

# The 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee Leadership with Comrade Xi Jinping as General Secretary

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Authoritative party documents refer to the prescribed dynamic of elite politics in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as its “collective leadership system.” Despite widespread impressions of Xi Jinping as a rule-busting strongman leader, PRC media consistently depict the current Politburo and its Standing Committee as operating in the same manner they did during the Hu Jintao period: as an oligarchic collective leadership according to the system’s norms.

## The “Collective Leadership System”

Throughout the post-Mao period, the “collective leadership system” (集体领导制) and its elements have been incorporated in the party’s most authoritative public documents: successive party constitutions, political reports delivered to party congresses and Central Committee plenums, and key leader speeches. These documents uniformly state that the system entails two fundamental elements which together enable effective policy-making: collective decision-making by consensus, and a division of policy responsibility among the individual members of the leadership. The appendix to this article transcribes references to the system in such documents.

### *Mao Era Background*

The party’s “collective leadership system” has traversed a difficult course since its establishment in the mid-1950s.<sup>1</sup> The roots of the system were set down in 1948, on the eve of the communist victory in the Chinese civil war. In September 1948, shortly after the party headquarters were reestablished at Xibaipo, Hebei, the party leadership headed by Mao Zedong ordered the strengthening of the party committee system through the CCP apparatus. The long struggle first against the Japanese and then to overthrow the Republican government had encouraged two tendencies that the new order sought to change. One was a decentralization of decision-making and increased autonomy of party units at lower levels from central direction. The other was the tendency, in a context of prolonged political struggle and war, of party chiefs at lower levels to assume autocratic decision-making authority within their units. The 1948 order thus sought both to recentralize power in the hands of Mao and the party’s center and to break down the power of local party chiefs.

Although the Politburo is effectively the party committee of the party’s top leadership, the 1948 order did not apply there. The 1945 Seventh Party Congress had not appointed a Standing Committee, and the larger Politburo rarely met. Instead, decision-making was concentrated in the five-man Secretariat, where Mao Zedong dominated as party chairman.

Establishment of the collective leadership system at the top began only at the 1956 Eighth Party Congress, which restored the Politburo Standing Committee and subordinated the Secretariat to it. As party chairman, Mao Zedong presided over the six-man Standing Committee. Deng Xiaoping as party general secretary—a post abolished in 1938 but restored at the Eighth Congress—presided over the Secretariat, which included seven members and three alternates. Deng, as the only leader to sit on both the Politburo Standing Committee and the Secretariat, was the link between policy decision-making and policy implementation. The larger Politburo, whose day-to-day implementation was supervised by the Secretariat, played a backbench role of ratifying decisions made by its Standing Committee.

As may be seen in the political report delivered by Liu Shaoqi and in Deng Xiaoping's report to the congress on revisions to the party constitution, the strong assertion of collective leadership principles was stimulated by two factors. One was the leadership's response to de-Stalinization in the USSR, prompted by Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" to the 20<sup>th</sup> Soviet Party Congress in February 1956. The other was the leadership's recognition that, with the revolution won and "socialist transformation" of the economy and society completed, the party's foremost tasks of governance and China's modernization required change in the leadership structure and decision-making processes.

Under this system, the Politburo Standing Committee brought together the heads of each of the major party, government, and military hierarchies in the political order. The Secretariat deployed a parallel delineation of "individual responsibility," with each of its members presiding over specific policy portfolios. In 1958, this structure was complemented by the establishment of Central Committee leading small groups (LSG) subordinate to the Secretariat to coordinate policy implementation in five major policy sectors.

Not long after it was established, this system fell afoul of rising tensions in the top leadership. By 1959, Mao began to have second thoughts about it, and in the early 1960s he started to work against the system to reassert his authority. With the onset of the Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1966, the system collapsed. Thereafter, the Cultural Revolution Small Group displaced the Politburo Standing Committee in deciding major political issues. The 1969 Ninth Party Congress appointed a new Politburo Standing Committee, but it never met. The Politburo continued to meet occasionally, though Mao routinely did not attend, relying instead on Lin Biao and later Zhou Enlai to preside.

