after that term ends in 2027, when he will be 74 years old.

- (U) Xi is only the third General Secretary to serve concurrently as President, and only one top leader ceded all party and state titles after two terms, underscoring the shallow nature of elite norms.
- The General Secretary has not always been preeminent, and some leaders have ruled without formal titles. The CCP retired the role of party Chairman after Mao, but some have speculated that Xi may try to revive this fraught title to retain influence after handing day-to-day power to a successor.
- (U) Xi is working to guide and constrain younger leaders by stressing the primacy of loyalty to the Party and by locking in his status and vision as the core of the CCP, not just the core of his generation.
- (U) We assess that future leaders are most likely to emphasize or deprioritize aspects of current policy rather than abruptly changing course and undermining the appearance of CCP unity and rectitude. In the same way, leaders have avoided repudiating Mao Zedong even as they acknowledge some of his past mistakes.

- As the CCP narrows the scope for differing views and deemphasizes “intra-party democracy,” or permissible internal debates, officials have less leeway to express concerns about the unsuitability of national policies to local realities. China’s intellectuals and academics may still offer options, particularly before leaders set a policy direction, but we assess that the shrinking space for competing schools of thought may result in more reactive and less-effective policy.

- Xi and other leaders routinely exhort local officials to avoid uniform targets and to tailor their methods to local conditions, judging from their public remarks, which provides a political balance intended to encourage local officials to solve problems as well as to hold them responsible for any policy failures to deflect blame from senior Party leaders or the Party itself. For example, from the earliest months of the COVID-19 outbreak to lockdowns early this year, official propaganda has contrasted central leaders with local scapegoats,

The CCP has updated cadre evaluation criteria for local officials, which incentivize sustained execution of Beijing’s priorities amid waves of political campaigns. The Party has softened the primacy of GDP growth in favor of criteria that are linked to balanced growth and responsive governance, including income inequality, environmental protection, and product safety.

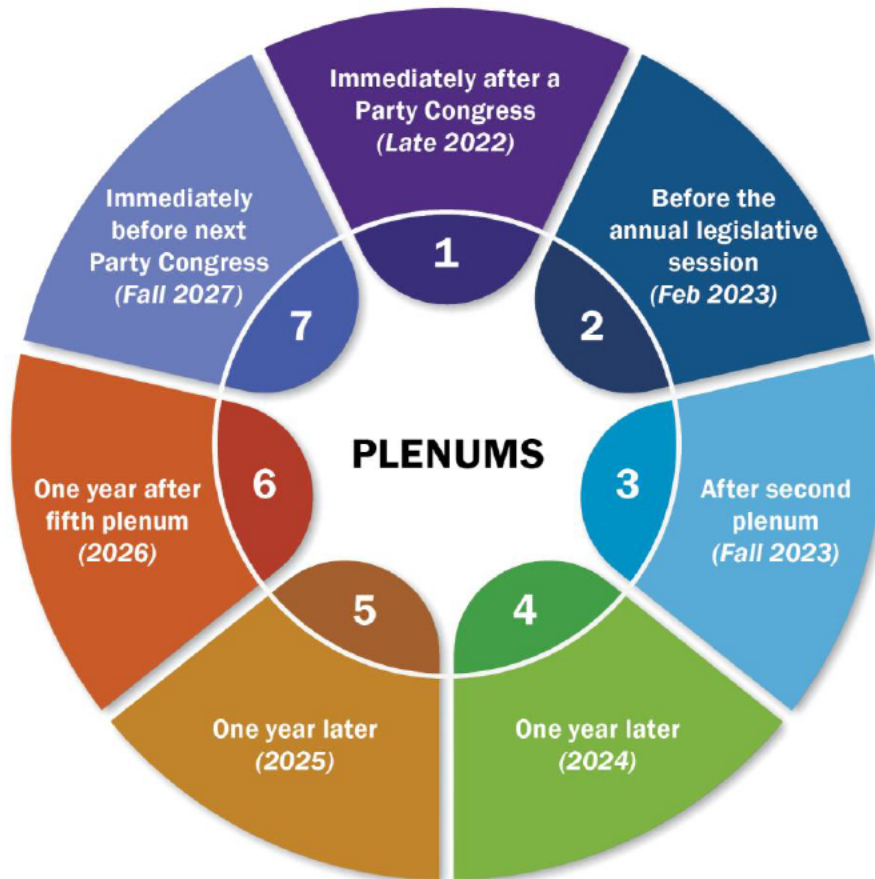
- In an expansion of a longstanding practice, Beijing more regularly dispatches lower levels of provincial and local officials across regions to mitigate the enduring risk of deeply entrenched local networks creating pockets of divided loyalty or deviating from the center’s priorities,

(U) Chinese Communist Party Calendar Key to Agenda

(U) The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in recent decades has operated on a steady political calendar that issues authoritative political guidance on the full range of policy topics to guide the state's actions as well

as personnel appointments. Party Congresses are held every five years and usher in a new Central Committee; the 20th Party Congress will be held in November 2022.

