

## The Choice of History and the Expectations of the People<sup>\*</sup>

In 1949, on the eve of the founding of the PRC, Mao Zedong rallied all members of the Central Committee of the CPC with these words: “Securing nationwide victory is merely the first step in a long march.”

Sixty-seven years later, at a grand ceremony marking the 95th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, declared: “Today, we are closer than ever before in our history to the goal of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and also more confident and more capable than ever of making this goal a reality.”

China is now at a momentous juncture in history. It is embracing unprecedented opportunities while confronting unprecedentedly arduous domestic tasks and navigating a global landscape that is undergoing profound turbulence and restructuring.

The CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core has borne its historical responsibility to ensure China’s development, upheld wisdom and courage in reform and innovation, and united over 1.3 billion people on the new Long March toward realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012.

<sup>\*</sup> The Chinese version of the article was released by Xinhua News Agency in January 2017.

## Crucial Leadership for a Critical Time

In the autumn of 2016, beneath the huge Party emblem of the hammer and sickle, members of the CPC Central Committee unanimously adopted the communique of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee. The communique formally put forward the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core.

For a country and a political party, the leadership core is of vital importance.

While remaining in a period of strategic opportunity, China—the world's second-largest economy—faces increasingly complex and harsh domestic and international conditions.

With over 88 million members, the world's biggest political party is leading the world's most populous nation—a nation of some 1.3 billion people—in a vast, diverse land of over 9.6 million square kilometers with a civilization history of over 5,000 years. Steering such a great nation through crucial historical juncture demands extraordinary strategic vision and unshakable determination.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party Central Committee has led the country with an overall grasp of the strategic landscape and the prevailing trend of development, initiating campaigns, introducing new practices and opening up new prospects in its great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Over the past four years, China has made major breakthroughs in promoting reform and ensuring stability while advancing development, in domestic affairs, foreign affairs and national defense, and in the governance of the Party, the state and the armed forces.

Solid strides have been taken in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and in charting a new course for state governance.

New governance philosophies and ideas are continually being refined and new strategies and measures are being implemented—from the Two Centenary Goals to the vision of the Chinese Dream, from the Five-sphere Integrated Plan to the Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy, from pursuing progress while ensuring stability to adapting to the new normal of economic development, and from the country's new development philosophy to its supply-side structural reform. The integration of Marxism with China's reality has reached a new level, enriching the theoretical framework of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

With unyielding determination, corruption is being rooted out, and with fearless resolve, reforms are being pushed forward. Profound military and national defense reforms have been launched with the goal of building strong, combat-ready armed forces.

The country remains committed to leaving no one behind on its path to prosperity. And its people-centered development philosophy is forging a deep emotional bond between the Party and the people.

China's voice is growing stronger on the world stage, and its presence in the global landscape is becoming ever more prominent, as evidenced by the G20 Hangzhou Summit, where China was at the forefront of global economic governance reform; by the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Beijing, which helped shape the trajectory of the global economy; by the BRI, which has garnered the support of over 100 countries and international organizations; and by the establishment of the AIIB, which has attracted 57 founding members.

Over the past four years, the CPC Central Committee with Xi at its core has set an example for mission-driven leadership and practical action, strengthening the Chinese people's confidence in and expectations for their country and their future.

"The Chinese nation has accumulated tremendous strength over the centuries, and it is now time to achieve the great Chinese Dream," Xi said.

## Enforcing Strict Party Self-Governance

“China’s success hinges on the CPC, especially on the Party’s efforts to exercise effective self-supervision and full and rigorous self-governance,” Xi said.

In the late autumn of 2016, the CPC convened a plenary session of its central committee to study the major issue of strict Party self-governance in every respect. It issued a historic normative document, providing a guiding framework for the advancement of Party building.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Xi at its core has upheld the Party’s leadership with a deep sense of historical responsibility.

“Our responsibility is to unite and lead the entire Party and people of all ethnic groups in continuing to strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, ensuring that China stands firm among the world’s nations and contributes even more to humanity,” Xi told journalists from home and abroad shortly after he was elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee over four years ago.

Since then, the CPC Central Committee with Xi at its core has firmly steered China’s course. Xi personally heads key leadership groups, including a leading group for comprehensively deepening reform. The CPC Central Committee conducts quarterly reviews of economic affairs, and the Party has stepped up its leadership over various sectors.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi has placed great importance on efforts to secure the foundations of the Party’s long-term governance.

Primary-level Party organizations have been enhanced in rural and urban communities, strict Party self-governance campaigns have been extended to the primary level, and Party officials have been dispatched to the front line of poverty alleviation.

With over four million Party organizations becoming strongholds

of action and more than 88 million Party members serving as role models, the CPC has reinforced its deep connection with the people and solidified the foundations of its governance.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Xi at its core has set an example in improving conduct and enforcing strict self-governance.

