

Learning from history

Xi Jinping discusses the party's founding, China's economic rise, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and looks ahead to a bright future for China

Today, the first of July, is a great and solemn day in the history of both the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese nation. We gather here to join all Party members and Chinese people of all ethnic groups around the country in celebrating the centenary of the Party, looking back on the glorious journey the Party has travelled over 100 years of struggle, and looking ahead to the bright prospects for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

On this special occasion, it is my honour to declare on behalf of the Party and the people that through the continued efforts of the whole Party and the entire nation, we have realized the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

This means that we have brought about a historic resolution to the problem of absolute poverty in China, and we are now marching in confident strides toward the second centenary goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects. This is a great and glorious accomplishment for the Chinese nation, for the Chinese people, and for the Communist Party of China.

The Chinese nation is a great nation. With a history of more than 5,000 years, China has made indelible contributions to the progress of human civilization. After the Opium War of 1840, however, China was gradually reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society and suffered greater ravages than ever before.

The country endured intense humiliation, the people were subjected to great pain, and the Chinese civilization was plunged into darkness. Since that time, national rejuvenation has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation.

To save the nation from peril, the Chinese people put up a courageous fight. As noble-minded patriots sought to pull the nation together, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement, the Reform Movement of 1898, the Yihetuan Movement, and the Revolution of 1911 rose one after the other, and a variety of plans were devised to ensure national survival, but all of these ended in failure. China was in urgent need of new ideas to lead the movement to save the nation and a new organization to rally revolutionary forces.

With the salvoes of Russia's October Revolution in 1917, Marxism-Leninism was brought to China. Then in 1921, as the Chinese people and the Chinese nation were undergoing a great awakening and Marxism-Leninism was becoming closely integrated with the Chinese workers' movement, the Communist Party of China was born.

... it is certain that with the firm leadership of the Party and the great unity of the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, we will achieve the goal of building a great modern socialist country in all respects and fulfil the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation

The founding of a communist party in China was an epoch-making event, which profoundly changed the course of Chinese history in modern times, transformed the future of the Chinese people and nation, and altered the landscape of world development.

Since the very day of its founding, the Party has made seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation its aspiration and mission. All the struggle, sacrifice, and creation through which the Party has united and led the Chinese people over the past hundred years has been tied together by one ultimate theme—bringing about the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

To realize national rejuvenation, the Party united and led the Chinese people in fighting bloody battles with unyielding determination, achieving great success in the new-democratic revolution.

Through the Northern Expedition, the Agrarian Revolutionary War, the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, and the War of Liberation, we fought armed counter-revolution with armed revolution, toppling the three mountains of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism and establishing the People's Republic of China, which made the people masters of the country. We thus secured our nation's independence and liberated our people.

The victory of the new-democratic revolution put an end to China's history as a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society, to the state of total disunity that existed in old China, and to all the unequal treaties imposed on our country by foreign powers and all the privileges that imperialist powers enjoyed in China. It created the fundamental social conditions for realizing national rejuvenation.

Through tenacious struggle, the Party and the Chinese people showed the world that the Chinese people had stood up, and that the time in which the Chinese nation could be bullied and abused by others was gone forever.

To realize national rejuvenation, the Party united and led the Chinese people in endeavouring to build a stronger China with a spirit of self-reliance, achieving great success in socialist revolution and construction.

By carrying out socialist revolution, we eliminated the exploitative and repressive feudal system that had persisted in China for thousands of years, and established socialism as our basic system. In the process of socialist construction, we overcame subversion, sabotage, and armed provocation by imperialist and hegemonic powers, and brought about the most extensive and profound social changes in the history of the Chinese nation.

This great transformation of China from a poor and backward country in the East with a large population into a socialist country laid down the fundamental political conditions and the institutional foundations necessary for realizing national rejuvenation.

Through tenacious struggle, the Party and the Chinese people showed the world that the Chinese people were capable of not only dismantling the old world, but also building a new one, that only socialism could save China, and that only socialism with Chinese characteristics could develop China.

To realize national rejuvenation, the Party united and led the Chinese people in freeing the mind and forging ahead, achieving great success in reform, opening up, and socialist modernization.

