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I have been asked to make some comments about China’s leadership, and it is a pleasure to do so. I have been asked to address some specific questions, but I think it will be easier to do so if I first make some general comments about the Chinese political system.

I approach the analysis of elite politics in China is through the lens of a Leninism. Often we generalize more broadly calling China’s system “authoritarian,” which it is, but authoritarianism is a broader term. Often it implies a system based on personal relations – often called patron-client relations – rather than organizational structures. China’s system is based on organizational structure, though personal relations are very important. But the Leninist system tends to structure relations.

One way in which it structures elite relations is by limiting the number of positions at the top of the system and the number of contenders for those positions. When looking at authoritarian systems in general we tend to see that the elite – the “inner circle” of the leadership – tends to be less structured, who gets into that inner circle and how many get included is usually fairly informal. It is based who has power and therefore needs to be included; in China, as in other Leninist systems, the top of the system is circumscribed by the number of people on the Politburo (usually around 25) and the number on the Politburo Standing Committee (usually, but not always, seven). The number of competitors for the top leadership position is rather small. For instance. In 1997, when Xi Jinping emerged as the heir apparent, only four people on the Central Committee fit the age criteria for leadership, and only three were serious contenders (Xi, Bo Xilai, and Li Keqiang). So, competition was rather limited, and limiting competition has, so far, helped stabilize the system.

Second, Leninism is a hierarchical system and so it both accepts and encourages the centralization of power. But that centralization of power is something that comes about (or doesn’t) by the leader selecting people to fill “critical positions.” Not all positions are created equal. Some, such as the heads of the Organizations Department and the Propaganda Department, tend to be more important. So, too, the security forces, including the military. This centralization of power is a process that can happen over time, sometimes years, or rather quickly. For instance, Jiang Zemin became general secretary in 1989, but it was not until late 1994, following the Fourth Plenum of the Fourteenth Party Congress, that one could talk of him “consolidating power.” In contrast, Xi Jinping used his campaign against corruption to

consolidate power rather quickly, moving against rivals, including Zhou Yongkang, Xu Caihou, and Guo Boxiong, within a year of taking over. The concentration of power in Xi's hands was even more apparent following the Nineteenth Party Congress in 2017.

It is the need to fill critical positions in order to consolidate power that breeds factionalism. One of the differences between "factions" today and in the Maoist era is that political leaders today have only rather small power bases compared to leaders in Mao's day. The revolutionaries who dominated the leadership in those days were powerful people who had built personal followings and had major accomplishments to their names. The political situation these days is quite different and the bases of power are accordingly different. Nobody would have said that Mao was the head of a "Hunan gang." The notion that Jiang Zemin relied heavily on a so-called "Shanghai gang" suggests two things: first that the basis of his power was narrower and second, that his followers were largely put into positions by Jiang. He was not a leader of a powerful faction within the party but rather someone who built a powerful group of followers after he came to power.

We see the same phenomenon with Xi Jinping. When he was named general secretary in 2012, he was not known as the head of a particularly influential or powerful group (faction) within the party, but over the years we have seen him promote a number of people who were close to him and has thus "consolidated" power.

With that introduction, let me turn to the questions you asked.

**1. How completely does Xi dominate decision-making processes and the political system more generally? What kind of opposition does he face to his personal leadership and/or over any particular policy areas of importance, and how meaningful is this opposition?**

The basic way that outsiders can try to judge this is to watch personnel appointments and look at the ways in which Xi seems to be influencing policy, including ideology. Judging by these standards, we have to say that Xi has been tremendously successful, getting rid of those he views as insufficiently loyal, promoting those he considers allies, reshaping China's ideology, and, more recently, putting his stamp on the contours of state-society relations. Does he face known opposition? I always assume that leaders face opposition. But the History Resolution (formally known as the "Resolution of the CCP Central Committee on the Major Accomplishments and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century") passed by the recent Sixth Plenum suggested that Xi is still very much in control of the policy process.

One thing that is different as we go into the Twentieth Party Congress later this year is that the party will have to make a decision as to whether it will allow Xi to serve a third term and, in all probability, a fourth and perhaps fifth term after that. Although there are many rumors circulating suggesting opposition, as I just stated, the adoption of the History Resolution suggests that Xi remains in control and that he will continue in office. Thus, it is my assumption that he will continue to be the dominant force in decision making. That does not mean that he controls everything and that he faces no opposition.

Economies are notorious difficult to control, and it would be surprising if there were not some push back on some of Xi's policies, such as his crackdown on high tech companies.

