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## Xi Jinping Is Alone at the Top and Collective Leadership ‘Is Dead’

The president’s ideology—and sway over policy—has been enshrined in the Communist Party charter



The Communist Party of China’s new Politburo Standing Committee on Wednesday in Beijing. From left to right: Han Zheng, Wang Huning, Li Zhanshu, President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, Wang Yang and Zhao Leji. PHOTO: WANG ZHAO/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

By *Jeremy Page and Chun Han Wong*

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BEIJING—Five years after becoming China’s leader, Xi Jinping has been granted power unmatched in recent decades and a stature on par with that of Chairman Mao Zedong.

China’s Communist Party unveiled a new top leadership lineup on Wednesday, including close allies of Mr. Xi and without a likely successor, ensuring that he can dominate decision-making for the next five years, and possibly longer.

The makeup of the new Politburo Standing Committee, the party’s top body, positions Mr. Xi to remain in power after his second term ends in 2022, breaking retirement norms developed since Mao’s death to protect against indefinite one-man rule.

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The party ended its weeklong party congress Tuesday by revising its constitution to inscribe a political theory bearing Mr. Xi’s name and endorse policies to make the nation a world power. The revision to the party’s charter that includes a broad Xi-branded ideology gives him the final say in

policy debates, party insiders said.

The moves appear to give Mr. Xi, 64 years old, unassailable power, allowing him to impose his will on China’s leadership, global reach and economic might well beyond his second term. Premier Li Keqiang remained in the party leadership, but insiders say his decision-making powers have been severely curtailed.

“Collective leadership within the party now exists only in name, and in reality is dead,” said Wu Qiang, a current-affairs commentator and former politics

lecturer at Beijing's Tsinghua University. This "paves the way for him to grab more power in the years to come, and stay on beyond 2022."

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At the center of Mr. Xi's new authority was the unanimous decision by the 2,336 select party members meeting in Beijing's Great Hall of the People to

revise the party's constitution to include "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era." They called the theory a new "guide to action."

The label placed Mr. Xi's ideology alongside "Mao Zedong Thought," which was written into the party charter in 1945, and above "Deng Xiaoping Theory" which was added in 1997 after Deng's death.

No other leader has his name attached to a political philosophy in the document.

In a report at the congress opening, Mr. Xi pledged that his political philosophy would deliver more balanced growth and better quality of life, while also moving China "closer to center stage" in the world.

The congress approved that report and agreed to incorporate several more of Mr. Xi's ideas into the party charter. It endorsed policies to project Chinese power abroad, strengthen the government's role in the economy, enhance Mr. Xi's hold over the military and party, and extend the party's control over many aspects of Chinese life.

"The party, government, military, society, education, north, south, east, west—the party leads everything," the congress resolution said, indicating the phrase would be added to the party charter.

Also included was Mr. Xi's "China Dream" of national rejuvenation and his "Belt and Road" plan to build infrastructure links between East and West.

Mr. Xi's supporters say his enhanced authority will enable him to overcome the vested interests they say have prevented him from tackling problems including pollution, the inefficiency of state companies and mounting domestic debt.

In the praise that delegates and state media poured on Mr. Xi, the congress also broke from recent conventions that eschewed personalized politics. Some senior party officials described Mr. Xi as a wise leader who is "taking the helm" as China's navigator-in-chief—terms most associated with Mao.

Mao led the Communist takeover in 1949 and then purged many fellow revolutionaries to accrue absolute power. Though his policies led to widespread political persecution, famine and tens of millions of deaths, he is still widely revered as the founder of modern China.

Some Chinese critics of the shift say they are concerned that Mr. Xi's Leninist approach to governance and untrammelled powers are ill-suited to China's complex economy and society.

With Mr. Xi's accruing power, a question surrounding the naming of the new Politburo Standing Committee had been whether it would include someone young enough to succeed Mr. Xi in 2022 and hold office for 10 years, based on current practices.

Expectations that Mr. Xi would block such a move have risen since one of the two front-runners for the role was suddenly sacked and placed under investigation in July. He was replaced as party chief of the inland city of Chongqing by one of the president's protégés.

Xie Chuntao, a congress delegate and senior party academic, said speculation that Mr. Xi would cling to power was "not meaningful."

One Nation Under Xi Jinping



“Chinese Communists aren’t thinking about such issues, and the Chinese people won’t be paying attention to this either,” Mr. Xie told reporters after the congress.

One Xi ally who didn’t join the new leadership was Wang Qishan, who has directed the anticorruption

campaign that sidelined rivals to the Chinese president. At 69, Mr. Wang doesn’t meet a recent customary rule, which holds that leaders over 67 retire at a congress. He may be in line for a supervisory role or something else.

While the congress elected a new antigraft commission without Mr. Wang, on the new body is Zhao Leji, the head of the party’s personnel department. Mr. Zhao also joined the new Standing Committee, taking on Mr. Wang’s role as the top disciplinary official.

Since 2012, Mr. Zhao has been in charge of appointments for the 4,000 senior-most posts across the party, military, government and state companies and worked to promote Mr. Xi’s allies.

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