Xi presided over a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on November 30, 2016. The meeting issued regulations concerning office space, housing, vehicles, travel arrangements, staff allocation and annual leave for Party and state leaders, and saw the expansion and refinement of the central Party leadership's eight-point decision on improving conduct that had been issued four years prior.

According to the regulations, Party and state leaders must vacate their offices in a timely manner upon retirement. They must not be allocated vehicles in excess of pertinent standards or make excessive travel arrangements. They must travel light with small entourages to minimize the impact on people's daily lives.

Over the past four years, more than 200 senior officials, including Zhou Yongkang, Bo Xilai, Guo Boxiong, Xu Caihou, Ling Jihua and Su Rong, have been investigated for corruption. Over one million officials have faced disciplinary action, and approximately 200,000 have been handed punishments for violating the eight-point decision.

During the same period, the Party has erected institutional safeguards against corruption through strengthened disciplinary inspection and supervision mechanisms, renewed its focus on Party ideals, ethics and family values, and launched large-scale education campaigns.

"If we do not offend hundreds of corrupt officials, we will offend 1.3 billion Chinese people," Xi said.

A recent public opinion survey has revealed that over 90 percent of respondents are satisfied with China's anti-corruption achievements.

All of these points indicate that the deterrence effect of China's anti-corruption work has taken hold, that the mechanisms to prevent and reject corruption are taking shape, and that the fight against corruption is gaining unstoppable momentum.

### Pressing Forward with Reform

Xiaogang Village in east China's Anhui Province is the birthplace of the "household contract responsibility system" and the starting point of China's reform.

On April 25, 2016, Xi leaned down in the courtyard of an old farmhouse in the village to examine the contract that marked the beginning of this historic transformation, revisiting what has been called "a thunderclap of reform in China."

This visit was his first local inspection after the release of the 13th Five-year Plan (2016–2020). His first inspection as general secretary of the CPC Central Committee had been to Shenzhen, which is at the forefront of China's reform and opening up.

From the two symbolic venues, he made essential declarations regarding China's reform, which marked a critical choice for the country hit by overlapping domestic economic pressures and a sluggish global economy.

Amid doubts over the direction of China's reform, Xi made clear that both the scope and depth of reform in China have expanded significantly compared to the past, and while easy and widely accepted reforms have been completed, those that remain are the toughest.

Labeled as the central figure in China's new wave of reform by *Time* magazine, Xi has acted as a helmsman, guiding this transformation with meticulous attention to detail.

Over the past four years, China has navigated risks and challenges, breaking barriers and innovating along the way. With swift and decisive action, the framework for comprehensive reform has taken shape.

At the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, Xi emphasized that reform must not be confined to a single field or a few areas—it must be pursued across all sectors.

This round of reform has moved at an unprecedented pace. In just three years, the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform has convened 31 meetings and approved 274 policy documents.

Major structural reforms have been implemented, ranging from economic and political systems to cultural, social and environmental governance and Party building. Key breakthroughs have been made in state-owned enterprises, judicial reform, and fiscal and tax systems as a clearer roadmap for comprehensive reform has been formed.

“We must have the courage to face challenges head-on and actively seek solutions,” Xi told local officials in early 2015.

Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* noted that China’s reform will not be easy to implement, as each reform measure will encounter resistance from entrenched interests.

Take streamlining government administration as an example. This effort was initially seen as a “self-imposed revolution” as bureaucratic hurdles were commonplace, not because they were impossible to remove, but because they were profitable.

Previously untouchable issues, ranging from salary reforms among centrally administered enterprises to the reforms on the rural land system and the price mechanisms, were tackled head-on. Military restructuring also saw bold moves, eliminating internal corruption and advancing structural reforms in China’s defense and armed forces.

Comprehensive reform is a vast undertaking that cannot be addressed through piecemeal fixes. From policy formulation to pilot programs, implementation must be both strategic and pragmatic.

Reforms in the judicial sector, among state-owned enterprises and in the country’s supervisory system were pursued through both top-down planning and grassroots experimentation. These

reforms were advanced under the rule of law, and legal frameworks were strengthened in the process.

Xi has personally led key reform efforts, heading multiple leadership groups, including those for cybersecurity, economic affairs and military restructuring.

Singapore's *Lianhe Zaobao* observed that Xi's direct involvement in reform leadership has exceeded expectations, demonstrating firm resolve at the highest level.

Over four years, China has adapted to the economic "new normal" and driven forward its supply-side structural reform agenda. With notable progress made in cutting overcapacity, reducing inventory, deleveraging, lowering costs and strengthening areas of weaknesses, the Chinese economy has maintained steady momentum despite global uncertainties.