**2. Some observers have assessed that Xi Jinping has reversed a trend toward institutionalization and consensus decision-making. To what extent is that the case, and is it attributable solely to Xi? What are the most important changes Xi has made to the organizational structure of the Party and the government?**

The reason I prefaced this statement with an outline of the Chinese political system was to make the point that the system has never been well institutionalized, assuming we mean institutionalized along the lines of legal-rational authority (in Weberian terms). On the other hand, if one wants to think of leaders existing along a spectrum from personalist to collective, then the idea that China had an institutionalized and collective leadership was more approximated in the Jiang Zemin period. But that sort of "institutionalized," and "collective" leadership is associated with Jiang when he was relatively weak in his early days. As he got stronger, the system was less institutionalized (e.g., expanding the size of the Politburo Standing Committee from seven to nine, which effectively stacked that body to favor Jiang). Under Xi Jinping the system has veered to the personalistic side of the spectrum.

To the extent that Xi has moved the system toward the personalized side of the spectrum, this is largely a result of the crises the party was facing in the 1990s and early 2000s, namely corruption, weakened discipline, the emergence of some degree of civil society, and looser ideological controls. So, to a large extent, it is a systemic change of a system under strain.

**3. To what extent has Xi Jinping been successful in mobilizing the Party and government to accomplish his political goals, such as increasing responsiveness to the Party center and bolstering the Party's legitimacy?**

This is difficult to judge from the outside. Xi has made a point of greater discipline in the party, of reducing and hopefully eliminating corruption, and of breaking up "interest groups." The Discipline inspection bureaucracy was combined with the state's Supervision Department and higher-level organizations are now supposed to be playing a greater role in supervising lower-level organs, but it is uncertain how well this is working. It appears that lower-level units are not as entrepreneurial as before, fearing to make mistakes. This has the effect of slowing the economy and frustrating local-level governments which are less able to solve their own problems.

In the History Resolution, Xi declared that corruption remains a mortal threat to the party, so it appears that the campaign against corruption has not solved the issue. The Resolution also states that "the Central Committee's major decisions and plans were not properly executed as some officials selectively implemented the Party's policies or even feigned agreement or compliance and did things their own way." So implementation of central decisions is not as effective as Xi Jinping would like. But this issue of central

control and local implementation is one of those constants in Chinese politics that goes back centuries.

And the party, state, and the conduct of business all provide incentives for creating interest groups (as reflected in Desmond Shum's book, *Red Aristocracy*), so unless the incentives are changed, it is difficult to see how those problems can be adequately addressed.

**4. What do you think are Xi Jinping's intentions for the forthcoming Party Congress? Where does he want governance (including, for example, over economic, foreign, and military policy) to go after the Party Congress?**

Xi Jinping's intentions for the up-coming party congress are pretty clear. His number one priority will be to secure a third term as general secretary (or possibly some other title) for himself. In addition, he will want to secure a Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee that is friendly to himself. We saw in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congresses that he used the campaign against corruption and other measures to concentrate a great deal of power in his own hands. Xi was also able to secure a History Resolution at the recent Sixth Plenum. I have no doubt that there are many people who oppose Xi, but so far they have not been willing to do so openly, so it appears that Xi will be successful. But, as you know, nine months is a long time in politics, so we will have to wait and see.

Predicting policy, is, as always, extremely difficult. I think watching economic policy will be most interesting. It is clear that Xi Jinping would like to establish a system in which political authority is more important than economic actors. But continued movement in that direction risks killing innovation (as the New York Times recently reported) and stimulating corruption, as economic actors seek protection.

Would a more confident Xi Jinping be even more confident in foreign policy? Quite possibly. Xi has built his domestic and international reputation as an uncompromising nationalist, and it is difficult to see him retreat from this posture. However, as the costs of his assertive policies mount – and they are mounting – he may seek ways to maintain his posture but also seek ways to not exacerbate tensions.

The most obvious way to do that would be to reduce the number of military flights into Taiwan's airspace. It would be useful, if this happens, if the US reciprocate by stressing the status quo. China has made clear that what concerns it the most is what they perceive as the ever closer military relationship the US has with Taiwan. Certainly, some observers in China perceive that relationship as tantamount to restoring the defense relationship the US maintained with Taiwan prior to 1979.

**5. Are there any changes of policy direction likely in 2022-3 stemming from the Party Congress?**

This question seems to repeat part of the previous question, and the answer derives from the dynamics of the party congress – the degree to which Xi dominates the new central

Committee and the degree to which he perceives support for, or opposition to, his policies. As I just suggested, the most obvious place in which to look for differences of opinion is in economic policy. The Chinese economy seems to be suffering at the moment, and it seems possible that some will try to tie slower growth rates to Xi's policies.