#### *Post-Mao Restoration and Elaboration*

Following Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping and his leadership collaborators worked to restore the collective leadership system, stressing with renewed force principles of collective decision-making and individual responsibility in a landmark August 1980 speech on reform of the political system. Key steps in their efforts were the restoration of the Secretariat and the adoption of new regulations for intra-party politics at the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee's Fifth Plenum in February 1980 and the piecemeal resurrection of

key policy small groups thereafter. As before, the impetus for restoring the system was a need for effective decision-making (accentuated this time by the advent of the reform era), and the desire to prevent any leader from establishing dictatorial power (accentuated this time by the experience of Mao's grotesque politics and policies in his last two decades in power).

The 12<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in September 1982 restored the collective leadership system essentially as it had been created at the Eighth Party Congress in 1956. The party congress established a six-man Politburo Standing Committee, a 25-member Politburo, and a 10-member Secretariat. It abolished altogether the post of party chairman. Reflecting the principal elements of the collective leadership system, the six members of the Politburo Standing Committee represented the major institutional hierarches: the party Central Committee (Hu Yaobang), the National People's Congress (Ye Jianying), the PRC president (Li Xiannian), the State Council (Zhao Ziyang), the Central Military Commission and the party Central Advisory Commission (Deng Xiaoping), and the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (Chen Yun). The members of the Secretariat each presided over coordination of a specific policy sector. The major difference between the 1956 system and its 1982 reincarnation was that in the latter, the general secretary, Hu Yaobang, presided over both the Politburo Standing Committee and the Secretariat—eliminating the “two centers” of the 1956 system.

Major changes in this system were adopted to enforce collective leadership following the demotion of Hu Yaobang as general secretary in January 1987, in part for abusing the Secretariat at the expense of the Politburo Standing Committee. At the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress later that year, the Secretariat was downgraded from ten members to four. Rules were adopted that mandated routine reporting by the Politburo Standing Committee on its work to the full Politburo, and, judging by Xinhua's unprecedented reporting, the Politburo began meeting roughly once a month. Finally, according to Xinhua's account of the first meeting of the new Politburo, new rules were adopted to promote collective decision-making.<sup>2</sup>

The subsequent Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao leaderships refined the 1987 system. The 1992 14<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and 1993 Eighth National People's Congress concentrated the top leadership posts in the party, state, and military in the hands of the party general secretary. The 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress located leadership of all of the major Central Committee leading small groups in the hands of Politburo Standing Committee members, completing a trend that had begun the previous decade under Jiang Zemin. That change not only made the Standing Committee the core of leadership decision-making on personnel and policy, but also placed it in charge of supervision of policy coordination and implementation. These modifications concentrated authority over all major policy arenas in the hands of the party general secretary and the members of the Politburo Standing Committee.

## The System under Xi Jinping

### *Assessments by Party Intellectuals*

Three recent books by party intellectuals affirm the contours and details of the preceding narrative worked out from analysis of party documents and other Chinese sources. Two of these books also assert that the decision-making dynamic of the Xi Jinping leadership continues the collective leadership processes that prevailed under Hu Jintao.

The first book, by Qinghua University political economist Hu Angang, provides a relatively detailed analysis of the evolution and operation of the collective leadership in party politics. Entitled *China's Collective Leadership System* (中国集体领导体制) and published by People's University Press in Beijing in July 2013, the book appeared too early to assess the dynamic of the new Xi Jinping leadership.<sup>3</sup> Following its publication, the book received considerable fanfare in central media. Excerpts were published on the *People's Daily* website, in the current affairs magazine *Observation Post* (瞭望), and in the English and Chinese editions of the weekly *Beijing Review* (北京周刊).<sup>4</sup>

Up to a point, Hu seems well placed to discuss leadership processes. He was a delegate to the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, and has a decade-long track record of writing about party leadership institutions and processes—a topic generally not discussed in any detail in PRC media. He is also an occasional columnist on the *People's Daily* website, and editor of *National Report* (国情报告).