Reform centers on the people. From his early years in the countryside to leading national reforms today, Xi has remained committed to improving people's livelihoods.

Business registration reforms have lowered barriers for entrepreneurs. Policies promoting knowledge-based income distribution have spurred innovation. The country's two-child policy addressed demographic challenges. Step by step, reforms have expanded from addressing basic needs to seeking broader development, moving focus from material well-being to rights and opportunities.

A more prosperous China, shaped by reform, is steadily emerging.

### Leading China to the World's Center Stage

"We must act in accordance with the trend of history, promote a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation, and build a community with a shared future for humanity," Xi said.

Yet the world is not at peace. As former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once observed, the international system is undergoing

changes not seen in 400 years.

Across the globe, economic and political gravity is shifting from the North Atlantic to the Pacific, and the rise of emerging markets and developing nations is unstoppable. Geopolitical complexities are intertwining, global economic recovery remains sluggish, and regional hotspots and global challenges are emerging one after another.

Back at the end of 2012, during his first diplomatic engagement after being elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Xi made an important judgment that the international community is increasingly becoming a community with a shared future.

This judgment has since served as the fundamental guiding principle for China's comprehensive participation in global governance.

From snow-covered Moscow to lush green Bali and the global spotlight of the United Nations podium, Xi has over the past four years expounded on the essence of solidarity and shared destiny, while articulating China's philosophical wisdom to the world.

By advocating a global governance system centered on the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity, Xi has demonstrated strategic thinking on China's long-term relations with the world and brought new momentum to the establishment of a new international order, according to Ross Terrill, a researcher at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University and the chief editor of the book, *Xi Jinping's China Renaissance: Historical Mission and Great Power Strategy*.

Xi has chaired multiple study sessions of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. These sessions have focused on China's relationship with the world, with topics including the peaceful development path, free trade zones, and global governance.

China has formulated a series of top-level designs and pioneering strategies.

It has put forward new diplomatic concepts, thoughts and strategies—from taking an ethical approach to the balance of justice and personal interests to adopting a style of neighborhood diplomacy that features amity, sincerity, mutual benefits and inclusiveness; from proposing that sincerity, real results, amity and good faith should be hallmarks of cooperation with Africa to developing a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation; and from building a global network of closer partnerships to advocating a security outlook that is guided by the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity and emphasizes common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

As the host country of the G20 Hangzhou Summit, China chaired the summit to achieve a series of pioneering, guiding and institutional outcomes, leaving a profound Chinese imprint on the history of the G20.

Xi has played a significant role in countless events over the last four years, contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions.

From the Pacific coast to Central Asia and Europe, from Northeast Asia and Russia to Southeast Asia and Africa, Xi's recent visits have followed the grand blueprint for the BRI.

When President Xi announced the BRI in 2013, he was reviving the memory of prosperity during the time of the ancient Silk Road that people had long been familiar with, said Peter Frankopan, a historian at Oxford University.

“China's opening up is not about putting on a solo act but about welcoming all parties to participate together,” Xi said. “It is about building not a private garden but a shared park for all nations.”

From proposing the BRI to implementing the negative list approach in pilot free trade zones, and from launching the AIIB to establishing the Silk Road Fund, Xi Jinping has sent a clear message of resolve and confidence to the world amid rising anti-globalization sentiment, stressing the pursuit of a higher level of opening up.

In locations such as Beijing, Washington, Paris and Hang-

zhou, Xi met with US President Barack Obama to address climate change on multiple occasions between 2014 and 2016, pushing China and the United States to issue three joint statements on the issue. China also took the lead in ratifying the Paris Agreement in 2016.

Then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praised China's effective actions under Xi's outstanding leadership.

The world will remember that China upheld justice, voiced fairness and extended its helping hand during the Ebola outbreak, during poverty alleviation campaigns in the world's least-developed countries, and during crises in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine.

Over the last four years, Xi's 24 overseas visits have covered 51 countries on five continents, and he has held meetings with about 220 foreign heads of state and government leaders at home. China's circle of friends has grown ever-larger.

Xi's first speech at the UN podium was interrupted by applause 15 times over 20 minutes. On the Tian'anmen Rostrum, his Victory Day speech mentioned "peace" a total of 18 times. And in Johannesburg, he announced ten China-Africa cooperation plans, envisioning a bright future for 2.4 billion people.

A recent survey on the positive image of leaders from ten major countries conducted by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government saw respondents from 30 nations rank Xi in first place.

"We Chinese people won't be swayed by fallacies," Xi said. "We do not make trouble, but we are not afraid of it. No country should entertain the fantasy that China will barter away its core national interests or allow its sovereignty, security and development interests to be infringed upon."

