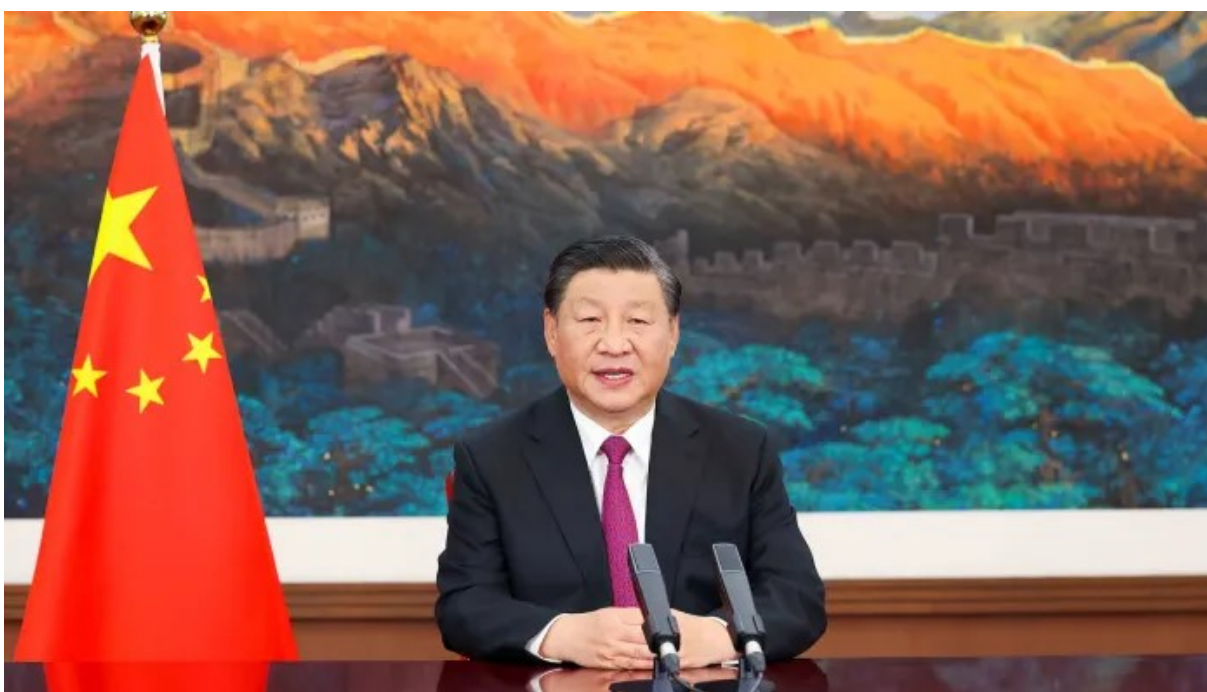


Xi Jinping

Xi lays groundwork for third term by adopting Mao and Deng's power ploy

Chinese president expected to be elevated into Communist pantheon at annual party meeting



Xinhua news agency described Xi Jinping as a 'a man of determination and action, a man of profound thoughts and feelings' © AP

Tom Mitchell in Singapore 9 HOURS AGO

Xi Jinping has summoned hundreds of senior Chinese Communist party officials to Beijing for a meeting that is expected to pave the way for his unprecedented bid for a third term in power next year.

The annual autumn meeting, or plenum, of the party's Central Committee will review and approve a rare "resolution" on Chinese history, and comes just four months after Xi presided over an elaborate celebration of the [100th anniversary](#) of the party's founding.

Both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, the party's two other transformational leaders to whom Xi compares himself, secured such resolutions at the beginning of their long tenures in power.

Mao was the party's unchallenged revolutionary leader for more than three decades and Deng reigned for about 15 years, steering the country away from Maoist autarky and opening its economy to the outside world.

Deng used his resolution to criticise the later years of Mao's rule, and justify his bold new economic programme. But analysts said Xi's resolution would ignore controversial episodes in the party's history and present himself as their natural heir, guiding China to its rightful place as a first-rank global power by the middle of the century.

Hu Jintao. Mao, they said, unified China, while Deng made it rich and Xi has made it strong.

“The Chinese nation has ushered in a great leap from standing up and getting rich to becoming strong,” the Politburo said. “The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has entered an irreversible historical process.”

Ahead of this week's plenum, which will conclude on Thursday, state media has been even more effusive in its praise of Xi, who is now often referred to not just as president and party general secretary but “the people's leader”.

A long article published by the official Xinhua news agency at the weekend called Xi “a man of determination and action, a man of profound thoughts and feelings, a man who inherited a legacy but dares to innovate, a man who has forward-looking vision and is committed to working tirelessly”.

Xi has made clear his admiration for Mao and rejected many of the institutional reforms championed by Deng, including a clearer separation of party and government roles and a regular transfer of power every decade. He is now widely expected to remain party and state head for five to 10 more years, and the country's de facto ruler for as long as he lives.

“Mao is the benchmark for Xi,” said Steve Tsang, director of the Soas China Institute in London. “The resolution is likely to cover the whole duration of the 100 years of the party and will project a much more positive assessment of the party — nearly always right if not right all the time, and certainly central to the achievements of China today,” he added.

“In this sense Xi is setting the scene for his third — and the beginning of his indefinite — term as top leader next year,” Tsang said.

The fact that it took Xi almost a decade to secure an official party resolution on history is a sign of how sensitive his bid for lifetime rule remains, despite the absence of any effective internal opposition.

Wu Qiang, a former lecturer at Tsinghua University and outspoken party critic, said the resolution was intended to “prepare China for even more of Xi's personality cult”.

2023 session of the National People's Congress.

“Xi must be aware of resistance to this approach and thus a wish among some of his ‘comrades’ [for him] to fail spectacularly just prior to [next year’s] Congress,” said Tsang.

“But is Xi someone [who seems] worried about China being cut off from the rest of the world? Unless he sees an enormous economic catastrophe brewing, I am sure he is relaxed about the restrictions in place for travel between ‘Covid-free’ China and the rest of the Covid-infested world.”

Additional reporting by Xinning Liu in Beijing

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