

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد      بدین یوم ویر زنده یک تن مېباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم      از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/05112016-preparing-for-difficult-reforms-chinese-party-leaders-consolidate-power-analysis/>

## Preparing For Difficult Reforms: Chinese Party Leaders Consolidate Power – Analysis



China's Xi Jinping. Photo by Antilong, Wikipedia Commons.

By Frank Ching

NOVEMBER 5, 2016

China's Communist Party gives Xi Jinping new title, "core" of leadership, to speed economic and military reforms.

China's leader, Xi Jinping, already general secretary of the ruling Communist Party, president, and commander of the country's military forces has been given another new title – "core" of the party leadership. The title, unused for the past 14 years, elevates Xi's status to a higher level than that of his predecessor, Hu Jintao. As Xi prepares to push for tough economic and military

reforms, his unchallenged position could prove to be valuable armor – or it could make a shinier target for his opponents.

Notice came in a communiqué issued at the end of a four-day session of several hundred party leaders in late October, and China watchers immediately recognized the significance of the statement urging all party members to “closely unite around the Communist Party of China Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core.”

The concept of a “core” leader was not used during the first 40 years of the People’s Republic of China. In fact, the title does not appear in the constitution of the Communist Party of China, so the rank comes with no attached power or responsibilities.

Mao Zedong, the party’s founder and chairman, never used the title “core” though he was hailed as the great leader, great teacher, great supreme commander and great helmsman and his word was law.

Similarly, Deng Xiaoping eschewed titles as superfluous and never became the formal party leader, premier or president though he was universally described as “China’s paramount leader” and governed by force of personality.

Yet Deng invented the title “core,” bestowing it on Jiang Zemin, whom he chose as the party leader after the tumult of the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 and the downfall of General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, who had sympathized with protesting students. Because Jiang did not have the standing of an old revolutionary, Deng boosted his status by saying that just as Mao was the core of the first generation of leaders and Deng himself the core of the second generation, so Jiang was the core of the third generation.

The whole party was enjoined to rally around “the Party Central Committee with Comrade Jiang Zemin at its core.”

The title helped. It also helped that Deng lived through Jiang’s first term. Buoyed by the designation of “core” – and lingering fears about the consequences of defying the Party since Tiananmen – he pushed through major reforms of state-owned enterprises; transformed the party from a revolutionary into a governing party; and developed the theory of “the three represents,” which significantly widened the party’s base.

In selecting Jiang as the post-Tiananmen party leader, Deng at the same time chose Hu Jintao to succeed Jiang in 2002. When it came time for Jiang to step down, Deng had been dead for five years and Jiang was unwilling to raise anyone else to the level of core leader. Throughout Hu’s 10-year tenure, the expression “the party Central Committee with Comrade Hu Jintao as General Secretary” was used instead.

Of course Hu, not being a core leader, could not pass on this designation to Xi when stepping down in 2012.

So, for the first time, an existing general secretary has been elected a core leader by other party leaders rather than designated as such by a strongman. Arguably, then, Xi has more legitimacy as core leader than Jiang, who was given that status by one man, albeit a highly respected revolutionary leader. The designation certainly puts Xi on a higher level than any other Chinese leader – giving him more authority to deal with the country’s myriad problems, from the economic slowdown and corruption to internal security to the South China Sea.

Ever since he became party leader in 2012 and head of state in 2013, Xi has been concentrating power in his own hands, creating and heading institutions responsible for national security and economic reform among others.

Such activities stand in stark contrast to Deng, who spurned titles such as president, premier or party leader. The avid card-player’s only title was honorary chairman of the China Bridge Association, and the party’s decision to revive the “core” designation suggests that Xi, though powerful, may not be in the league of Mao or Deng.

Xi can most appropriately be compared to Jiang, the only other leader to govern as core leader in the party’s 95-year history. Deng may have felt that his successor needed the core leader designation as a boost from the very start to push through needed reforms.

In 2013, at the first plenum under Xi’s watch, the party rolled out impressive reform plans that included allowing the market to play a “decisive role” in allocation of resources, safeguarding the authority of the constitution and law; improving protection of human rights, and allowing farmers the same benefits as city dwellers. But when the Chinese stock market crashed in 2015, the government intervened rather than allowing the market to decide. Non-implementation of many reforms has been attributed to opposition by vested interests, and Xi’s power grab is explained as a necessary condition for the realization of such reforms.

Now, as core leader, Xi would find it difficult to explain further delay in reforms.

At the October party meeting, it was disclosed that the anti-corruption campaign, a hallmark of the Xi administration for four years, will not be wound down after the party has been purified and instead will become a permanent feature. The meeting’s rhetorical emphasis was on strengthening party discipline.

This move is, at least in part, meant to remove any remaining obstacles in Xi’s path. After all, there isn’t much point in designating a core leader if party members – especially other party leaders – can flout his decisions at will. The core leader may, to some extent, function as part of a collective leadership.

Further action is likely next year, when, according to convention, Xi is expected to unveil who will govern with him during his second five-year term and who his successor will be in five years. Xi may well bend mandatory retirement rules – age 68 for top leaders and 65 for senior-level officials – to allow certain allies to remain in power. After all, these rules were set in place by Jiang in 2002 for political reasons, to ensure the removal of an opponent.

Thus, speculation is rife that Wang Qishan, who is in charge of the anti-corruption campaign but who will be 69 years old next year, will be granted an exemption from the current rules, if the rules aren't ditched outright.

Also, Xi may delay unveiling a successor next year so as not to turn himself into a lame duck.

He may also dispense with the two-term limit imposed since Deng's time and refuse to retire in 2022. After all, he will only be 69, relatively young as a core leader and the same age as Hillary Clinton today, who is a year younger than Donald Trump. If that happens, Xi would have cemented his status as a lasting core of the party's leadership.