We established the Party's basic line for the primary stage of socialism, resolutely advanced reform and opening up, overcame risks and challenges from every direction, and founded, upheld, safeguarded, and developed socialism

with Chinese characteristics, thus bringing about a major turn with far-reaching significance in the history of the Party since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

This enabled China to transform itself from a highly centralized planned economy to a socialist market economy brimming with vitality, and from a country that was largely isolated to one that is open to the outside world across the board.

It also enabled China to achieve the historic leap from a country with relatively backward productive forces to the world's second largest economy, and to make the historic transformation of raising the living standards of its people from bare subsistence to an overall level of moderate prosperity, and then ultimately to moderate prosperity in all respects.

These achievements fuelled the push toward national rejuvenation by providing institutional guarantees imbued with new energy as well as the material conditions for rapid development.

Through tenacious struggle, the Party and the Chinese people showed the world that by pursuing reform and opening up, a crucial move in making China what it is today, China had caught up with the times in great strides.

To realize national rejuvenation, the Party has united and led the Chinese people in pursuing a great struggle, a great project, a great cause, and a great dream through a spirit of self-confidence, self-reliance, and innovation, achieving great success for socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

Following the Party's 18th National Congress, socialism with Chinese characteristics entered a new era. In this new era, we have upheld and strengthened the Party's overall leadership, ensured coordinated implementation of

the five-sphere integrated plan and the four-pronged comprehensive strategy, upheld and improved the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, modernized China's system and capacity for governance, remained committed to exercising rule-based governance over the Party, and developed a sound system of intraparty regulations.

We have overcome a long list of major risks and challenges, fulfilled the first centenary goal, and set out strategic steps for achieving the second centenary goal. All the historic achievements and changes in the cause of the Party and the country have provided the cause of national rejuvenation with more robust institutions, stronger material foundations, and a source of inspiration for taking greater initiative.

Through tenacious struggle, the Party and the Chinese people have shown the world that the Chinese nation has achieved the tremendous transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong, and that China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability.

Over the past hundred years, the Party has united and led the Chinese people in writing the most magnificent chapter in the millennia-long history of the Chinese nation, embodying the dauntless spirit that Mao Zedong expressed when he wrote, *"Our minds grow stronger for the martyrs' sacrifice, daring to make the sun and the moon shine in the new sky."*

The great path we have pioneered, the great cause we have undertaken, and the great achievements we have made over the past century will go down in the annals of the development of the Chinese nation and of human civilization.

A hundred years ago the pioneers of Communism in China established the Communist Party of China and developed the great founding spirit of the Party, which is comprised of the following principles: upholding truth and ideals, staying true to our original aspiration and founding mission, fighting bravely without fear of sacrifice, and remaining loyal to the Party and faithful to the people. This spirit is the Party's source of strength.

Over the past hundred years, the Party has carried forward this great founding spirit. Through its protracted struggles, it has developed a long line of inspiring principles for Chinese Communists and tempered a distinct political character. As history has kept moving forward, the spirit of the Party has been passed on from generation to generation.

We will continue to promote our glorious traditions and sustain our revolutionary legacy, so that the great founding spirit of the Party will always be kept alive and carried forward.

We owe all that we have achieved over the past hundred years to the concerted efforts of the Chinese Communists, the Chinese people, and the Chinese nation. Chinese Communists, with comrades Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao as their chief representatives, have made tremendous and historic contributions to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. To them, we express our highest respect.

Let us take this moment to cherish the memory of comrades Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, and other veteran revolutionaries who contributed greatly to China's revolution, construction, and reform, and to the founding, consolidation, and development of the Communist Party of China; let us cherish the memory of the revolutionary martyrs who bravely laid down their lives to establish, defend, and develop the People's Republic; let us cherish the memory of those who dedicated their lives to reform, opening up, and socialist

modernization; and let us cherish the memory of all the men and women who fought tenaciously for national independence and the liberation of the people in modern times.

Their great contributions to our motherland and our nation will be immortalized in the annals of history, and their noble spirit will live on forever in the hearts of the Chinese people.

The people are the true heroes, for it is they who create history. On behalf of the CPC Central Committee, I would like to pay my highest respects to workers, farmers, and intellectuals across the country; to other political parties, public figures without party affiliation, people's organizations, and patriotic figures from all sectors of society; to all members of the People's Liberation Army, the People's Armed Police Force, the public security police, and the fire and rescue services; to all socialist working people; and to all members of the united front.

I would like to extend my sincere greetings to compatriots in the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and in Taiwan as well as overseas Chinese. And I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to people and friends from around the world who have shown friendship to the Chinese people and understanding and support for China's endeavours in revolution, development, and reform.