(U) This graphic is UNCLASSIFIED.



(U) This table is UNCLASSIFIED.

1	Approves the selection of top CCP leaders, endorsing prearranged choices for General Secretary, Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), and Politburo, as well as the PBSC's choices for the Secretariat and the Central Military Commission.
2	Approves the National People's Congress (NPC) agenda and recommended candidates for leadership posts in the State Council, the NPC, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Supreme People's Court, and the Procuratorate. Formal documents have focused on administrative reform, occasionally presaging major government restructuring.
3	Typically focuses on economic issues with strong ideological content, including the adoption of then paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's economic reform model in 1978.
4	Tends to focus on party and governance issues, including judicial topics.
5	Discusses and approves the draft Five-Year Plan for economic and social development, which is adopted formally by the NPC the following March.
6	Begins preparing for the next Party Congress, including highlighting top leaders' vision or ideological caption for the next Central Committee.
7	Makes final preparations for the Party Congress, officially sets the start date, and approves the work report to be presented by the CCP General Secretary.

Limits of Beijing's Control. Despite the steady drumbeat of centralization, we assess that local CCP officials will retain a degree of autonomy in implementation in part because of the sheer scale of the challenge of adjudicating conflicting priorities, local needs, and chronically unfunded mandates, [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED] Local officials are creative in trying to stay ahead of inspectors and falsify deliverables, for example, swaddling local pollution monitors in cotton to stymie the automated collection of air quality data that could harm their performance metrics, [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] Even if Beijing eventually catches and punishes local officials who lie or hide information—as in the case of the Zhengzhou leaders who were sacked for covering up deaths during large floods in 2021, [REDACTED]—we assess that delays may cost the center additional time and resources to respond effectively, harming the CCP's image.
- [REDACTED] Local officials also retain some authority to make concessions to defuse public protests or prevent citizen groups from taking their grievances to senior leaders where they could hurt local officials' promotion prospects, [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] However, some local officials may regard it as politically safer to overzealously implement orders, perhaps exceeding Beijing's goals rather than taking the risk that a more flexible or conciliatory approach could earn them a black mark for failing to stifle local protests or to manage a COVID-19 outbreak, [REDACTED]



(U) Visitors photograph an image of CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping in the Museum of the Chinese Communist Party, which opened in 2021.

Strengthening the CCP as Sole Authority

Moving the Party to the Front.

We assess that the CCP's efforts to reassert and institutionalize its control over the military, government, and other centers of power will continue to erase even fragmentary toeholds for opposition. In addition, the increased codification of CCP ideology into China's state laws and regulations will make it more difficult for future officials to adjust or walk back the integration of the Party and state.

- [REDACTED] The CCP is strengthening its already tight control over the People's Liberation Army (PLA), including through more robust political oversight and accountability to the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), who is concurrently the CCP General Secretary. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and elevated the chief of military political discipline and inspection work to full CMC membership, [REDACTED]
- (U) In 2018, China implemented sweeping reforms affecting more than 80 percent of ministries to centralize party control and "perfect the institutions that hold up the party's comprehensive leadership." At the same time, China amended the state constitution to acknowledge the primacy of CCP rule, rather than just mentioning CCP leadership in the preamble, publicly noting that the Soviet Union

fell after removing communist leadership from Article 6 of its constitution.

- (U) The CCP has rejected experiments in the early 2000s with limited local elections and internal debate, and instead favors CCP outreach that engages citizens on its terms and avoids building up a cohort of public figures who could potentially oppose or critique Party leaders or actions, judging from academic research.
- (U) One third of China's nearly 3,000 legislative delegates serve concurrently in CCP or government posts, and the legislative standing committee continues to be overseen by a Politburo Standing Committee member, ensuring that the legislature never diverges from or tries to check the Party.
- [REDACTED] The CCP also has signaled that powerful entrepreneurs must align with the party. In late 2020, China abruptly suspended Ant Group's initial public offering after its founder criticized government regulations, triggering nearly \$300 billion in stock losses and underscoring Beijing's willingness to endure costs to assert greater control over a large technology firm and its influential leader, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] **Further Subsuming Potential Challenges.** We assess that the CCP will continue to preserve space for itself and its senior leaders to operate beyond the reach of the laws and regulations that it uses to constrain others. During the next few years, the CCP probably will focus on curtailing legal and media entities that could expose weaknesses in CCP governance, as well as restraining social groups that could present an organized alternative to the Party's rule, [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED] The CCP continues to codify its vision of the law as a political instrument and to professionalize the legal system while asserting control over outcomes in a wide swath of cases beyond traditionally sensitive human rights issues,

[REDACTED] China's push for "smart" courts also increases the CCP's control by moving cases further away from local authorities and ensuring outcomes are more consistent with party policy.