Hu's book narrates the evolution of the CCP's effort to instill collective leadership processes in leadership politics from beginnings in the 1920s down to the era of “mature” collective leadership” under Hu Jintao. Hu posits five elements to the collective leadership system: division of policy labor among the leadership collective; collective turnover in the leadership; collective learning through group study of important issues; collective leadership through routinized inspection tours; and collective decision-making. According to Hu, the collective leadership follows a “democratic decision-making process” that builds on “the full sharing of information on a timely basis in a frank manner.” To establish political consensus, “democratic procedures and majority rule are followed” in formulating policy. Effective implementation of Politburo Standing Committee decisions in turn requires that its members speak with one voice. “Since each individual leader has different experiences, knowledge, and information channels, they may each have different opinions,” Hu notes. But the Standing Committee “should create only a collective image, not images of its individual members.”<sup>5</sup>

In February 2014, Hu published a sequel that updated *China's Collective Leadership System* and that does address the “collective leadership system” under Xi Jinping. Entitled *Democratic Decision-Making—China's Collective Leadership System* (民主决策—中国集体领导体制), the book was also published by People's University Press in its “Comprehensively Building a Moderately Well-Off Society” series, edited by Zheng Hangsheng, a People's University professor, and by Cui Yaozhong, a deputy director of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Department.<sup>6</sup>

Hu's sequel includes a long chapter assessing the process by which the new Xi Politburo Standing Committee leadership was selected and tabulating their educational backgrounds, service in the provinces and in central party leadership organs, and other characteristics. The succession from the Hu to the Xi leadership not only demonstrated an efficient and effective generational turnover of power, Hu asserts, but also put in place a collective leadership well suited to pursuit of the primary goal assigned to it by the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress: achievement of a moderately well-off society by 2020.

The third book addresses the evolution of the collective leadership system under Xi Jinping more directly. Entitled *Decision-Making China—The Historical Evolution of the Chinese Decision-Making System since Reform and Opening Up* and published in late 2014 by People's Press, the book was written by Shen Chuanliang, a professor at the Central Party School CCP History Institute.

Shen's book offers several chapters analyzing party leadership decision-making processes from the 1920s down through the Hu Jintao period along the same lines as Hu Angang's books, though with a somewhat different periodization. The book concludes with a long chapter on collective decision-making under Xi Jinping up through early 2014.

Shen sees several steps undertaken by the Xi leadership as strengthening the power of the Politburo and its Standing Committee in order to implement the "comprehensive" reforms mandated at the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress that appointed those groups. He explains that the addition of three new Central Committee small groups—the Comprehensive Deepening Reform LSG, the National Security Commission, and the Internet Security and Informatization LSG—is warranted by the crosscutting responsibilities each addresses across several policy sectors. Thus, the Comprehensive Deepening Reform LSG is intended "to serve as the leadership core to take full charge of the overall situation and to coordinate various aspects, so as to ensure the favorable advance of reform and the fulfillment of various reform tasks." The power of these new groups is apparent in each case from their direction by Xi Jinping and multiple Politburo Standing Committee members. These new groups, Shen argues, strengthen rather than undermine the authority of the Politburo and its Standing Committee.

Regarding Politburo processes, Shen notes, Xi has repeatedly stressed the necessity of following the collective decision-making rules and procedures in managing Politburo work and upholding democratic centralism. Xi has also frequently stressed the importance of enclosing power "in a cage of institutions," following the PRC constitution and law, and upholding the party constitution in enforcing intra-party processes and regulations. As a result, Shen argues, the Xi leadership has demonstrated a clear capacity to take the initiative and sustain force behind its decisions. He offers a detailed analysis of the drafting of the Third Plenum's 60-point "comprehensive reform" decision as an example of these processes at work.

