

# XI JINPING SET TO BEGIN THIRD TERM

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A frail-looking former leader Hu Jintao, 79, who was sitting beside his successor, was unexpectedly escorted off the congress stage before voting was to commence on approving amendments to the party Constitution, which were then passed unanimously in his absence.

The second surprise was the exclusion of second-ranked leader Li Keqiang and fourth-ranked PBSC member Wang Yang — both allies of Mr. Hu — from the new Central Committee that was announced at the congress. Their early retirements — they are both under the unofficial retirement age of 68 — paves the way for as many as four new appointments to the PBSC, with two other current members due to retire. Mr. Li, however, will continue as Premier until his term ends in March.

All four appointments are likely to be close allies of Mr. Xi, marking for the first time in decades in Chinese politics a “clean sweep” on its most powerful body, which had, in the past, shared power between different party factions.

Mr. Xi, however, has shattered both factional equations as well as the “collective leadership” model, returning China to one-man rule. The congress also approved amendments to the party Constitution further underlining Mr. Xi’s “core” status by calling on the party to “establish his core position and the guiding role” of his ideology and “uphold his core position and the centralised, unified leadership” of the party, called the “two establishes” and “two upholds”.

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