**6. How useful is the idea of “factions” in understanding the dynamics of the Party today? What role, if any, do factions play in decision-making and policy implementation?**

I think one has to be careful about using the word “faction.” Often the term seems to imply a cohesive group of people with a similar policy orientation who rise and fall together. Perhaps the “Shanghai gang” is thought of that way. But the term is often used to mean a group of people with a similar policy orientation but not necessarily tied together politically ties. Thus, terms like “reformers” or “conservative” were often used this way in the past. But such groups are rarely cohesive. And sometimes there are surprising personal relations across groups. For instance, the very conservative general Wang Zhen admired the poet Ai Qing and thus protected him during the Cultural Revolution.

Moreover, the nature of factionalism changes over time. For instance, the term “Shanghai gang” is a distinctly reform era term because it implies people working together in the same area. In the Maoist era, people's experiences were much more widely dispersed, both in terms of the jobs they performed in the party and their geographical location. Deng Xiaoping was from Sichuan, but he is far more identified with the military, foreign affairs, and party administration than with the province of Sichuan.

In the contemporary period, it seems to me the term “faction” means something along the lines of “trusted follower.” That is to say, a leader is likely to promote a number of followers to significant positions because he trusts them and because he believes that they will give him advice that is good both in terms of policy and in terms of political impact. Such followers are not likely to prod a leader in a direction the leader is uncomfortable with but rather to provide advice on how to move in a direction the leader wants to go.

**7. How do you assess the role of Party elders and their political networks in decision-making in the Xi era?**

As far as I can tell, elders play little to no role in the current era. The role that elders played was a function of the Deng Xiaoping era. It is perhaps understandable that a relatively junior political leader such as Jiang Zemin would defer to “retired” elders such as Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun. It appears that Jiang Zemin continued the practice into the Hu Jintao era, intervening substantially in the personnel choices of the latter. Xi appears to have been determined to stop such interference and he purged several followers of both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao to establish his own leadership.

**8. Describe what you know about the people on Xi's personal staff as well as top Party staff and how they exercise their authority on Xi's behalf.**

I do not know.

**9. What is the dynamic within the Politburo Standing Committee regarding Xi's major initiatives?**

I think the basic policy making process is very much as Xi Jinping described it for the writing of the History Resolution. A group is chosen to study an issue. In the case of the History Resolution, Xi Jinping headed the group and Wang Huning and Zhao Leji were vice chairs. Zhao Leji is head of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission and former head of the Organization Department, so he has been and is deeply involved in issues concerning how the party is run. Since this resolution involved governance issues, his appointment was reasonable. Wang Huning is the most intellectually sophisticated member of the Politburo Standing Committee (indeed, the only intellectual to serve on the Politburo Standing Committee since Chen Boda). He has written extensively about governance issues, so he is also a very understandable choice. They presided over a drafting group, which solicited opinions from party and non-party leaders at various levels. Drafting the resolution appears to have taken about six months, and, according to Xi Jinping's explanation of the drafting process, 547 revisions were made to the original draft.

Drafting the History Resolution was no doubt more elaborate than drafting proposals for other policy initiatives but the process is similar, that is to say, an agency usually takes the lead and considers one or more policy proposals. Different views are solicited and the advantages of a policy are debated. When there is a relative consensus, or when Xi Jinping feels strongly about something, it is circulated to the Politburo or its Standing Committee. Members can make comments on the proposal. If there are serious differences of opinion, the proposal is likely put aside for the time being.

It appears that Xi Jinping has strong opinions on a range of issues, particularly those relating to the management of the party, including discipline and ideology. On such issues, he appears to solicit opinion from a narrower range of opinion (compared to his predecessors).

**10. The Commission is mandated to make policy recommendations to Congress based on its hearings and other research. What recommendations for legislative action would you make based on the topic of your testimony?**

My advice would be to follow the physicians' motto, "First, do no harm." Since the relationship between the US and China is competitive, things that enhance the competitive position of the US should be welcomed. That means supporting, in terms of funds and policy, innovation. There is considerable R&D expenditure in the US, both

from business and the federal government, but further support is essential. So is cybersecurity.

There is much talk about deterrence these days, but it is important to keep in mind that what we see as deterrence can seem like a provocation to China. I strongly support Taiwan, but some of the measures proposed by the Congress have been provocative without enhancing the security of Taiwan. Calls for “strategic clarity” fall into this category.