*Persistence of Collective Leadership*

From the regime's perspective, the depiction by Hu Angang and Shen Chuanliang of decision-making dynamics under Xi Jinping and under earlier leaders serves its public image well. The two authors are careful not to tread into the nitty-gritty politics of making policy sausage; what they expose of proceedings in the halls of Zhongnanhai is limited, partly in service to the regime's priority on casting an image of leadership unanimity.

Nevertheless, there are clear indications from PRC media treatment of the Xi leadership that the collective leadership processes prescribed by party documents and depicted by Hu and Shen continue under Xi Jinping. The most obvious is the continued use in the Xi era of routine formulations that connoted collective leadership in the Hu Jintao period. In the same way that PRC media referred to "the 16<sup>th</sup> [and 17<sup>th</sup>] Central Committee leadership with Comrade Hu Jintao as general secretary" (以胡锦涛同志为总书记的党中央领导), they now fastidiously refer to "the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee leadership with Comrade Xi Jinping as general secretary" (以习近平同志为总书记的党中央领导). Paralleling a similar usage in the Hu period, the Xi leadership has frequently been referred to in PRC media since 2012 as "the new Central Committee leadership collective with Xi Jinping as general secretary" (以习近平为总书记新一届中央领导集体).

Throughout Hu Jintao's tenure as general secretary, none of the major ideological innovations that emerged under his leadership—the "scientific development concept," "socialist harmonious society," or the "new socialist countryside"—were credited as the product of his personal ideological genius or his intellectual property. So far, no such innovations have been attributed to Xi Jinping, either. Xi is associated with the broad theme he enunciated on the first day of his tenure—the "China dream"—but rather than being an ideological innovation, this was a keynote, paralleling the general theme pronounced by Hu Jintao at the beginning of his tenure: a focus on "people-centered" policy.

Judging by available evidence, Politburo processes continue as they did under Hu Jintao.<sup>7</sup> The members of the Politburo Standing Committee continue to assume responsibility for specific policy portfolios, apparent from the institutions each presides over beyond the Politburo, from the keynote speeches each delivers at relevant meetings, and from the focus of each leader's published comments during inspection tours

As Shen Chuanliang notes, the creation of four new leading small groups enhances the longstanding trend since the Jiang period of concentrating authority in the Politburo Standing Committee, as table 1 suggests. Xi Jinping does indeed preside over the three new groups that cut across several policy systems (系统): the Comprehensive Deepening Reform LSG, the National Security Commission, and the Internet Security and Informatization LSG. But his leadership in each instance is diluted by the presence of at least two other Politburo Standing Committee members. In the case of the Comprehensive Deepening Reform LSG, its leadership roster includes a majority of four of seven Standing Committee members.

**Table 1**

*Politburo Standing Committee Representation on the Central Committee's Leading & Coordination Small Groups under Hu Jintao & Xi Jinping*

<i>Leading Group</i>	<i>2007–2012</i>	<i>2012–present</i>
Comprehensive Deepening Reform	—	Xi Jinping Li Keqiang, Liu Yunshan, Zhang Gaoli
Finance & Economy	Hu Jintao Wen Jiabao, Li Keqiang	Xi Jinping Li Keqiang, Liu Yunshan, Zhang Gaoli
National Security Commission	—	Xi Jinping Li Keqiang, Zhang Dejiang
National Security LSG	Hu Jintao Xi Jinping	—
Politics and Law	Zhou Yongkang	
Internet Security & Informatization	—	Xi Jinping Li Keqiang, Liu Yunshan
United Front Work	—	Yu Zhengsheng?
Propaganda & Ideology	Li Changchun	Liu Yunshan
Party-Building	Xi Jinping	Liu Yunshan
Foreign Affairs	Hu Jintao Xi Jinping	Xi Jinping
Taiwan Affairs	Hu Jintao	Xi Jinping
Hong Kong & Macao	Xi Jinping	Zhang Dejiang
Tibet Affairs	Jia Qinglin	Yu Zhengsheng
Xinjiang Affairs	Zhou Yongkang	Yu Zhengsheng

