

President of the People's Republic of China

The **president of the People's Republic of China**, commonly called the **president of China**, is the <u>head of state</u> of the <u>People's Republic of China</u>. The presidency on its own is a <u>ceremonial office</u> and has no real power in China's <u>political system</u>. However, since 1993, the post has been held by the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and chairman of the Central Military Commission, who is China's <u>de facto</u> leader.

The presidency is officially regarded as an institution of the state rather than an administrative post. [note 1] Under the current constitution, the president serves at the pleasure of the National People's Congress (NPC), the legislature, and is not legally vested to take executive action on his own prerogative. The office was first established in the Constitution in 1954, with the official English-language translation of "state chairman". It was successively held by Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi. Liu fell into political disgrace during the Cultural Revolution, after which the presidency became vacant. The post of chairman was abolished under the Constitution of 1975, then reinstated in the Constitution of 1982, but with reduced powers. Since 1982, the title's official English-language translation has been "president", although the Chinese title remains unchanged. [note 2]

Since China is a <u>single-party</u> communist state, the president is generally considered to hold the second-highest position in the political system, formally after the <u>leader</u> of the Chinese Communist Party. However, since 1993, apart from brief periods of <u>transition</u>, the paramount leader has simultaneously served as state president, Communist Party leader (as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)), and <u>commander-in-chief</u> of the military (as chairman of the <u>Central Military Commission</u> (CMC)). This individual then carries out different duties under separate titles. For example, the leader meets foreign dignitaries and receives ambassadors in his capacity as president, issues military directives as chairman of the CMC, and upholds party rule as general secretary of the CCP.

During the Mao era, there were no term limits for the presidency. Between 1982 and 2018, the constitution stipulated that the president could not serve more than two consecutive terms. In 2018, term limits were abolished in order to align the presidency with the position of CCP general secretary, which does not have term limits. The current

President of the People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国主席



National Emblem of the People's Republic of China



Flag of the People's Republic of China



Incumbent
Xi Jinping
since 14 March 2013

Office of the President of the People's Republic of China

Style

<u>Mr President</u> (主席)

(informal)

His Excellency (阁

下)

(diplomatic)

president is Xi Jinping, who took office in March 2013, replacing Hu Jintao. He was re-elected in March 2018, and further re-elected for a third term in March 2023.

History

Establishment in 1954

The office of state chairman (the original English translation) was first established under the 1954 Constitution. Though the ceremonial powers of the office were largely identical to those in the current Constitution, the powers of the 1954 office differed from those of the current office in two areas: military and governmental. The state chairman's military powers were defined in the 1954 Constitution as follows: "The Chairman of the People's Republic of China commands the armed forces of the state, and is chairman of the National Defence Council (Chinese: 国防委员会)."[2][3] The National Defence Council was unique to the 1954 Constitution, and was mandated as the civil command for the People's Liberation Army. It was abolished under the 1975 Constitution.

The state chairman's governmental powers were defined in the 1954 Constitution as follows: "The Chairman of the People's Republic of China, whenever necessary, convenes a Supreme State Conference (Chinese: 最高国务会议) and acts as its chairman."[2] The members of the Supreme State Conference included the main officers of state, and its views were to be presented to the main organs of state and government, including the National People's Congress and the State and National Defense Councils.[2] The Supreme State Conference was also unique to the 1954 Constitution. It was abolished under the 1975 Constitution and later Constitutions have not included a similar body.

History up to 1974

CCP Chairman Mao Zedong was the first to hold the office of state chairman. He was elected at the <u>founding session</u> of the National People's Congress in 1954. At the <u>2nd NPC</u> in 1959, Mao was succeeded by <u>Liu Shaoqi</u>, first-ranked <u>Vice Chairman</u> of the Chinese Communist <u>Party</u>. Liu was reelected as state chairman at the <u>3rd NPC</u> in Jan 1965. However, in 1966, Mao launched the <u>Cultural Revolution</u> and by August 1966 Mao and his supporters succeeding in removing Liu from his position as party vice chairman. A few months later Liu was apparently placed under house arrest, and after a prolonged power struggle the 12th Plenum of the 8th Communist Party Congress stripped Liu Shaoqi of all his party and non-party positions on 31 October 1968, including the post of state chairman. This was in violation of the Constitution, which required a vote by the NPC to remove the state chairman. After Liu's

Wikipedia		
Туре	Head of state	
Status	Ceremonial presidency	
Reports to	National People's Congress and its Standing Committee	
Residence	Zhongnanhai	
Seat	West Building, Zhongnanhai, Beijing	
Nominator	Presidium of the National People's Congress	
Appointer	National People's Congress	
Term length	Five years, renewable with no- limit	
Constituting instrument	Constitution of the People's Republic of China	
Precursor	Chairman of the Central People's Government (1949–1954)	
Inaugural holder	Mao Zedong	
Formation	27 September 1954	
Abolished	1975–1982	
Unofficial names	State Chairman	
Deputy	Vice President	
Salary	<u>CN¥</u> 150,000 per annum <u>est.</u> (2015) ^[1]	

President of the people's Republic of China

Simplified Chinese 中华人民共和 国主席

Traditional Chinese 中華人民共和

國主席

Transcriptions

show

removal in 1968, the office of state chairman was vacant. From 1972 to 1975, however, state media referred to Vice State Chairman <u>Dong Biwu</u> as "acting state chairman".