- (U) [REDACTED] In addition to reining in investigative outlets such as Caixin and critical academic journals such as Yanhuang Chunqiu that for years had operated successfully at the edges of acceptable discourse, the CCP is applying intense scrutiny to social media sites that it worries are building credibility as alternate sources of information, [REDACTED] The Cyberspace Administration of China has a list of approved news sources that excludes even long-established, private sources, and it has penalized companies for hosting "illegal information."
- [REDACTED] We assess that public disclosures of corruption and lawbreaking among elites have the potential to harm the Party's image and mobilize public grievances—as a 2022 documentary series did—but unauthorized disclosures increasingly come from former insiders living abroad, enabling China's censors to more easily mute the domestic impact, [REDACTED]

Protecting the Party From the People

[REDACTED] **Key Judgment 2:** During the next five years, the CCP probably will grow more successful at preempting challenges to its rule and preventing dissatisfied individuals from mobilizing, even as its sweeping controls alienate some of China's citizens. We assess that the CCP increasingly will rely on technical tools to complement robust grassroots efforts aimed at creating a cycle in which the Party gathers information about citizens and uses tailored actions and propaganda to tout the CCP's responsiveness. We judge that this approach will

(U) Parsing Xi's Critics

██████████ We assess that discontented voices within the Party reflect a diversity of views about the direction that Xi and other CCP leaders have chosen, but do not constitute a threat to Xi's leadership. The CCP rails against factions as a practical concern and as a Leninist way of articulating the importance of obedience, and it works to break up powerful networks that it worries could split the Party or subvert leaders. Despite such rhetoric, we see few credible signs of any CCP faction fighting Xi, and frustrated individuals would face high personal and professional risks trying to act on discontent as a group.

- ██████████ Retired leader Jiang Zemin is most frequently cited as the face of elite forces contesting Xi's control, but he is elderly and his "Shanghai gang" is fading in size and influence, ██████████
- ██████████ In 2020, retired and self-exiled Central Party School professor Cai Xia publicly wrote about Party dissent against Xi, and the CCP took the rare step of not just expelling her but freezing her assets, ██████████
██████████ This underscores the growing personal risk that even elite critics face.
- ██████████ That same year, Ren Zhiqiang, an elite gadfly nicknamed "Big Cannon Ren," was fined and sentenced to 18 years in prison on corruption charges after writing an essay that criticized "the emperor's new clothes."
██████████ the charges were a shot across the bow at other princelings—politically or financially powerful relatives of former and current CCP leaders—who might cross Xi.

continue to be undergirded by well-financed repressive tools that probably will preempt challenges long before dissatisfied individuals and groups can pose real threats to the Party.

**██████████ Gathering Information
Openly and Unobtrusively**

(U ██████████) **Listening and Asking for Views.** The CCP probably will continue to reap benefits from its investments in extensive networks of human interaction and digital tools that gather information about people's concerns and local performance to determine which officials or citizens warrant corrective action or additional scrutiny, judging from academic research. These overlapping feedback loops probably will help local and central CCP leaders to calibrate policies, but bureaucratic incentives are more likely to encourage local leaders to tighten or intensify implementation of Beijing's instructions.

- ██████████ The CCP is sustaining investments in human networks tasked with soliciting, monitoring, and compiling citizens' views, ██████████
██████████ The Party's massive "grid management" system of cadres and volunteers also divvies up coverage of work units and neighborhoods to gather and convey information about citizens ranging from tax compliance to COVID-19 outbreaks. Academic research concerning the CCP suggests that the Party's grassroots presence significantly improves policy implementation.
- ██████████ In recent years, Xi and other CCP leaders have publicly touted the "Fengqiao experience," which encourages local efforts to identify problems, report potential "troublemakers," and digitalize records that will eventually feed "smart city" programs by improving forecasts for where societal problems will emerge, ██████████
██████████ As part of these efforts, CCP cadres, local officials, and propaganda officials help manage public grievances, including by receiving online complaints and discouraging citizens from

using the petition process to take their concerns to Beijing, judging from academic research. Other officials regularly visit formerly incarcerated or unemployed individuals to deliver economic assistance, ask about their needs, and try to encourage positive views of the CCP.

- (U [REDACTED]) Local and online public comment periods available for some draft laws and regulations help the CCP tailor content to address concerns and improve public buy-in, judging from academic research. This research suggests that laws that incorporate public comments are less likely to be amended or repealed in subsequent years and increase public satisfaction with local governments.
- [REDACTED] In addition, the CCP is expanding or reinvigorating party cells in private enterprises and civil society organizations to gather information about challenges as well as to strengthen the alignment of local projects and programming with central goals, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] As of 2020, more than half of US subsidiaries in China reported having set up party cells, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Watching From Behind the Scenes. The CCP is expanding and honing its already firm control of domestic electronic communications through sophisticated monitoring, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We assess that this less overtly intrusive approach will enable the CCP to gather data about public grievances and hone predictive tools to more quickly identify brewing challenges without openly interfering with ordinary communications and generating a public backlash.