Finally, it is true that Xi Jinping has enjoyed a greater media prominence. But this attention to Xi as top leader is a long way from the personality cult trappings erected around Mao and even those around Hua Guofeng after Mao's death. There are no daily quotations from "the thought of Xi Jinping" given prime space on the front page of *People's Daily*, as was done with Mao quotations during his day, and with those of Hua Guofeng for a time thereafter. Xi Jinping so far is not hailed as "the reddest red sun in our hearts" as Mao was, nor do Chinese youth celebrate the anniversary of Xi Jinping swimming anywhere, as they did to mark Mao's 1966 swim in the Yangzi. Xi Jinping's collection of speeches, *The Governance of China*, does not appear intended as an object of mandatory nationwide study and adulation—a "spiritual atom bomb of infinite power"—as much as a presentation of the approach of Xi and his Standing Committee colleagues to the agenda they have been mandated to fulfill. Taken together, the attention to Xi Jinping seems to serve two purposes. First, it seeks to restore the party's sagging public image; and, second, it serves to extinguish widespread impressions of the leadership stagnation from Hu Jintao's second term by putting forward the image of a new leader vigorously attacking the daunting reform agenda bestowed on the new leadership at the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and fleshed out at the November 2013 Third Plenum.

## Implications

The implication of these trends in the Xi period is that the “collective leadership system” and its basic elements remain in place. Xi Jinping may indeed be China’s most powerful leader since Xuanye, the Kangxi Emperor—my favorite Manchu Qing ruler and I hope yours, too, some day. But, even if this is so, Xi is operating within the collective leadership system institutionalized by his predecessors.



## Appendix: Collective Leadership in Key Party Documents and Speeches

### Mao Zedong, “On Strengthening the Party Committee System” (10 September 1948)

“The party committee system is an important party institution for ensuring collective leadership and preventing any individual from monopolizing the conduct of affairs. It has recently been found that in some (of course not all) leading bodies it is the habitual practice for one individual to monopolize the conduct of affairs and decide important problems. Solutions to important problems are decided not by party committee meetings but by one individual, and membership in the party committee has become nominal. Differences of opinion among committee members cannot be resolved and are left unresolved for a long time. Members of the party committee maintain only formal, not real, unity among themselves. This situation must be changed. From now on, a sound system of party committee meetings must be instituted in all leading bodies . . . All important problems . . . must be submitted to the committee for discussion, and the committee members present should express their views fully and reach definite decisions which should then be carried out but the members concerned.” (*Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. IV)

### Central Committee Resolution Concerning the Convocation of Party Congresses and Conferences at All Levels (September 1948)

“Establishing the party committee system is an important step in favorably realizing democratic centralism. Party committees at all levels . . . must adopt a system of collectively discussing issues and reaching decisions. The resolution of important problems should not be left to individuals. Neither collective leadership nor individual responsibility should be overemphasized at the expense of the other.” (in Tony Saich, ed., *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party*, M. E. Sharpe: 1996, p. 1326)

### Liu Shaoqi, Eighth Party Congress political report (15 September 1956)

“In order to bring the party’s role of leadership as much in line as possible with objective realities, to facilitate the summing up of experience and opinions of the masses and reduce the possibility of making mistakes, party organizations at all levels must without exception adhere to the party’s principle of collective leadership and broaden democratic life within the party. All important questions must be thoroughly discussed with the proper collective bodies before decisions are taken, and argument and debate on diverse viewpoints must be allowed without any restraint [so] that various opinions from the masses, both inside and outside the party, may be more or less fully reflected; in other words, [so] that the various aspects present in the course of development of objective realities will be more or less fully reflected. Every leader must be good at listening patiently to and taking into consideration opinions contrary to his own, and resolutely approve opposite views if reasonable, or whatever is reasonable in them; he must

continue to work amicably with and never turn his back on any comrade who, prompted by the correct motives and following normal procedure, may have put forward an opinion contrary to his own. Only in this way can we achieve collective leadership and party unity in deed, and not in name only, and assure that its organization will improve and its cause prosper . . .