Though our Party's founding mission is easy to define, ensuring that we stay true to this mission is a more difficult task. By learning from history, we can understand why powers rise and fall. Through the mirror of history, we can find where we currently stand and gain foresight into the future.

Looking back on the Party's 100-year history, we can see why we were successful in the past and how we can continue to succeed in the future. This will ensure that we act with greater resolve and purpose in staying true to our founding mission and pursuing a better future on the new journey that lies before us.

As we put conscious effort into learning from history to create a bright future, we must bear the following in mind:

We must uphold the firm leadership of the Party. China's success hinges on the Party. The more than 180-year-long modern history of the Chinese nation, the 100-year-long history of the Party, and the more than 70-year-long history of the People's Republic of China all provide ample evidence that without the Communist Party of China, there would be no new China and no national rejuvenation.

The Party was chosen by history and the people. The leadership of the Party is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics and constitutes the greatest strength of this system. It is the foundation and lifeblood of the Party and the country, and the crux upon which the interests and wellbeing of all Chinese people depend.

On the journey ahead, we must uphold the Party's overall leadership and continue to enhance its leadership. We must be deeply conscious of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership.

We must stay confident in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics. We must uphold the core position of the General Secretary on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and uphold the Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership.

Bearing in mind the country's most fundamental interests, we must enhance the Party's capacity to conduct sound, democratic, and law-based governance, and ensure that it fully exerts its core role in providing overall leadership and coordinating the efforts of all sides.

We must unite and lead the Chinese people in working ceaselessly for a better life. This country is its people; the people are the country. As we have fought to establish and consolidate our leadership over the country, we have in fact been fighting to earn and keep the people's support.

The Party has in the people its roots, its lifeblood, and its source of strength. The Party has always represented the fundamental interests of all Chinese people; it stands with them through thick and thin and shares a common fate with them.

The Party has no special interests of its own-it has never represented any individual interest group, power group, or privileged stratum. Any attempt to divide the Party from the Chinese people or to set the people against the Party is bound to fail. The more than 95 million Party members and the more than 1.4 billion Chinese people will never allow such a scenario to come to pass.

On the journey ahead, we must rely closely on the people to create history. Upholding the Party's fundamental purpose of wholeheartedly serving the people, we will stand firmly with the people, implement the Party's mass line, respect the people's creativity, and practice a people-centred philosophy of development.

We will develop whole-process people's democracy, safeguard social fairness and justice, and resolve the imbalances and inadequacies in development and the most pressing difficulties and problems that are of great concern to the people. In doing so, we will make more notable and substantive progress toward achieving well-rounded human development and common prosperity for all.

We must continue to adapt Marxism to the Chinese context. Marxism is the fundamental guiding ideology upon which our Party and country are founded; it is the very soul of our Party and the banner under which it strives. The Communist Party of China upholds the basic tenets of Marxism and the principle of seeking truth from facts.

Based on China's realities, we have developed keen insights into the trends of the day, seized the initiative in history, and made painstaking explorations. We have thus been able to keep adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times, and to guide the Chinese people in advancing our great social revolution.

At the fundamental level, the capability of our Party and the strengths of socialism with Chinese characteristics are attributable to the fact that Marxism works.

On the journey ahead, we must continue to uphold Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of Three Represents, and the Scientific Outlook on Development, and fully implement the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

We must continue to adapt the basic tenets of Marxism to China's specific realities and its fine traditional culture. We will use Marxism to observe, understand, and steer the trends of our times, and continue to develop the Marxism of contemporary China and in the 21st century.

We must uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics. We must follow our own path-this is the bedrock that underpins all the theories and practices of our Party.

More than that, it is the historical conclusion our Party has drawn from its struggles over the past century. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is a fundamental achievement of the Party and the people, forged through innumerable hardships and great sacrifices, and it is the right path for us to achieve national rejuvenation.

As we have upheld and developed socialism with Chinese characteristics and driven coordinated progress in material, political, cultural-ethical, social, and ecological terms, we have pioneered a new and uniquely Chinese path to modernization, and created a new model for human advancement.

On the journey ahead, we must adhere to the Party's basic theory, line, and policy, and implement the five-sphere integrated plan and the four-pronged comprehensive strategy. We must deepen reform and opening up across the board, ground our work in this new stage of development, fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy, and foster a new pattern of development.

