

Leading reform into a new era

Under Xi's guidance, China's lasting and inspiring rise has captured the world's attention

By XINHUA

Wang Jun is a deputy editor of the book, *A Study of Xi Jinping Thought on Reform and Opening-up*.

Documents are piled high upon his desk, the result of endless hours of Wang and his team collecting and collating information and research materials in support of the tome.

"Xi Jinping is a man wholeheartedly devoted to reform and opening-up," said Wang, who is also president of the Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong province.

This year, China celebrates the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up, a policy launched by late leader Deng Xiaoping and now being carried forward by Xi.

In late October, Xi went to Guangdong province, during which time he visited a reform-themed exhibition at the foot of Lotus Mountain in Shenzhen.

Xi paused in front of a large painting. It was a rush hour scene of the city in the 1980s. A giant poster stood tall before the Shekou Industrial Zone to constantly remind the city's early builders to seize the moment and strive for economic miracles.

Shenzhen was a prominent testing ground for China's reform and opening-up.

"We've come to Shenzhen, Guangdong, again as we want to declare to the world that China will never drag its feet on reform and opening-up! China is certain to show the world impressive new achievements in the next 40 years!" Xi said.

Six years ago, when Xi was elected general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, reform had entered what many people called a "deepwater" zone. The CPC faced arduous challenges in reform, some foreign media claimed at the time.

Xi has withstood the pressure and led China to achieve so much, Wang said.

The Chinese economy is being transformed from fast growth to high-quality development. In 2017, growth picked up for the first time in six years, reaching 6.9 percent, far above the 3.7 percent global economic growth.

Over the past six years, over 70 million new jobs have been created, more than the current population of the United Kingdom. The size of the Chinese middle-income population has swelled to 400 million, constituting a huge consumer market.

Overseas media called Xi "a far-sighted reformer" and "a serious reformer who built a unique path for China's future", whose clear vision for reform "has inspired the nation".



President Xi Jinping talks with Yuan Longping (third right) and other agricultural experts at the Nanfan Scientific and Research Breeding Base in Sanya, South China's Hainan province, in April. Xi's reforms aim to reverse ecological degradation. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

When China began reform and opening-up in 1978, Xi was studying chemical engineering at Tsinghua University in Beijing. His father, Xi Zhongxun, was then the Party chief of Guangdong province.

The elder Xi had high hopes for reform. He sought Deng's permission for "taking the first step" to set up a special economic zone that would break new ground for reform.

In the early 1980s, as Xi senior was promoted to Beijing, Xi Jinping was sent to work in Zhengding county, in North China's Hebei province. He began his reform experiments there, starting with the rural land contract trial, being the first in Hebei to adopt this practice, already tested in southern provinces.

As the county Party chief, Xi was critical of the "middle-level obstruction" issue and solved it by appointing willing and competent cadres to push forward reforms.

Xi's reputation as a reformer was reinforced as he advanced his political career. In parts of East China — Fujian province, Zhejiang province, and Shanghai — he kick-started innovative reform strategies to tackle different sorts of challenges.

Shi Zhihong, a former deputy

director of the Policy Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, said: "Xi's reform is derived from his experience. He knew that the rigid old paths would lead nowhere, and reform was a must."

In 2012, reflecting on China's reform cause, Xi spoke highly of Deng. "If there were no Deng, who guided our Party to make the historic decision to reform and open up, we couldn't have achieved this much," Xi said.

"Reform and opening-up is a great awakening of our Party, and it gave rise to great theoretical and practical innovations," he added.

On Nov 15, 2012, right after being elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Xi spoke of the need to adhere to reform and opening-up to continue liberating social productive forces, resolve people's difficulties in life and work and stay committed to the path of common prosperity.

Today, Xi's resolve to carry on reform could not be more obvious. But he knew how hard it would be.

Xi went to Guangdong on his first domestic inspection tour after assuming the Party's top post. It was not by coincidence that in 1992 Deng

visited Guangdong on his now well-known "southern tour." Deng's talks during the tour were instrumental in advancing reform and opening-up.

Xi insisted that reform should suit China's own needs for change, and China would not reform to make others happy. "Only the wearer knows whether the shoes fit or not," he said.

The overall goal of deepening reform is to improve and develop the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and modernize China's system and capacity for governance.

This overarching objective is described by observers as China's "Fifth Modernization" drive.

According to Xi, reform must balance several pairs of relations: between mind emancipation and truth-seeking; overall advancement and breakthroughs in key areas; top-level design; and crossing the river by feeling the stones.

He Yiting, vice-president of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, said Xi's thought on reform has enriched and developed the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

In November 2013, Xi presided

over the third plenary session of the 18th CPC Central Committee that issued an extensive reform plan and a seven-year implementation timetable.

China's deepening reform in all areas has caught the world's attention. Some overseas media said the reform gave a big impetus to China's lasting and inspiring rise.

Since then, the successive Party plenums have all stressed deepening reform, which constitutes a prominent fixture in Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

Xi has become the leader in China's new round of reform and opening-up.

After the third plenary session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, Xi served as the head of a leading group on deepening overall reform. When it was changed to a committee, he remained as the chair.

He also chairs a number of high-level committees and commissions on areas including law-based governance, foreign affairs, cybersecurity and informatization. By heading these groups, Xi can have face-to-face discussions with people work-

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