

Xi Jinping handed historic third term as China's president

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Xi Jinping was handed a third term as Chinese president on Friday, capping a rise that has seen him become the country's most powerful leader in generations.

The appointment by [China's](#) rubber-stamp parliament comes after Xi locked in another five years as head of the Communist Party (CCP) and the military – the two more significant leadership positions in Chinese politics – in October.

Since then, 69-year-old Xi has weathered widespread protests over his zero-Covid policy and its subsequent abandonment that saw countless people die.

Those issues have been avoided at this week's [National People's Congress](#) (NPC), a carefully choreographed event that is also set to appoint Xi ally Li Qiang as the new premier.

And on Friday they handed Xi a third term as China's President – the culmination of a remarkable rise in which he has gone from a relatively little-known party apparatchik to the leader of a global superpower.

His coronation sets him up to become modern China's [longest-serving president](#), and will mean Xi will rule well into his seventies – if no challenger emerges.

Adrian Geiges, co-author of “Xi Jinping: The Most Powerful Man in the World”, told AFP he did not think Xi was motivated by a desire for personal enrichment, despite international media investigations having revealed his family's amassed wealth.

“That's not his interest,” Geiges said.

“He really has a vision about China, he wants to see China as the most powerful country in the world.”

For decades China – scarred by the dictatorial reign and cult of personality of [founding leader Mao Zedong](#) – eschewed one-man rule in favour of a more consensus-based, but still autocratic, leadership.

That model imposed term limits on the largely ceremonial role of the presidency, with Xi’s predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao relinquishing power after 10 years in office.

Xi has torn up that rulebook, abolishing term limits in 2018 and allowing a cult of personality to foster his all-powerful leadership.

But the beginning of his unprecedented third term leading China comes as the world’s second-largest economy faces major headwinds, from slowing growth and a troubled real estate sector to a declining birth rate.

Relations with the [United States](#) are also at a low not seen in decades, with the powers sparring over everything from human rights to trade and technology.

“We will see a China more assertive on the global stage, insisting its narrative to be accepted,” Steve Tsang, Director of the SOAS China Institute, told AFP.

“But it is also one that will focus on domestically making it less dependent on the rest of the world, and making the Communist Party the centrepiece of governance, rather than the Chinese [Government](#),” he said.

“It is not a return to the Maoist era, but one that Maoist will feel comfortable in,” Tsang added.

“Not a direction of travel that is good for the rest of the world. (AFP) 