We must promote high-quality development and build up our country's strength in science and technology. We must ensure it is our people who run the country, continue to govern based on the rule of law, and uphold the core socialist values. We must ensure and enhance public wellbeing in the course of development, promote harmony between humanity and nature, and take well-coordinated steps toward making our people prosperous, our nation strong, and our country beautiful.

The Chinese nation has fostered a splendid civilization over more than 5,000 years of history. The Party has also acquired a wealth of experience through its endeavours over the past 100 years and during more than 70 years of governance.

At the same time, we are also eager to learn what lessons we can from the achievements of other cultures, and welcome helpful suggestions and constructive criticism. We will not, however, accept sanctimonious preaching from those who feel they have the right to lecture us.

The Party and the Chinese people will keep moving confidently forward in broad strides along the path that we have chosen for ourselves, and we will make sure the destiny of China's development and progress remains firmly in our own hands.

We must accelerate the modernization of national defence and the armed forces. A strong country must have a strong military, as only then can it guarantee the security of the nation. At the point that it was engaged in violent struggle, the Party came to recognize the irrefutable truth that it must command the gun and build a people's military of its own.

The people's military has made indelible achievements on behalf of the Party and the people. It is a strong pillar for safeguarding our socialist country and preserving national dignity, and a powerful force for protecting peace in our region and beyond.

On the journey ahead, we must fully implement the Party's thinking on strengthening the military in the new era as well as our military strategy for the new era, maintain the Party's absolute leadership over the people's armed forces, and follow a Chinese path to military development.

We will take comprehensive measures to enhance the political loyalty of the armed forces, to strengthen them through reform and technology and the training of competent personnel, and to run them in accordance with the law.

We will elevate our people's armed forces to world-class standards so that we are equipped with greater capacity and more reliable means for safeguarding our national sovereignty, security, and development interests.

We must continue working to promote the building of a human community with a shared future. Peace, concord, and harmony are ideas the Chinese nation has pursued and carried forward for more than 5,000 years. The Chinese nation does not carry aggressive or hegemonic traits in its genes.

The Party cares about the future of humanity and wishes to move forward in tandem with all progressive forces around the world. China has always worked to safeguard world peace, contribute to global development, and preserve international order.

On the journey ahead, we will remain committed to promoting peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit, to an independent foreign policy of peace, and to the path of peaceful development.

We will work to build a new type of international relations and a human community with a shared future, promote high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative through joint efforts, and use China's new achievements in development to provide the world with new opportunities.

The Party will continue to work with all peace-loving countries and peoples to promote the shared human values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom. We will continue to champion cooperation over confrontation, to open up rather than closing our doors, and to focus on mutual benefits instead of zero-sum games.

We will oppose hegemony and power politics and strive to keep the wheels of history rolling toward bright horizons.

We Chinese are a people who uphold justice and are not intimidated by threats of force. As a nation, we have a strong sense of pride and confidence. We have never bullied, oppressed, or subjugated the people of any other country, and we never will.

By the same token, we will never allow any foreign force to bully, oppress, or subjugate us. Anyone who would attempt to do so will find themselves on a collision course with a great wall of steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people.

We must carry out a great struggle with many contemporary features. Having the courage to fight and the fortitude to win is what has made our Party invincible.

Realizing our great dream will require hard work and persistence. Today, we are closer, more confident, and more capable than ever before of making the goal of national rejuvenation a reality. But we must be prepared to work harder than ever to get there.

On the journey ahead, we must demonstrate stronger vigilance and always be prepared for potential danger, even in times of calm. We must adopt a holistic approach to national security that balances development and security imperatives, and implement the national rejuvenation strategy within a wider context of the once-in-a-century changes taking place in the world.

We need to acquire a full understanding of the new features and requirements arising from the change to the principal contradiction in Chinese society and the new issues and challenges stemming from a complicated international environment.

We must be both brave and adept in carrying out our struggle, forging new paths and building new bridges wherever necessary to take us past all risks and challenges.

We must strengthen the great unity of the Chinese people. In the course of our struggles over the past century, the Party has always placed the united front in a position of importance. We have constantly consolidated and developed the broadest possible united front, united all the forces that can be united, mobilized all positive factors that can be mobilized, and pooled as much strength as possible for collective endeavours.

