

President Xi immortalised at National Congress

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Tuesday 31 October 2017



President Xi [Image: Michel Temer]

The Communist Party of China has held its 19th National Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The event ended with the announcement of the new Politburo Standing Committee with Xi Jinping reappointed as the leader for his second five-year term ruling the world's most populous nation.

The Politburo Standing Committee exercises the most important powers within China's all-powerful Communist Party. Its members will discuss, decide and scrutinise the Chinese government in implementing the policies for the next five years. The Congress is a watershed moment in modern China and the Communist Party has demonstrated that it is in sole control of the nation's destiny and that one man, President Xi, has over 1.3 billion people in his personal grip.

Xi Jinping has been the President of the Politburo since 2012. He is the coordinator of many significant changes in China and its political system: a ceaseless anti-corruption campaign; tightening the Communist Party's influence on the social and education spheres; and closing the gap between rich and poor in society. On social issues, Mr Xi has ended China's controversial 'one-child' policy which threatened China's labour market and social life due to the sudden generational drop in population. On the international stage, Mr Xi has shown his fierce defence for China's interest and extending its influence. All of this while China continues to disregard human rights and shut down any form of organised opposition to the state creed.

In Mr Xi's Congress opening speech, he revealed his plan for a supposed "new era" for China with the ambition of becoming a truly global superpower. In addition to Mr Xi's speech on a dream for China, his status has been established by the Chinese Communist Party as its most powerful leader since Mao Zedong by formally incorporating his name into the party constitution. At the close of the Congress, it was voted to add "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era."

This announcement marks a significant diversion from the norm since conventionally, a reference is only added posthumously, as in the case of Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. The move consolidates Xi's power and immortalises him within China's political life. Even after his second five-year term ends, he will continue to cast a long shadow on the politics and ideology of the nation.

According to Mr Tong Zhao, researcher in Carnegie-Tsinghua Centre, Beijing, it is unlikely that China will

change its current position on the crisis brewing in the Korean peninsula as result of the 19th Congress. Beijing will not back down from the pressure from US President Donald Trump to take a much tougher approach to the rogue state out of fear that such action might negatively affect the Chinese economy. Furthermore, two months before the Congress, China and Russia had carried out military drills less than 100 miles from the North Korean border as an act of solemn promise to protect their communist ally.

US President Donald Trump congratulated Xi Jinping's "extraordinary" rise through his usual method: a tweet. The question is whether we can expect him to intend to rule beyond 2022. Although there have been rumblings concerning Chongqing governor Chen Min'er, Mr Xi has broken with tradition and not publicly chosen an heir apparent. Xi, 64, would rule well into his seventies were he to continue beyond the traditional two terms of office. Premier Li Keqiang, 62, is the only man to retain his position.

In an event that was to shape the future of modern China and its place in the world, it was clear who runs the show: The Communist Party. The all-powerful party will continue to dominate all public life in China as well as have a mighty presence throughout the whole of society. President Xi, by writing himself into the party constitution, has consolidated his position as the most powerful Chinese leader since Chair-man Mao. Xi will be forever immortalised within Chinese life.



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