

The 31th MAC Advisory Committee Meeting: Highlights of Discussion by Advisory Members*

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The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) recently held an Advisory Committee Meeting on the topic of "Observations on the 'Sixth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee' of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)." Key statements and highlights of discussion by the advisory members are as follows:

1. The introductory report presented by the scholars outlined that the "Sixth Plenary Session" passed the third historical resolution to consolidate Xi Jinping's core leadership position, and establish Xi as the core and the course of Xi Jinping Thought. The assessment of Xi in the session's communiqué and resolution fully exceeds that of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. This will usher in an era of long-term rule under Xi. It is a foregone conclusion at the CCP's "20th National Congress" that Xi will extend his term. It is also unlikely that Xi's power will change hands at the "21st National Congress" in 2027. With no foreseeable successor of Xi at the moment in mainland China, it is worth close observation of CCP's power succession mechanism and potential changes of its system.
2. The participating scholars believed that the "resolution" reveres Xi Jinping's one-man leadership position, ends internal political competition, gives Xi unbridled decision-making power, and leaves the "Xi camp" as the only remaining faction.

* The MAC Advisory Committee Meeting is formed by experts and scholars in related fields. The views and opinions expressed in the meetings or excerpted in this article belong solely to the speakers.

This underscores the CCP's transition from an "authoritarian" to a "totalitarian" regime. It also shows that the party, through resource reallocation, rectification, supervision, and other measures, is strengthening social control and backtracking to the Mao era. The "resolution" glorifies Xi's nine-year rule and consecrates Xi. However, the CCP's promotion of "common prosperity" simply underlines its failure to create a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Income inequality in mainland China remains high, with the Gini coefficient from 2012 to 2020 exceeding warning levels. This obviously reveals that behind the "Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of Chinese nation" is a clear intention to appease and distract public dissatisfaction over the economic recession. In addition, the "resolution" highlights "patriots ruling Hong Kong," "resolving problems and eliminating their root causes," and other positions, indicating that the CCP will further tighten its grip on Hong Kong and curtail the city's political and social space in the future.

3. Regarding the CCP's external relations, the participating scholars mentioned that, during the video summit with US President Joe Biden, Xi Jinping deliberately emphasized that the Taiwan issue is the most sensitive matter and potential source of conflict between the US and mainland China. Xi further stressed that both sides must properly manage the Taiwan issue. The scholars suggested that government closely watch the competition and cooperation between the US and mainland China, assess and thoroughly consider the issue of the Taiwan Strait after US-China interaction, and closely keep track of the CCP's operation trend in how the US handle Taiwan-related work. The participating scholars believed that the current US security team has addressed the affairs rather steadily. They also suggested that the government increase US understanding of Taiwan's cross-Strait policies.

4. Regarding the fact that the trend of the cross-Strait security issue becoming a matter of global concern, the participating scholars found that the international community and polls in the US, Japan, and Europe are paying increasing attention to security across the Taiwan Strait and supporting Taiwan out of concerns for the CCP's aggressive actions. However, they also suggested that Taiwan need a hedging strategy to cope with the CCP's two-pronged strategy aimed at dividing the government and people of Taiwan, and prevent mainland China from pressuring Taiwan into talks. Despite the unlikely scenario of full-scale military clashes in the short term between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, the CCP forces are always preparing for a military invasion of Taiwan. Outside parties have also warned that the CCP may make a move in 2027, the centenary of the founding of its armed forces. It was suggested that the government should continue to closely watch the CCP's military development and R&D of weapons, and that Taiwan must continue to enhance its defense and combat preparedness.

5. Participating scholars offered suggestions on the development of cross-Strait relations. They hoped the two sides could interact through various channels, develop normal cross-Strait exchanges, increase understanding, and avoid misjudgments. They also urged the government to properly care for mainland-Chinese students and spouses in Taiwan and to differentiate between the CCP authorities and the mainland Chinese people. Moreover, the CCP's continued intensification of political, economic, and social control could impact the rights and interests of Taiwanese businesspeople and other Taiwanese citizens in mainland China. It was hoped that the government would handle related issues properly. The scholars also noted that international think tanks are currently proposing studies on the development of mainland China without Xi Jinping, since mainland China may not see another leader as assertive as Xi in the future. The government should conduct scenario planning for a potential power vacuum and form pre-emptive measures in response.

6. During the meeting, Minister Chiu Tai-san stated that the CCP's Taiwan work remains fixed to a bottom-line thinking. This thinking, combined with the CCP's so-called new journey for the next hundred years and development of US-China relations, shows that the CCP intends to highlight the party's resolution to resolve the Taiwan issue. The CCP is also expected to more actively promote "opposition to independence and promotion of unification" in its subsequent Taiwan work. The CCP's repeated negative actions to intimidate Taiwan will make it difficult to develop cross-Strait relations. Related follow-up internal and external development of the CCP, US-China interaction and regional trends all affect developments in the Taiwan Strait. The government will pay close attention to this and make assessment and responses properly.