- [REDACTED] The CCP increasingly relies on artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to exploit extensive surveillance camera footage and alert police to known fugitives, suspicious behavior, or even missing pets, [REDACTED]
The CCP has vastly increased the scale of earlier monitoring efforts and is working to achieve total



(U) A screenshot of one of China's facial recognition systems tagging pedestrians.

video surveillance of every major public space in China under a series of programs [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED] Most of China's citizens appear to accept the CCP's argument that these surveillance tools enhance security and convenience, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] According to academic research, China's citizens are most supportive of CCTV surveillance and internet monitoring, compared to other tools, possibly because these appear to offer public safety benefits.

[REDACTED] Persuading With Propaganda and Policy





[REDACTED] Relaying the Party's Message. We assess that the CCP's broad range of propaganda tools are helping to make the case to China's citizens that the Party understands and advances their interests and is responsible for China's rise, including by ensuring domestic stability, improving quality of life, and elevating China's international status. Public opinion surveys are extremely difficult to conduct in authoritarian countries such as China where respondents self-censor critical views to protect themselves and China's laws require polling firms to vet questions and preview results with authorities. However, academics who specialize in public opinion in China consistently report that the CCP enjoys broad popular support.

(U) **Control History To Control the Future**

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) views control of the historical narrative as a critical component of its legitimacy and shaping future nationalism. The CCP in recent years has continued to tighten media and education controls to promote historical narratives that portray the CCP in a positive light and

to minimize or eradicate any public awareness of CCP failures, particularly those that resulted in the deaths of China's citizens. Most recently, the CCP has railed against "historical nihilism," which includes any criticism of the CCP and has worked to remove the last bastions of it in Hong Kong's schools.

(U) This table is UNCLASSIFIED; all photos are UNCLASSIFIED.

	CELEBRATES	CONCEALS
Century of Humiliation		
	1839–1949 Survival in the face of foreign aggression, including the Opium Wars and foreign control	
	1921 Founding of the CCP	Mao's contested standing at that time
	1930s–40s War against Japan	Infighting in the CCP as well as any positive Kuomintang or US role fighting Japan
Mao Era		
	1949 Founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC)	Violent suppression of regions that did not identify as part of China, such as Tibet
	1958–60 Great Leap Forward to collectivize agriculture and boost steel production	Famine and starvation which killed millions
	1967–76 "Socialist construction" improved material, social, and education foundation for later economic development	High death toll of China's Cultural Revolution
Reform Era (Deng Era)		
	1978 Shift from class struggle to socialist modernization and economic reforms	Battles between CCP conservatives and reformers
	1982 CCP and PRC reforms to strengthen the state, boost economic growth, and check individual leaders' excesses	CCP failures beyond Mao's few "mistakes"
	1989	Tiananmen Square massacre
	1991	Fears that the CCP will share the Soviet Union's fate
	2001 China joins the WTO	
	2008 China hosts the Olympics	Spike in violence and repression against ethnic minorities and democracy advocates
New Era (Xi Era)		
	2021 100th anniversary of the CCP met the goal of a moderately prosperous society and eliminated extreme poverty	Gaping inequality across geographic regions, rural-urban, and social class divides

- (U [REDACTED]) **Fostering Appearance of Public Engagement.** The CCP touts public engagement within party-defined limits, such as open public comment periods and online tools to send suggestions or complaints to local governments, in part to foster a public perception of participation of topics such as local government corruption, environmental concerns, and education, according to open-source reporting and academic research. Online, government-affiliated bots and personas introduce and amplify carefully spun posts, enabling netizen engagement with official narratives to appear more authentic.
 - [REDACTED] **Reinforcing Patriotism.** The CCP has increased its focus on longstanding patriotic education, emphasizing loyalty to the Party and an identity aligned with China's main ethnic Han group, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
CCP propaganda also works across media to stoke national pride in major events such as hosting the Olympics as well as nurturing a common public defense in response to external criticism, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
 - (U [REDACTED]) **Using Entertainment To Influence.** The CCP is working to cultivate an entertainment environment that supports and promotes CCP principles, including by producing more high-quality content and by blocking domestic and foreign movies, television programs, and entertainers of which it disapproves, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED] **Encirclement.** The CCP continues to use its united front efforts, including the United Front Work Department and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, to reach outside of the Party to co-opt groups in academia, religious and ethnic minorities, private business, and overseas diaspora communities. These efforts portray the CCP as representing and benefiting group interests, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] **Struggling To Shift the Social Contract.** As China's economic growth has slowed, we assess that the CCP is shifting to emphasize quality of life improvements such as pollution control, poverty alleviation, and public goods, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] However, we judge that the Party will struggle to address public dissatisfaction regarding tricky problems such as urban-rural and regional divides or to direct assistance programs to households, judging from open-source reporting and academic research.
- (U) Xi has publicly called on the CCP to focus less myopically on growth and instead balance issues that address key social grievances, such as economics, politics, culture, society, and the environment. China's leaders no longer fixate on the "middle-income trap" and instead are stressing the importance of balanced development across China, judging from their public remarks and local media reporting.
 - (U [REDACTED]) In 2021, "common prosperity" became the latest in a series of campaigns intended to signal the Party's acknowledgement of growing wealth inequality and its commitment to ensuring that more citizens benefit from China's economic development. However, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the CCP is not prepared to tackle politically unpalatable but long overdue reforms to the tax system or the social safety net.
 - (U [REDACTED]) In recent years, the CCP's guidance on financial risk management typically trickled down through state regulators, where overzealous implementation sometimes triggered liquidity crises and layoffs in real estate and financial markets, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] We assess that the CCP will face enduring challenges trying to maintain and strengthen oversight of key sectors of the economy needed to sustain growth.