Abolition in 1975

When the 4th NPC was convened in 1975, its main act was to adopt a new Constitution which eliminated the office of state chairman and



emphasized instead the leadership of the Communist Party over the state, including an article that made the CCP chairman supreme commander of the PLA in concurrence as chairman of the party CMC, while the duties of head of state were transferred to the chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The 5th NPC was convened two years early, in 1978, and a third Constitution was adopted, which also lacked the office of state chairman, but did place a greater emphasis on the ceremonial roles performed by the chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress as head of state.

Restoration in 1982

The office was reinstated in the <u>fourth Constitution</u>, adopted by the 5th Session of the 5th NPC in 1982. In the 1982 Constitution, the party developed policy while the state executed it, and the president was conceived of as a <u>figurehead</u> of state with actual state power resting in the hands of the general secretary of the Communist Party, <u>premier of the State Council</u> and the <u>chairman of the Central Military Commission</u>. As part of the effort to prevent one person from rising above the party as Mao had done, all four posts were intended to be held by separate people. The president therefore held ceremonial duties such as greeting foreign dignitaries and signing the appointment of embassy staff, and did not intervene in the affairs of the State Council or the party. The constitution also mandated term limits for the office, stipulating the president and vice president could not serve more than two consecutive terms.

The posts of the premier, president and CCP general secretary were held by different individuals in the 1980s. That said, in reality political power was concentrated on Deng Xiaoping, effectively the paramount leader, who controlled the Party, government and the military from "behind the scenes" without holding any of the three posts. However, presidents <u>Li Xiannian</u> (1983–1988) and <u>Yang Shangkun</u> (1988–1993) were not simple figureheads, but actually significant players in the highest leadership. They derived most of their power from being amongst the Eight Elders, rather than the office of president. [5]

In the 1990s, the experiment of separating party and state posts, which led to conflict between Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang during the <u>Tiananmen Square protests of 1989</u>, was terminated. In 1993, <u>Jiang Zemin</u>, who had been general secretary of the CCP and chairman of the Central Military Commission since 1989, assumed the presidency as well, becoming the undisputed top leader of the party and the state. <u>[6][7]</u> Jiang stepped down as president in 2003, handing the post to then—<u>Vice President Hu Jintao</u>, the first vice-president to assume the office. Hu had already become general secretary in 2002. In turn, Hu vacated both offices for Xi Jinping in 2012 and 2013, who had also previously served as Vice President under Hu.

On March 11, 2018, the first session of the 13th National People's Congress, by a vote of 2,958 in favor, two opposed and three abstaining, passed a constitutional amendment that removed the previous term limits for the president and the vice president. [9] Xi explained the decision in terms of needing to align the presidency with his more powerful posts of general secretary of the party and CMC chairman, which do not have term limits. [10]

Qualifications and election

According to the Constitution, the president must be a Chinese citizen with full electoral rights who has reached the age of 45. [11]

According to the Organic Law of the NPC, the president is nominated by the NPC Presidium, the Congress's executive organ. [12] The president is then elected by the National People's Congress (NPC), constitutionally China's highest state body, which also has the power to remove the president and other state officers from office. Elections and removals are decided by majority vote. [11] In practice, however, the ruling Chinese Communist Party reserves the post of president for its current general secretary since 1990s. Like all officers of state elected by the NPC, the president is elected from a one name ballot.

Powers and duties

The president functions as the head of state of the PRC as well as the supreme representative of China both internally and externally. Under the current constitution, instated in 1982 with minor revisions in later years, the president has the power to promulgate laws, select and dismiss the premier (head of government), vice premiers, state councilors as well as ministers of the State Council, grant presidential pardons, declare states of emergency, issue mass mobilization orders, and issue state honors. In addition, the president names and dismisses ambassadors to foreign countries, and signs and annuls treaties with foreign entities. According to the Constitution, all of these powers require the approval or confirmation of the National People's Congress (NPC), which the office is subject to. [13]

The president also conducts state visits on behalf of the People's Republic. [note 3] Under the constitution, the "state visit" clause is the only presidential power that does not stipulate any form of oversight from the NPC. As the vast majority of presidential powers are dependent on the ratification of the NPC, the president is, in essence, a symbolic post without any direct say in the governance of state. It is therefore conceived to mainly function as a symbolic institution of the state rather than an office with true executive powers. [15][16][17]

In theory, the president has discretion over the selection of the premier, though in practice the premier has historically been selected through the top-level discussions of the Chinese Communist Party. Upon the nomination of the premier, the NPC convenes to confirm the nomination, but since only one name is on the ballot, it can only approve or reject. To date, it has never rejected a personnel nomination. Since the premier, the head of government in China, is the most important political appointment in the Chinese government, the nomination power, under some circumstances, may give the president real political influence.