The patriotic united front is an important means for the Party to unite all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation, both at home and abroad, behind the goal of national rejuvenation.

On the journey ahead, we must ensure great unity and solidarity and balance commonality and diversity. We should strengthen theoretical and political guidance, build broad consensus, bring together the brightest minds, and expand common ground and the convergence of interests, so that all Chinese people, both at home and overseas, can focus their ingenuity and energy on the same goal and come together as a mighty force for realizing national rejuvenation.

We must continue to advance the great new project of Party building. A hallmark that distinguishes the Communist Party of China from other political parties is its courage in undertaking self-reform.

An important reason why the Party remains so vital and vibrant despite having undergone so many trials and tribulations is that it practices effective self-supervision and full and rigorous self-governance.

It has thus been able to respond appropriately to the risks and tests of different historical periods, to ensure that it always remains at the forefront of the times even as profound changes sweep the global landscape, and to stand firm as the backbone of the nation throughout the process of meeting various risks and challenges at home and abroad.

On the journey ahead, we must keep firmly in mind the old adage that it takes a good blacksmith to make good steel. We must demonstrate greater political awareness of the fact that full and rigorous self-governance is a never-ending journey.

With strengthening the Party politically as our overarching principle, we must continue advancing the great new project of Party building in the new era. We must tighten the Party's organizational system, work hard to train high-calibre officials who have both moral integrity and professional competence, remain committed to improving Party conduct, upholding integrity, and combating corruption, and root out any elements that would harm the Party's advanced nature and purity and any viruses that would erode its health.

We must ensure that the Party preserves its essence, colour, and character, and see that it always serves as the strong leadership core in the course of upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

We will stay true to the letter and spirit of the principle of One Country, Two Systems, under which the people of Hong Kong administer Hong Kong, and the people of Macao administer Macao, both with a high degree of autonomy.

We will ensure that the central government exercises overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong and Macao, and implement the legal systems and enforcement mechanisms for the two special administrative regions to safeguard national security.

While protecting China's sovereignty, security, and development interests, we will ensure social stability in Hong Kong and Macao, and maintain lasting prosperity and stability in the two special administrative regions.

Resolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Communist Party of China. It is also a shared aspiration of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation. We will uphold the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, and advance peaceful national reunification.

All of us, compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, must come together and move forward in unison. We must take resolute action to utterly defeat any attempt toward 'Taiwan independence', and work together to create a bright future for national rejuvenation. No one should underestimate the resolve, the will, and the ability of the Chinese people to defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The future belongs to the young people, and our hopes also rest with them. A century ago, a group of young progressives held aloft the torch of Marxism and searched assiduously in those dark years for ways to rejuvenate the Chinese nation.

Since then, under the banner of the Communist Party of China, generation after generation of young Chinese have devoted their youth to the cause of the Party and the people, and remained in the vanguard of the drive to rejuvenate the nation.

In the new era, our young people should make it their mission to contribute to national rejuvenation and aspire to become more proud, confident, and assured in their identity as Chinese people so that they can live up to the promise of their youth and the expectations of our times, our Party, and our people.

A century ago, at the time of its founding, the Communist Party of China had just over 50 members. Today, with more than 95 million members in a country of more than 1.4 billion people, it is the largest governing party in the world and enjoys tremendous international influence.

A century ago, China was in decline and withering away in the eyes of the world. Today, the image it presents to the world is one of a thriving nation that is advancing with unstoppable momentum toward rejuvenation.

Over the past century, the Communist Party of China has secured extraordinary historical achievements on behalf of the people. Today, it is rallying and leading the Chinese people on a new journey toward realizing the second centenary goal.

The Central Committee calls on every one of you to stay true to our Party's founding mission and stand firm in your ideals and convictions. Acting on the purpose of the Party, you should always maintain close ties with the people, empathise and work with them, stand with them through good times and bad, and continue working tirelessly to realize their aspirations for a better life and to bring still greater glory to the Party and the people.

Today, a hundred years on from its founding, the Communist Party of China is still in its prime and remains as determined as ever to achieve lasting greatness for the Chinese nation.

Looking back on the path we have travelled and forward to the journey that lies ahead, it is certain that with the firm leadership of the Party and the great unity of the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, we will achieve the goal of building a great modern socialist country in all respects and fulfil the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. ■

Xi Jinping is President of the People's Republic of China

This article is based on a speech delivered to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, July 1 2021