Multiplying Tools for Repression

Full Spectrum of Coercive Tools. We assess that the CCP will continue to invest in and reap rewards from overlapping mechanisms to silence elite, intellectual, and dissident voices and to prevent aggrieved citizens from finding sympathizers, organizing even marginal resistance, or presenting a systemic threat to the regime. China has intensified its efforts to reduce the space for civil society and activists and even apolitical groups that do not conform to the CCP's view of ideal, "Sinicized" groups and values,

Ultimately, the CCP's use of preemptive tactics often avoids repression from escalating to lethal force, but the Party invests in training to steel security service members and is prepared to use lethal force if necessary to combat what it sees or portrays as existential threats, judging from open-source and academic research.

- Quelling and Preempting Protests.** China has sporadically published data about public protests or "mass incidents," but stopped as numbers climbed to an average of 471 per day in 2015, according to academic research. Authorities' responses range from negotiated solutions to arrests and use of force, but we assess that the CCP increasingly relies on technology to speed response times and preempt protests before they gather momentum. As early as 2016, private-sector leaders claimed that AI could detect anomalous crowds as they were gathering and trigger a quick official response,
- Suppressing Identities.** The CCP has stepped up efforts to suppress religious, ethnic, and other group identities that could diverge from CCP interests or articulate an alternative vision for China's future,

In addition to conducting widespread detentions and efforts to eradicate previously tolerated use and teaching of local languages and cultural and religious practices in Xinjiang and Tibet, the CCP has also cracked

down on groups that had not been seen as particularly subversive or threatening such as ethnic Mongolians, women's rights groups, and the LGBTQ+ community.

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Increasingly Moving Online. As the CCP increasingly embraces digital repression, we assess that its efforts will become harder to detect or evade. Less overt policies include shadow bans of media content that minimize viewership or information-sharing rather than relying exclusively on deletion,

The CCP and China's security services are not omniscient or omnipresent, However, we judge that the CCP cultivates and benefits from a public perception of nearly comprehensive surveillance that drives citizens to self-censor their online comments and interactions with foreign officials, academics, or journalists.

- China's authorities have capitalized on COVID-19 as an excuse to test, expand, and normalize big data options for tracking population movements through cellphones and apps,

They are opportunistically advancing existing plans and probably laying the groundwork to continue using location and proximity data for political as well as public health reasons.

-

Earlier this year, Shanghai residents fed up with lengthy, draconian COVID lock-downs used sarcastic hashtags to temporarily evade censors. However, the threat of expulsion from WeChat has been increasingly effective at promoting self-censorship because the popular app is an integral tool for online banking, cellular communication, and transportation.

- In recent years, the CCP has expanded a ban on private firms or capital in news media, including banning news from foreign entities or live broadcasting events that could influence public opinion. Even posting personal experiences that touch on sensitive issues, such as repression in Xinjiang or COVID-19 lock-downs, can prompt authorities to threaten punishment for sharing “unverified reports,” illegal information, or violent content.
- (U) Since 2021, the CCP also has continued to rely on “strike hard” campaigns—periods of intensified enforcement—to organize national and local efforts to monitor webpages and online content, scrub offensive content, and levy fines against a range of commercial and social media firms contributing to what the Party deems unhealthy or illegal information practices, according to open-source reporting.

Vulnerabilities of CCP Risk Management

Focused on Mitigating Certain Risks. Although we assess that the CCP probably is acutely aware of some risks in its repressive governance approach, its recent actions suggest that it will continue to accept or overlook other downside risks. the CCP most actively works to counter threats that a strong



(U) Surveillance cameras join plainclothes and overt security officials in monitoring Tiananmen Square to deter and quickly respond to potential protests or incidents.

military or politically active security service can pose. Accordingly, the Party has focused on ensuring control over this powerful sector through strengthening party lines of authority over the PLA and the paramilitary People’s Armed Police and breaking up their patronage networks,

- **Bridling the Security Services.** In 2021, the CCP launched a nation-wide education and rectification campaign targeted at the security services and law enforcement, capping a series of multi-year campaigns and high-profile purges and trials of senior officials that famously included the head of Interpol, . The CCP supplements these efforts with financial incentives and resources; for example, as CCP and mainland authorities have increased their control over Hong Kong, security budgets and police salaries in Hong Kong have risen despite an overall deficit,
- **Courting Sensitive Groups.** The CCP has adopted more careful tactics when dealing with what it sees as politically sensitive groups such as military veterans. In recent years, as large-scale veterans’ protests have underscored growing discontent with retirement benefits, pensions, and help finding jobs, the CCP has combined repression with high-profile announcements of measures intended to address their grievances,

- (U) **Growing Reliance on Technologies.** The CCP probably is aware of some risks generated by its increasing dependence on high-tech tools for domestic controls, judging from open-source reporting. In 2021, the Party released draft regulations on algorithms, which included exhortations to promote mainstream CCP values and “positive energy,” a reference to stifling criticism of the government.