“Naturally, the extension of democratic life in our party will not in any way weaken our party’s centralism, but, on the contrary, strengthen it; the full play of the initiative of our party members will not in any way weaken party discipline, but, on the contrary, strengthen it. Similarly, our party’s principle of collective leadership does not in any way negate the need for personal responsibility of the important role of the leader; on the contrary, it is the guarantee that a leader can play his personal role in a correct and most effective way. As everyone knows, the reason why the leader of our party, Comrade Mao Zedong, has played the great role of helmsman in our revolution and enjoys a high prestige in the whole party and among all the people of the country is not only that he knows how to integrate the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the actual practice of the Chinese revolution, but also that he firmly believes in the strength and wisdom of the masses, initiates and advocates the mass line in party work, and steadfastly upholds the party’s principles of democracy and collective leadership.” (15 September 1956 report in *Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Vol.I: Documents*, 103–105)

### **1956 CCP Constitution, Chapter II, Article 19, paragraph 5 (adopted at the Eighth Party Congress):**

“All party organizations operate on the principle of combining collective leadership with individual responsibility. All important issues are to be decided on collectively, and at the same time, each individual is enabled to play his part to the fullest possible extent.” (*Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, vol. I: Documents*, p. 151)

### **Deng Xiaoping report to the 1956 Eighth Party Congress on revision of the CCP Constitution (16 September 1956)**

“Another fundamental question with regard to democratic centralism in the party is the question of collective leadership. Leninism demands of the party that all important questions should be decided by the appropriate collective body, and not by any individual. The 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU has thrown a searching light on the profound significance of adhering to the principle of collective leadership and combating the cult of the individual, and this illuminating lesson has produced a tremendous effect not only on the CPSU but also on the communist parties of all other countries throughout the world. It is obvious that the making of decisions on important questions by individuals runs counter to the party-building principles of the political parties dedicated to the cause of communism and is bound to lead to errors. Only collective leadership, in close touch with the masses, conforms to the principle of democratic centralism and can reduce the possibility of errors to the minimum.

“It has become a long-established tradition in our party to make decisions on important questions by a collective body of the party, and not by any individual . . . [there follows a long discussion of the 1948 Central Committee decision on establishing the party committee system and its statements on strengthening collective leadership].

“However, the application of the system of collective leadership in our party still has many defects. In a small number of party organizations some responsible comrades are still prone to exercise exclusive personal control. They seldom call the necessary regular meetings, or, when they do call meetings of party organizations, they reduce such meetings to a formality. They neither give the participants a chance to prepare themselves beforehand for the questions that are going to be decided on, nor create an atmosphere conducive to free discussion at the meeting; hence decisions are virtually imposed upon the members. This practice of personal dictation under the guise of collective leadership must be resolutely opposed. All questions submitted to the meeting must be discussed and differences of opinion must be permitted. If in the course of discussion a serious difference of opinion arises, the discussion should be suitably prolonged and personal talks undertaken so as to seek real agreement among the great majority, provided this does not affect an urgent matter that needs to be settled immediately. In such cases, nothing should be put to a vote in a hurry, nor should any conclusion be peremptorily drawn.” (16 September 1956 report in *Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, vol. I: *Documents*, pp. 192–96)

**1969 CCP Constitution (adopted at the Ninth Party Congress):**

No reference to collective leadership.

**1973 CCP Constitution (adopted at the Tenth Party Congress):**

No reference to collective leadership.

