

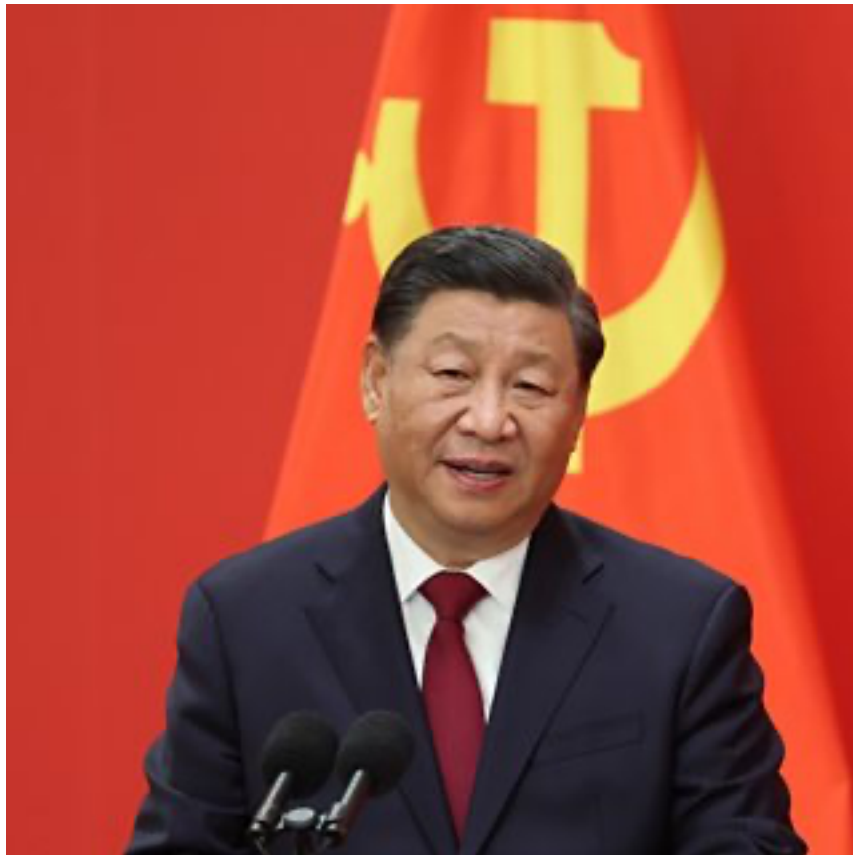
BBC World Service

BBC Newsday

China's Xi Jinping secures third term in power

Robert Lawrence Kuhn

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BBC Introduction

China's President Xi Jinping has secured a historic third term as the Communist Party's leader, cementing his place as the nation's most influential ruler. No other party leader besides CCP founder Mao Zedong has ever served a third term.

The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party re-elected Xi Jinping as its general secretary for a precedent-breaking five-year term on Sunday, tilting the country decisively back towards one-man rule after decades of power-sharing among its elites.

Dr Robert Kuhn is an advisor to China's leaders and author of "How China's Leaders Think: The Inside Story of China's Past, Current and Future Leaders." He told Newsday: "Xi Jinping's position is unassailable as of now."

(Picture: Chinese President Xi Jinping speaks at the 20th Communist Party Congress in Beijing, China.

ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN

Certainly, it is an authoritarian state where there is a single party, the Communist Party of China, which is the perennial ruling party. On the other hand, the Party has reached out to the population in trying to promote what they call "whole process people's democracy" to involve the populace in the process of governance through polling and various other kinds of mechanisms.

Xi Jinping's position is unassailable as of now. It has been for a long time. It's been a long process beginning, really, in 2016, which was unappreciated by the world's media when he became what's called "core", which essentially puts his vote, if you will, above everyone else's put together. And then it has been a sequence of events with different [aspects], with his ideology being put into the Party constitution in 2017, term limits for the

presidency eliminated in 2018. (There never were term limits for the Party leadership and the Central Military Commission.) And now all of his theories and what's called the "two establishers" have been put into the Party constitution, which is establishing Xi Jinping as the core of the Central Committee and the Party and establishing his ideology as the foundation ideology of what they call the "Sinicization of Marxism" or Marxism in the 21st century for China.

BBC HOST

The firm rule that the Party's General Secretary should retire after two five-year terms; he has been able to circumvent or change all of that. No other leader besides Mao Zedong has ever served a third term. How did Xi Jinping accomplish this?

ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN

The rule of the "ten years", the two five-year terms, is an informal rule. The rule for two five-year terms for the presidency was a formal rule and that was abrogated. There was a common understanding that was started after the death of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping wanted to prevent a personality cult, so to prevent the disasters of the mass movement, particularly the Cultural Revolution. So that was part of the plan. In fact, Jiang Zemin had two terms plus a short term when he was appointed.

Nonetheless, Xi has gone through a long process, through many modalities, of coming to the position where he is today. One thread is building up a series of philosophical or political slogans, if you will, or concepts, things like something called the "Four Comprehensives" where they're moderately prosperous society, reform, anticorruption, something like the "New Development Concepts" where they stress innovation, coordination, green, open and sharing as economic drivers. So, he has built up a series of ideological or philosophical positions,

which is absolutely critical in China. You can't become the top leader... You have to be the “philosopher-king”. In addition to the philosophy and the accomplishments, the anticorruption campaign was a critical factor – we can't omit that.

BBC HOST

Now that it has been secured and using all those tools that you've just articulated, what does he do with his unbridled power and how will the international world be looking at this?

ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN

The primary approach is the anti-poverty campaign where Xi brought the final 100 million people out of extreme poverty, which was greatly to his credit, along with the anti-corruption campaign – among the people. And where he goes from here: he's looking to do “common prosperity”, to build a Chinese economy, to be self-sufficient in technology, and to recognize the tensions in the world and to put what they call “Chinese experience”, “Chinese wisdom” into the international community.

They've had what they call the “Belt and Road Initiative”, building infrastructure in developing countries, vastly around the world – a lot of problems with it, debt, etc. – but nonetheless a real contribution to inequality, particularly in Africa and other poor places.

Building on that, Xi has now proposed a “Global Development Initiative”. And then he has proposed a “Global Security Initiative”, which is in a sense a recognition that China's participation in the global marketplace of governance ideas is critical and cannot be ignored.

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