██████████ **Possible Blindspots.** We assess that the CCP is less attuned or concerned with the risk that its repressive tactics might further aggrieve citizens rather than just suppress them. Party leaders probably will rely on surveillance and repressive tools to prevent dissatisfied citizens from uniting and posing threats to the government. Academic research suggests that citizens increasingly may give credit to local governments rather than central CCP leaders with addressing their concerns, creating a sense of distance from the Party.

- ██████████ **Harrassing Innocent Victims.** The CCP’s high tolerance for false positives probably results in more widespread surveillance and detentions than individual cases warrant, ranging from city-wide COVID-19 lock-downs to the mass-detention of ethnic Uyghurs in western China. Security authorities’ overreach may alienate otherwise law-abiding citizens, ██████████
 ██████████ In 2021, for example, the CCP cracked down on entertainment fan groups to protect citizens from “chaos” and scams, according to local media, but we judge that this probably was also a preemptive action to break up groups outside of the CCP’s control before they articulated any interest in politics.
- (U) ██████████ **Losing the Human Touch.** As the CCP moves toward increasing reliance on digital platforms to interact with citizens, monitor potential areas of concern, and summon security or political authorities to intervene, we judge that it could begin neglecting some of the people-to-people interactions that traditionally reinforced surveillance and outreach.

- (U) ██████████ **Revealing Preferences.** We judge that the CCP’s preoccupation with preempting threats to the regime by silencing or co-opting critics also may sow dissatisfaction among ordinary citizens. Academic research suggests that the CCP’s diversion of economic support to persons of political concern, rather than to citizens in poverty, increases the dissatisfaction level among the intended targets of economic assistance.

██████████ **Making the World Safe for the CCP**

██████████ **Key Judgment 3: The CCP’s belief that domestic and foreign threats are inextricably linked probably will drive China’s more assertive behavior abroad and constrain opportunities for direct US engagement.** We assess that the CCP is turning from a more reactive defense of China’s national security to a more proactive and at times preemptive approach to tackling threats abroad. As China’s bolder actions increasingly touch on other countries’ domestic interests, this probably will energize and expand constituencies that will look to work with the United States against China.

██████████ **Seeing Foreign Threats at Home**

██████████ Since its founding in 1921, the CCP has focused on perceived foreign threats to its control of China, but we assess that its level of concern has risen in recent decade as CCP leaders perceive that the United States increasingly is interested in blocking China’s rise and framing it as a contest between democracy and authoritarian regimes. CCP leaders increasingly view China’s history and regime change elsewhere as illustrating the need to strengthen internal defenses against foreign influences ranging from cultural and information penetration to efforts to encourage human rights and the rule of law. Xi and other Party leaders also view threats from technological dependencies and supply chains that expose China to foreign pressure,

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██████████

(U) What Would Change our Assessment

(U) *“This is a cautionary tale. The dominant contemporary Western scholarly assessments of CCP elite politics in almost every period of history of the PRC have been either dramatically wrong, or a very mixed bag, or in critical respects speculation that cannot be verified on existing evidence.” -Frederick C. Teiwes, China leadership scholar*

(U) Several new events, revelations, or new information could change our assessment of the CCP internal dynamics, its ability to control China’s citizens, and its behavior overseas.

- (U) **Crazy in Command.** Xi is 69 years old and appears to be of sound mind and capable of listening to his advisers, but authoritarian experts warn that some leaders’ mental acuity and patience fade with age and could lead to more unpredictable and aggressive actions.
- (U) **Changing Policy Tack.** Rising autocrats have strong incentives to mask individual dissent or intended policy changes from peers, rendering them practically undetectable from the outside. The CCP might make dramatic changes, for example on economic policy, if leaders concluded that the Party had to reverse course to survive.
- (U) **Angry Elites Bite Back.** If the CCP goes too far in antagonizing business leaders to score political points, these “old winners” turned “new losers” could band together to publicly criticize China’s policies and economic performance, a lynchpin of regime legitimacy as well as elite profit.
- (U) **Security Services Strike Out.** If security service members waver in their execution of orders to crack down on fellow citizens whose grievances they share, the CCP may face more extensive challenges than in recent years.
- (U) **A Party for Everyone.** The CCP for decades has eschewed efforts to foment revolution abroad or create local parties in its image. If CCP leaders decided that current diplomatic outreach and united front efforts to influence foreign leaders were insufficient to protect China’s core interests, they might consider establishing more sizeable institutional or financial ties between the CCP and local parties.
- (U) **Autocracy Building.** If CCP leaders concluded that a zero-sum contest between democracies and authoritarian regimes was gaining ground and strengthening US efforts to thwart China, CCP leaders might be tempted to intervene more actively in other countries’ political systems.