**1977 CCP Constitution, Article 11 (adopted at the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Congress):**

“Party committees at various levels shall carry out the principle of combining collective leadership with individual responsibility based on a division of labor. They must rely on the political experience of the collective and the wisdom of the collective, collectively deciding all major issues and at the same time allowing individuals to give play to their proper roles.” (Xinhua, August 1977)

## “Several Principles Concerning the Party’s Inner Political Life” (February 1980)

“Collective leadership is one of the very highest principles of party leadership. Party committees at various levels—from the Central Committee on down—must according to this principle implement the system of integrating collective leadership and individual responsibility based on division of work. All matters involving the party’s line, general orientation, and policies, all arrangements for important party work, important cadre appointments and dismissals, transfers and disposition, and important issues of mass interest, as well as all issues that as prescribed by superior party organs ought to be decided by the party committee collective should be decided by collective discussion by the party committee or its standing committee of its secretariat according to circumstance . . .

“Within a party committee, decision-making must strictly follow the principle of the minority subordinate to the majority. The relationship between secretary and members in a party committee is not a hierarchical one, and the secretary is a member equal to all members of the party committee. The secretary or first secretary must be good at focusing everyone’s opinions, and it is not permitted to practice ‘what I say goes’ or patriarchal tactics . . .

“Propaganda about leaders must seek truth from facts, and flattery and exaggerated praise is prohibited. Celebrating birthdays of leaders and sending them gifts or laudatory letters is prohibited. It is not permitted to set up monuments to living leaders, and monuments to deceased leaders should be minimized. It is not permitted to name streets, places, enterprises or schools using leaders’ names.” (Promulgated at the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee’s Fifth Plenum, February 1980, in *三中全会以来重要文献选编 [Selected Important Documents since the Third Plenum]*, Beijing: 2011, pp. 362–63.)

## Deng Xiaoping, “On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership” (18 August 1980)

“Party committees at all levels are genuinely to apply the principle of combining collective leadership and division of labor with individual responsibility. It should be made clear which matters call for collective discussion and which fall within the competence of individuals. Major issues must certainly be discussed and decided upon by the collective. In the process of making decisions, it is essential to observe strictly the principle of majority rule and the principle of one-man-one-vote, a party secretary being entitled only to his single vote. That is, the first secretary must not make decisions by himself. Once a collective decision is made, it should be carried out by all members, each taking his own share of responsibility. No buck-passing should be allowed on any account, and those who neglect their duties should be penalized. As the top person in the collective leadership, the party secretary of a party committee must assume chief responsibility for day-to-day work, while among its other members the stress should be on individual responsibility according to division of labor. We should encourage leading cadres to shoulder responsibility boldly, but this is totally different from making arbitrary

decisions. The two should never be confused.” (18 August 1980, in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, 1975–1982, p. 323)

**Hu Yaobang, 12<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress political report (1982):**

“Generally speaking, the Central Committee, its Politburo, the Politburo’s Standing Committee, and the Secretariat have proved able to follow principles of democratic centralism and collective leadership. The practices of ‘what I say goes’ and of each going his own way are no longer allowed. When important differences of opinion arise, unity of thinking and action can be achieved through full reasoning and criticism and self criticism. The present Central Committee is a united and harmonious leading body and a strong core able to cope with complicated situations.” (*Beijing Review*, 13 September 1982)

**1982 CCP Constitution, Chapter II, Article 10, Paragraph 5:**

“Party committees at all levels function on the principle of combining collective leadership with individual responsibility based on division of labor. All major issues shall be decided upon by the party committees after democratic discussion.” (*Beijing Review*, 20 September 1982)

**Zhao Ziyang, 13<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress political report (25 October 1987):**

“We must start with the central authorities in putting on a sound basis the party’s collective leadership system and democratic centralism. The main points are: Establish a system whereby the Standing Committee of the Politburo makes periodic reports on work to the Politburo, and the Politburo makes periodic reports to the CCP Central Committee plenary sessions; appropriately increase the number of Central Committee plenary sessions so that the Central Committee can better play its role in collective policy-making; formulate work rules and a system for holding democratic life meetings of the Politburo, its Standing Committee, and the Central Secretariat, so as to institutionalize collective leadership and to strengthen supervision and constraints on the party leaders.” (*Beijing Review*)

