



China's constitutional amendments have 'more positives than negatives'.

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The recent constitutional changes will ensure reforms, such as the restructuring of central and local governments, are carried through.

**HANS HENDRISCHKE**

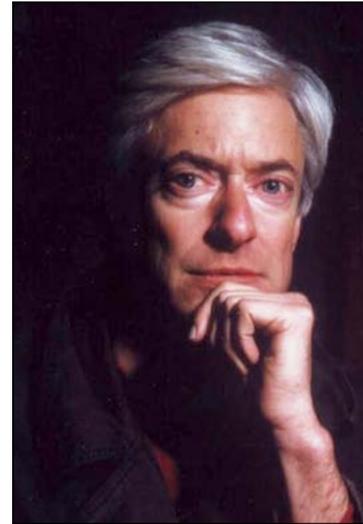
Professor of Chinese business and management at the University of Sydney



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**KRIENGSAK CHAREONWONGSAK**

President of Thailand's Institute of Future Studies for Development



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**LAURENCE BRAHM**

Founding director of the Himalayan Consensus Institute and senior research fellow at the Center for China and Globalization in Beijing



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**ANTONIO FATAS**

Professor of economics at INSEAD in Singapore

#### >> FROM PAGE 4

managing the central-local relations cannot work anymore. For overcoming the conflicts, enhancing Xi's personal authority is necessary and predictable."

Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, president of Thailand's Institute of Future Studies for Development, said Xi's reforms are for the people of China and to see the country take its place as one of the "world's great powers".

The University of Waikato's Peters said Xi Thought has provided a long-term, two-stage development plan.

"The first stage (2020-35) is devoted to the realization of socialist modernization, including the achievement of the Belt and Road Initiative. The second stage (2035-50) is to develop China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong and culturally advanced," he said.

Shen, of the Commission for Legislative Affairs of the NPC Standing Committee, said the inclusion of Xi Thought "into the country's fundamental law reflects the common aspiration of the entire Communist Party of China and all Chinese people of various ethnic groups," according to Xinhua.

"It has been the fundamental theoretical guide for the historic achievements and shifts made in the cause of the Party and the country since the 18th CPC National Congress," Shen said.

The CPC announced the formation of Xi Thought for the first time at its 19th National Congress in October last year, hailing it as "the latest achievement in adapt-

ing Marxism to the Chinese context and an important component of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics", according to Xinhua.

Upon conclusion of the congress, Xi Thought was written into the Party's Constitution as a new guide to action.

Included are a vision of innovative, coordinated, green and open development for all; the five-sphere integrated plan for coordinated economic, political, cultural, social and ecological advancement; the goal of a "great modern socialist country"; and an oath of allegiance to the Constitution.

The amendment has enriched clauses on the patriotic united front, harmonious relations among ethnic groups, and peaceful foreign policies, including the addition of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The expression that China will "adhere to the peaceful development path and the mutually beneficial strategy of opening-up" was added to the preamble.

"The greatest strength of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the leadership of the CPC," Xinhua quoted Cao Qingyao, an NPC deputy and a district Party chief of Chongqing municipality, as saying.

"The revision has enriched provisions concerning upholding and strengthening the overall CPC leadership and is significant to ensuring the Party and the country forge ahead along the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics," Cao noted.

Other revisions include adding core socialist values and granting Chinese cities, with subordinate districts, the power to make local laws and regulations.

The people's congresses and their standing committees in these cities will be able to adopt local laws and regulations under the condition that they do not contradict the Constitution, national laws and regulations, and provincial laws and regulations, according to the amendment.

Antonio Fatas, a professor of economics at INSEAD in Singapore, said he thought it is "too early" to tell what the changes will mean for China in the long run.

"So far, the Chinese model has worked well to make China a middle-income economy.

"To go beyond that, you need to continue and possibly accelerate the process of reform," Fatas added.

Chareonwongsak, also a prime ministerial adviser and chairman of Thailand's Nation-Building Institute International, said that amending the Constitution will have a "tremendous unifying impact on China".

"When China does well economically, Asia rises as well," he said.

Gao said removing the term limits for president and vice-president was a sensible adjustment that will strengthen China's top leadership.

"It brings the role of president into line with that of general secretary of the Communist Party of China and chairman of the Central Military Commission. It will strengthen the stability of the top echelon of China's leadership," said Gao.

Wang Huiyao, also a counselor to the State Council, China's Cabinet, said the constitutional revisions were the right ones.

"What you are aiming to stop is that Catch-22 situation that existed before, where the boundaries blurred and corruption became somehow linked to the fast growth of the economy. Putting the supervisory structure in place helps to solve the Catch-22," he said.

Gao said having Xi's name in the country's Constitution is symbolically important, too.

"It can only heighten and further strengthen the importance of Xi Jinping as a political leader in China," said Gao, also chairman of the China Energy Security Institute and vice-president of the Center for China and Globalization.

Laurence Brahm, founding director of the Himalayan Consensus Institute and senior research fellow at the Center for China and Globalization in Beijing, said the recent changes to the Constitution send a "message of stability and continuity" to Asia.

"When you know the administration will be there for a consistent period, it sends a message of stability and consistency, which from the prospect of investors and businesses, people now know what the next 10 years is going to look like, and that is a stabilizing force in the Asia region," Brahm told *China Daily Asia Weekly*.

He said that in some Western countries the election cycles have become "a form of entertainment" which distracts people from the main economic issues.

"In the case of an extended political term in China, it sends messages of continuous stability, (both) economic and social. I think that will have, in the long term, positive ramifications for the entire Asia region."

Brahm said Xi has addressed in his first five years the major issues that were serious for China's economy, political structure and society. These include corruption, excessive internal debt, the deleveraging now being done, and issues of ecology and smart infrastructure.

Jacques, the British academic and author, said including Xi's Thought in the State and Party Constitutions was an important historical landmark.

"The Constitution is an enduring document, and this confers on Xi historical status. His thinking is already influential," he said.

Jacques, also a senior fellow at the Department of Politics and International Studies at Cambridge University and a former editor of the UK political magazine *Marxism Today*, said Xi coming to power was the biggest change in China since Deng Xiaoping launched reform and opening-up in 1978, and Xi now completely defines China's new era.

"This is not just about China being an economic power, but an all-round power with a central place on the global stage," he said.

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