- (U) [REDACTED] The CCP has amplified warnings against foreign efforts to “bully, oppress, and subjugate China” in recent years because it is convinced that the United States is deeply committed to thwarting the CCP and constraining China’s rise as major power, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED] The CCP is also reinforcing legal bulwarks against perceived foreign threats, including recent measures that tighten scrutiny of NGOs and foreign activities, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] For example, the 2020 National Security Law for Hong Kong targets subversion, secession, terrorism, foreign interference, and collusion with foreign entities, to strengthen

Beijing's legal options to act against threats to China's national security as well as CCP ideology.

██████████ In recent years, the CCP's already skeptical view of US actions has hardened as leaders increasingly see Washington as intent on threatening China's core interests.

- (U ██████████) CCP leaders interpret US policies on issues such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, human rights, and forced labor as attempts to undermine China's core interests and proof that Washington poses an existential challenge to CCP rule, ██████████
- ██████████ Xi, other CCP leaders, and state media often identify perceived divisions or failings in US political processes, social cohesion, and international partnerships as indications of malaise in a declining power, ██████████
██████████ However, PRC scholars expect this decline to be punctuated by resurgences and even more determined US efforts to regain relative geopolitical status by weakening China's rise and CCP rule.

██████████ Shifting From Strong Defense to Offense

(U ██████████) We assess that Xi and other CCP leaders during the next five years will continue to promote an image of national confidence, touting domestic successes while lambasting foreign critics as ill-informed or ill-willed toward China. In its domestic and foreign policy rhetoric, the CCP increasingly portrays US-China competition as a perpetual struggle in which Beijing must protect itself by going on the offensive, ██████████
██████████

██████████ **Propaganda and Transnational Repression.** Xi and other CCP leaders during the next five years probably will project an increasingly confident and assertive defense of China's development model overseas, arguing that it could serve as a "new choice" of democratic governance and development for

modernizing countries, ██████████

██████████ We judge that the CCP will work to undermine China-critical narratives from the United States and like-minded partners and strive to improve its global image, building on a leadership push that in 2017 added enhancing soft power to the party's charter.

- (U ██████████) In 2021, spurred in part by the US Summit of Democracy, China released a white paper, "China: Democracy That Works," that touted the CCP's "whole-process" democracy as a model that combined the best of electoral engagement at the local level with year-round consultation. Along with the paper's release, Beijing issued a coordinated criticism of US democracy and human rights.
- ██████████ The CCP's united front efforts have operated outside China's borders for years, ██████████
██████████ but Beijing is investing greater focus and resources on foreign influence targets, including Chinese diaspora communities and foreign co-opted individuals to advance Beijing's interests and counter critics. CCP entities abroad mask their government affiliations with varying degrees of success, but we assess that they probably will have more encounters with foreign law enforcement as they increase efforts to woo, subvert, or threaten local diaspora communities, journalists, and politicians.
- (U) The CCP may try to apply China's laws overseas and take preemptive action against overseas dissidents as well as local entities that could challenge China's interests. In 2020, China's Minister of Justice announced that Beijing would improve the extraterritorial application of its laws and enhance the international influence of China's judicial practice.

██████████ **Deploying or Selling Authoritarian Tools Abroad.** We assess that the CCP during the next five years probably will experiment more with efforts that move beyond touting China's model to directly offering or selling regulatory or technical components of that

system to other countries. However, we judge that the CCP will stop short of trying to create authoritarian regimes or foreign versions of itself because CCP leaders recognize that similarities in governing systems do not guarantee smooth bilateral relations or robust economic ties, and because opportunities to benefit from closer government relations tend to reset during democratic transitions, [REDACTED]

- (U) China probably will continue to offer developing countries resources for political capacity building, such as a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) pilot project in Tanzania that drew on China's cybersecurity law model and training on grassroots outreach and propaganda that the CCP offered to political parties in Ethiopia, South Africa, and Sudan, judging from open-source reporting.
- (U [REDACTED]) We assess that other autocratic and backsliding democratic governments will struggle to recreate the full range of China's domestic controls, including control of networks and companies, or the CCP's political monopoly. Any foreign leaders or parties that adopt the CCP's technologies and methods for domestic control probably would become more repressive but fail to secure themselves as efficiently against domestic pressure or foreign engagement.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

• [REDACTED]

• [REDACTED]

• [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- (U) [REDACTED]

(U) CCP as National Security Party

(U) China's all-encompassing national security concept links the absolute leadership of the CCP with political security, economic security, and territorial integrity. China does not publish the full membership, internal structure, or decisionmaking process of its National Security Commission, which is chaired by Xi.