**Jiang Zemin, 14<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress political report (1992):**

“Party committees at all levels must maintain and strengthen the Party’s collective leadership. If a Party member has differing views, he may preserve them, but he must abide by the decisions made by the collective. We must see to it that the organizational principle of the Party is adhered to—the principle that individual Party members are subordinate to the organization, that the minority is subordinate to the majority, that the lower Party organizations are subordinate to the higher ones and that all the constituent organizations and members of the Party are subordinate to the National Congress and the Central Committee. We must not tolerate liberalism or any defiance of organization and

discipline, such as going one's own way in disregard of orders and prohibitions." (*Beijing Review*, 26 October 1992)

**Jiang Zemin, 15<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress political report (1997):**

"We should improve the system of party congresses and the system whereby the collective leadership by party committees is combined with division of work and individual responsibility." (*Beijing Review*, 6–12 October 1997, p. 31)

**Jiang Zemin, 16<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress political report (2002):**

"In accordance with the principle of collective leadership, democratic centralism, individual consultations and decision by meetings, we should improve the rules and decision-making mechanism within party committees in order to give fuller play to the role of plenary sessions of party committees." (*Xinhua*, 17 Nov 2002)

**Hu Jintao, 17<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress political report (2007):**

"We should strictly implement democratic centralism, perfect the system that combines collective leadership with division of work responsibility among individuals, and oppose and prevent arbitrary decision-making by any individual or minority." (*Xinhua*, 24 October 2007)

**17<sup>th</sup> Central Committee Fourth Plenum decision on party-building (2009):**

"We must perfect inner-party decision-making mechanism. Party committees at various levels should decide major matters according to the principles of collective leadership, democratic centralism, deliberating on differences, and resolution by full plenums. We must give play to decision-making role of party committees with respect to major issues, perfect the discussion rules and decision-making procedures of party standing committees . . . We must perfect integrating collective leadership with individual division of responsibility, elevate the use of democratic methods of forming consensus, develop working skills, and pay attention to listening to different opinions so as to prevent individuals or minorities from having the last word." (*Xinhua*, 27 September 2009)

**Hu Jintao, 18<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress political report (8 November 2012):**

"We should uphold the principal position of Party members, better protect their democratic rights, and conduct criticism and self-criticism. We should foster comradely relations based on equality and democratic principles, a political atmosphere that encourages democratic discussion, and an institutional environment for democratic oversight . . . We should strengthen the decision-making and oversight role of plenary

sessions of Party committees and improve procedural rules and decision-making procedures of their standing committees.” (Xinhua, 17 November 2012).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The following account is based on: Alice Miller, “Institutionalization and the Changing Dynamics of Chinese Leadership Politics,” in Li Cheng, ed., *China’s Changing Political Landscape* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), pp. 61–79; “Party Politburo Processes under Hu Jintao,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 11 (Summer 2004); “Yet More on Party Politburo Processes under Hu Jintao,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 17 (Winter 2006); “The Work System of the New Party Leadership,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 24 (Spring 2008); “The Central Committee’s Leading Small Groups,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 26 (Fall 2008); and “The Politburo Standing Committee under Hu Jintao,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 35 (September 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See “Party Politburo Processes under Hu Jintao.”

<sup>3</sup> Hu Angang 胡鞍鋼, *中国集体领导体制* (*China’s Collective Leadership System*, Beijing: 中国人民大学出版社, 2013). An English translation is available as *China’s Collective Presidency* (New York: Springer, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> “中国集体领导体制”连载,” 14 August 2013, at: <http://theory.people.com.cn/n2013/0814/c367946-22563249.html#>; “Collective Leadership China’s Way,” *Beijing Review*, 2013 no. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Hu Angang, *中国集体领导体制*, pp. 139–142; *China’s Collective Presidency*, pp. 109–110.

<sup>6</sup> Hu Angang, *民主决策——中国集体领导体制* (*Democratic Decision-Making—China’s Collective Leadership System*, Beijing: 中国人民大学出版社, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> See “Politburo Processes under Xi Jinping,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 47 (Summer 2015).