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Chinese regime rewrites history as Xi Jinping prepares for third presidential term

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) completed a four-day Central Committee meeting this week and issued a lengthy communiqué yesterday full of effusive praise for President Xi Jinping and the work of the party since he was installed as CCP general secretary in 2012.



Chinese President Xi Jinping on screen during a gala show ahead of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing, June 28, 2021 [Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan]

The adulation of Xi is in preparation for holding the 20th CCP congress next year at which he is expected, unlike the two previous leaders, to be given a third five-year term as general secretary and therefore the country's president. The previous congress in 2018 removed the constitutional limitation of two terms for the president and vice-president.

In announcing next year's party congress, the communiqué declared: "The Central Committee calls upon the entire Party, the military, and all Chinese people to rally more closely around the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core [and] to fully implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era."

The reference to Xi as the party's "core" and the "guiding role" of his thought is now a mandatory official ritual. The meeting not only fully supported the work report of the party's Political Bureau as presented by Xi but unusually adopted a "Resolution on the major achievements and historical experience of the party over the past century."

The CCP has only ever adopted a historical resolution on two previous occasions. In the first, in 1945, Mao Zedong sought to codify his dominant position in the leadership after factional infighting during the 1930s. In the second, in 1981, Deng Xiaoping set out to bury the legacy of Mao's misnamed Cultural Revolution from 1966 and open the door for pro-market restructuring and capitalist restoration.

The latest historical resolution puts Xi at least on a par with Mao and Deng. The summary of the resolution contained in the communiqué refers to Mao and Deng and makes mention of Xi's immediate predecessors—Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao—but more than half of its 5,400 words are devoted to lauding the achievements of the party under Xi.

A similar emphasis was evident in party's new "brief history" launched to coincide with the official centenary of the CCP's founding in July 1921—roughly a third of its pages are devoted to Xi's nine years in office. Moreover, the state-owned media subject the population to a diet of hagiographic articles promoting Xi as a man of the people with the common touch.

This extraordinary build-up and the regime's reliance on Xi—a bland bureaucrat, who, unlike Mao and Deng, did not experience the social and political upheavals that led to the 1949 Chinese Revolution—derives not from a position of political strength but of

weakness. The CCP is not only riven with internal divisions but confronts geo-political conflicts, particularly with the US, a slowing economy, and, above all, sharpening social tensions produced by the gulf between rich and poor.

In the wake of the 2018 CCP congress, the *World Socialist Web Site* characterised the emergence of Xi as China's undisputed political strongman as "a form of rule that Marxists have classically designated as Bonapartist." Facing a profound crisis on all sides, Xi has been thrown up as a larger-than-life figure to quell internal disputes as the party desperately seeks to consolidate its forces to suppress social upheaval at home and prepare for US-led aggression abroad.

This week's communiqué, on the one hand, is compelled to acknowledge "that the external environment has grown increasingly complex and grave over the past year... while China has faced extremely arduous tasks in COVID-19 prevention and control as well as economic and social development at home."

On the other hand, standing reality on its head, the communiqué presents Xi's record as one of all-round triumph—"the economy has maintained good momentum, positive advances... in China's scientific and technological self-reliance, further progress... in reform and opening up. A complete victory... in the fight against poverty as scheduled, the people's wellbeing... further improved, social stability... maintained, steady progress... in modernizing the armed forces, and China's major-country diplomacy has advanced on all fronts."

In fact, under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic growth in China slowed markedly to less than 5 percent in the third quarter—well below the 8 percent benchmark regarded by the regime as necessary to maintain low levels of unemployment and therefore social stability. Adding to the economic slowdown is the danger of financial instability stemming from very high levels of debt and a mounting crisis in the property market, signalled by the repayments crisis of Evergrande and other major property developers.

On the international front, it would be difficult to identify any advances in "major-country diplomacy." Beijing confronts the unrelenting hostility of the US, which has engaged in a military build-up throughout the region over the past decade, strengthening military

alliances and engaging in military provocations in the South China and East China Seas. This year under Biden, Washington has deliberately stirred up tensions with Beijing over the explosive issue of the status of Taiwan, undermining the basis for diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Despite the veneer of unity, sharp divisions exist within the CCP leadership between those who advocate concessions and a new compromise with the US, involving a further economic opening up to foreign capital, and those pushing for accelerated military expansion and greater national economic reliance. Neither strategy is in any sense progressive—the US has already made clear that it will accept nothing short of complete submission to its interests, while engaging in an arms race leads down the path to a catastrophic war.

As he balances precariously within the party, Xi is also desperately seeking to maintain a base of social support. He continually declares the party's fidelity to Marxism, socialism and communism, yet the CCP abandoned its basic tenets decades ago in embracing the reactionary Stalinist doctrine of "Socialism in One Country" and presides over a manifestly capitalist economy in which the market dominates every aspect of life.

The CCP justified its embrace of capitalist restoration by claiming that it would guarantee the social welfare of the population. As foreign capital flooded into the country to exploit its cheap labour, the living standards of millions were lifted. At the same time, however, an immense social gulf opened up between the bulk of the population and a tiny layer of billionaires and multi-billionaires that benefitted from capitalist restoration.

Xi's claims to be implementing "socialism with Chinese characteristics" and to have ended absolute poverty, as well as the regime's implementation of a scientifically-based COVID-19 elimination strategy reflect, in the final analysis, a fear of mounting social tensions. The legacy of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, a momentous social upheaval that was deformed by the CCP's Stalinist perspective, continues to reside in the widespread popular belief that the social interests of the masses should take precedence over the private profits of a few.

Despite Xi's boast to have eliminated narrowly defined absolute poverty—on schedule!—some 600 million Chinese cannot afford to rent, let alone buy a property, in a major city.

At the same time, China has more dollar billionaires—many of whom are CCP members or in advisory bodies—than the US. The regime’s recent moves to rein in some huge Chinese tech giants like Alibaba and Tencent are aimed both at promoting, falsely, a populist egalitarian image in line with its claims to be promoting “common prosperity,” and ensuring that the super-wealthy do not challenge the CCP’s monopoly on power.

So-called Xi Jinping Thought, along with the CCP’s rewriting of history, nevertheless reflect the interests of the Chinese oligarchs. In essence, it boils down to Xi’s “Dream” for China’s “national rejuvenation,” which, he claims, was the aim of the CCP from its founding. While the CCP opposed the imperialist subjugation of China from the outset, it recognised that such a struggle necessitated the unity of Chinese workers with their class brothers and sisters internationally to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism globally. The nationalist perspective of the CCP today is the diametrical opposite—far from overthrowing the current imperialist order, it wants a seat at the imperialist table, which it currently does not have.

The internationalist and socialist program that animated the founding of the CCP is what workers and youth in China need—like their counterparts in the US and around the world—as they face the rising danger of war and a worsening economic and social outlook.

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