Chinese leaders have prioritized national sovereignty and security, focused on regional stability, and upheld peaceful development as the main theme when handling affairs such as the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone and the effective countering of the so-called South China Sea arbitration.

## The March Toward Great Rejuvenation

Days before the 2016 Spring Festival, Xi visited Jinggangshan in Jiangxi Province for the third time. In Shenshan Village, Mao-ping Township, he addressed the residents: “Our Party is dedicated wholeheartedly to serving the people. On the path of poverty alleviation, no impoverished family shall be left behind, and no struggling individual shall be neglected.”

At that very moment, the country's 13th Five-year Plan period commenced.

The nation now has only four years left to achieve its First Centenary Goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and just over three decades left to realize its Second Centenary Goal of building itself into a great modern socialist country in all respects.

“When I was a child, my mother gave me a picture-story book series—*The Legend of Yue Fei*. One of its more than ten volumes illustrates Yue Fei's mother tattooing four characters meaning ‘serve the country with the utmost loyalty’ across his back. The story deeply impressed me,” Xi once said, sharing the background of his patriotic convictions.

While visiting the National Museum's *The Road to Rejuvenation* exhibition after the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi, who had just been elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, declared China's unwavering determination to achieve its aspirations by launching a grand campaign to realize the Chinese Dream.

China's impoverished population dwindled from 770 million at the beginning of its reform to 55.75 million by the end of 2015. Another ten million were lifted out of poverty in 2016. China has helped over 700 million people rise out of poverty in just over three decades, achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goal on poverty reduction ahead of schedule.

China's economic significance on the global stage also continued to rise. The proportion of China's economic aggregate in the

world economy increased from 1.8 percent at the beginning of reform and opening up to 14.8 percent in 2015.

The new development philosophy is taking root, innovation-driven vitality is emerging, initiatives such as “Beautiful China” and “Healthy China” are benefiting the people, and major national strategies are being transformed from blueprints into realities—the governance philosophy of the CPC Central Committee with Xi at its core has strengthened China’s foundations and ensured its development forward.

China is at a crucial moment in achieving its great dream, facing challenges such as eliminating absolute poverty, phasing out excess production capacities, combating air pollution, and advancing reforms in key areas like its fiscal, tax and financial systems. In the course of human history, no country of China’s scale has ever successfully overcome the middle-income trap.

“To claim new victories in a struggle with many new historic features, there are still many snow-capped peaks that we must scale, many grasslands that we must cross, and also many Loushan Passes and Lazikou Passes that we must conquer,” Xi said in a speech at the ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Red Army’s Long March.

From the Third to the Sixth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy has been progressively laid out, guiding the country toward becoming a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Since President Xi took office, he has led China’s economy toward a great transformation for more balanced development and has firmly promoted reforms in many key areas to better adapt to the adjustment of the global economy, said David Lipton, first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

When he attended the Boao Forum, former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin told media that he had read every sentence of the French edition of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* carefully, and that he had shared his reading notes and exchanged

views on innovation with Xi when they met.

By November 2016, *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* had been published in 12 languages, with more than 500,000 copies distributed in over 100 countries and regions.

The Chinese nation has been nourished by the accumulated cultural heritage of lengthy struggles to become an unyielding force that fuels the country's confidence in achieving its great dream.

"We are following our own path with an unparalleled vast stage, immensely deep historical foundations and an incredibly strong determination to move forward," Xi said.

"The new Long March to advance socialism with Chinese characteristics must be a continuous relay, and each generation must walk its own Long March well," Xi said in July 2016 in Ningxia, the site where different forces of the Red Army finally united and finished their historic march.

Work logs and travel maps bear witness to the footprints of senior CPC leaders. Xi and other leaders have traveled across the nation.

"Socialism is built through hard work," Xi said.

At this crucial stage, Xi has naturally emerged as the core of the CPC Central Committee and the entire Party through his efforts in guiding and advancing the country's great struggle, great project and great cause. And it was once again a crucial, solemn choice made by the Party and the people.

China's century-old dream was once so distant. Its national rejuvenation is now within reach.

On November 9, 2016, Chinese astronauts Jing Haipeng and Chen Dong held a space-to-ground communication with Xi from approximately 380 kilometers above Earth. Xi urged them to "strengthen their unity and overcome challenges together," encouraging them to persevere and successfully complete their follow-up missions.

Nine days later, the two astronauts, who had worked aboard the

space station for 33 days, successfully returned to Earth, marking a milestone in China's manned space program.

Today's China is pushing forward with the most significant reforms in governance, and a grand blueprint for reform is unfolding with great momentum at a critical stage in realizing the Chinese Dream.

"It is like a ship, visible from the shore, with its masthead emerging on the horizon. It is like the rising sun, seen from the mountaintop, radiating brilliant light as it breaks through the dawn," Mao Zedong once wrote.