- [REDACTED] The CCP issues five-year National Security Strategies. The second strategy spans 2021 to 2025 and stresses the need to increase new national security structures in political, economic, social, S&T, and other emerging areas, underscoring the comprehensive scope of China's national security concept and plans, [REDACTED]
- (U) National security terms and concepts have proliferated to broad aspects of domestic policy. For example, "national cultural security," touts China's traditional culture and opposes any artwork that challenges the CCP's historical narrative or promotes admiration of foreign culture or ideas.
- (U) [REDACTED] China celebrates National Security Day on April 15, the anniversary of Xi's launch of this wide-ranging national security concept in 2014. In 2022, an official commemoration highlighted gains from deep sea to overseas interests that made China "one of the most secure countries in the world."

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

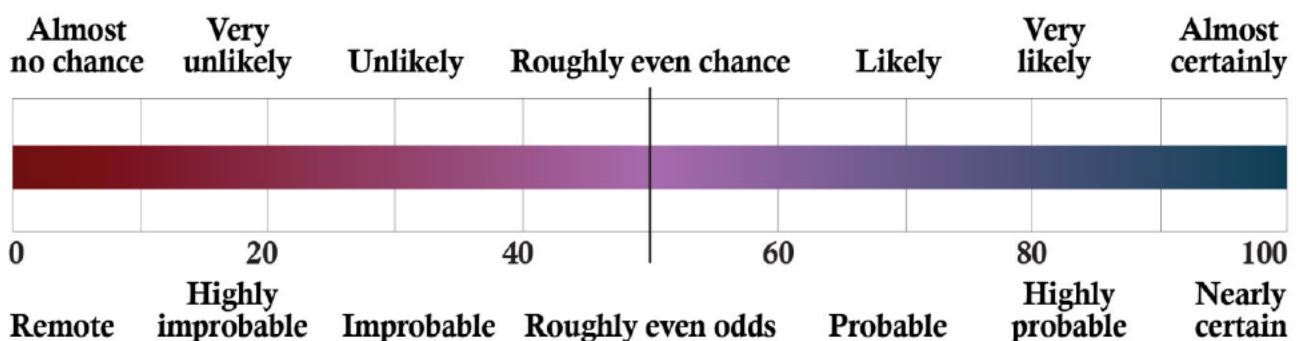
(U) Estimative Language

(U) Estimative language consists of two elements: judgment about the likelihood of developments or events occurring and levels of confidence in the sources and analytic reasoning supporting the judgments. Judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact. Assessments are based on collected information, which is often incomplete or fragmentary, as well as logic, argumentation, and precedents.

(U) Judgments of Likelihood

(U) The chart below approximates how judgments of likelihood correlate with percentages. Unless otherwise stated, the Intelligence Community's judgments are not derived via statistical analysis. Phrases such as "we judge" and "we assess"—and terms such as "probable" and "likely"—convey analytical assessments.

Percent



(U) Confidence in our Judgments

(U) Confidence levels provide assessments of timeliness, consistency, and extent of intelligence and open source reporting that supports judgments. They also take into account the analytic argumentation, the depth of relevant expertise; the degree to which assumptions underlie analysis; and the scope of information gaps.

(U) We ascribe high, moderate, or low confidence to assessments:

- (U) **High confidence** generally indicates that judgments are based on sound analytic argumentation and high-quality consistent reporting from multiple sources, including clandestinely obtained documents; clandestine and open source reporting; and in-depth expertise; it also indicates we have few intelligence gaps; have few assumptions underlying the analytic line; have found potential for deception to be low; and we have examined long-standing analytic judgments held by the IC and considered alternatives. For most intelligence topics, it will not be appropriate to claim high confidence for judgments that forecast out a number of years. High confidence in a judgment does not imply that the assessment is a fact or a certainty; such judgments might be wrong even though we have a higher degree of certainty that they are accurate.
- (U) **Moderate confidence** generally means that the information is credibly sourced and plausible but not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence. There may, for example, be information that cuts in a different direction. We have in-depth expertise on the topic, but we may acknowledge assumptions that underlie our analysis and some information gaps; there may be minor analytic differences within the IC, as well as moderate potential for deception.
- (U) **Low confidence** generally means that the information's credibility and/or plausibility is uncertain, that the information is fragmented, dated, or poorly corroborated, or that reliability of the sources is questionable. There may be analytic differences within the IC, several significant information gaps, high potential for deception or numerous assumptions that must be made to draw analytic conclusions. In the case of low confidence, we are forced to use current data to project out in time, making a higher level of confidence impossible.

(U) National Intelligence Council

(U) The National Intelligence Council manages the Intelligence Community's estimative process, incorporating the best available expertise inside and outside the government. It reports to the Director of National Intelligence as head of the US Intelligence Community and speaks authoritatively on substantive issues for the Community as a whole.

(U) NIC Leadership

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

(U) National Intelligence Officers

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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