The director of the Office of the President of the PRC (<u>Chinese</u>: 中华人民共和国主席办公室; <u>pinyin</u>: *Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó Zhǔxí Bàngōngsh*ì) is <u>Cai Qi</u>, who is also the director of the <u>CCP General</u> Office and the director of the <u>CCP General Secretary Office</u>. [20]

Political ranking

The political ranking of the presidency has changed throughout the decades, influenced by the officeholder of the time. 2nd President Liu Shaoqi was also the first-ranked vice chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, and ranked second in the Chinese Communist Party, behind CCP Chairman Mao Zedong. President Li Xiannian was also the 5th ranked member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee, after the CCP general secretary and Chinese premier. President Yang Shangkun was not a member of CCP Politburo Standing Committee, but he ranked third after CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang and CMC Chairman Deng Xiaoping. Since Jiang Zemin's accession to the office, the president has also the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, ranking first in party and state.

Post title

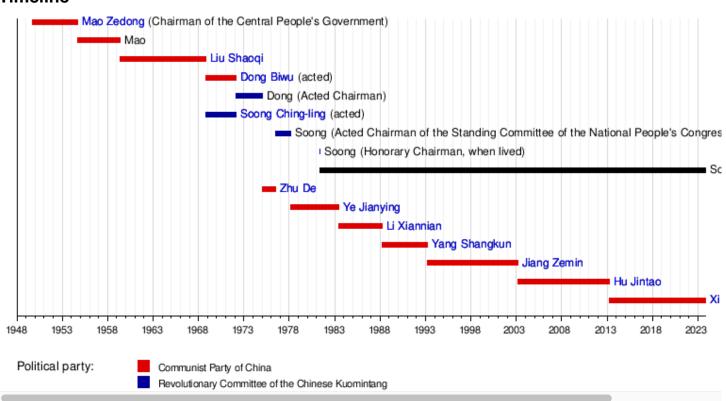
The title of the office (Chinese: 国家主席; pinyin: Guójiā Zhǔxí), which literally translates to "state chairman", was unchanged in the Chinese text, but a new English translation of "President of the People's Republic of China" has been adopted since 1982, instead of "Chairman of the People's Republic of China". [16]

Order of succession

Article 84 of the Constitution of China. If the office of president falls vacant, then the <u>vice president</u> succeeds to the office. If both offices fall vacant, then the <u>chairman of the NPC Standing Committee</u> temporarily acts as president until the NPC can elect a new president and vice president. [25][14]

List of heads of state

Timeline



Chairmen



Mao Zedong
(27 September 1954 –
27 April 1959;
Chairman of the Central
People's Government
1 October 1949 –
27 September 1954)



Liu Shaoqi (27 April 1959 – 31 October 1968)



Dong Biwu(*Vice-Chairman acted as the Chairman*31 October 1968 –
24 February 1972; *Acted Chairman*24 February 1972 –
17 January 1975)



Song Qingling
(Vice-Chairwoman
acted as the Chairman
31 October 1968 –
24 February 1972;
Honorary Chairwoman
16 May 1981 – present,
died 29 May 1981)

Chairmen of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress



Zhu De (17 January 1975 – 6 July 1976)



Song Qingling
(Acting Chairman
6 July 1976 –
5 March 1978)



Ye Jianying (5 March 1978 – 18 June 1983)

Presidents



Li Xiannian (18 June 1983 – 8 April 1988)



Yang Shangkun (8 April 1988 – 27 March 1993)



Jiang Zemin (27 March 1993 – 15 March 2003)



Hu Jintao (15 March 2003 – 14 March 2013)



Xi Jinping (14 March 2013 – present)

Statistics

#	President	Date of birth	Age at ascension (first term)	Time in office (total)	Age at retirement (last term)	Date of death	Longevity			
1	Mao Zedong	26 December 1893	60 years, 275 days	4 years, 212 days	64 years, 122 days	9 September 1976	82 years, 258 days			
2	Liu Shaoqi	24 November 1898	60 years, 154 days	9 years, 187 days	69 years, 342 days	12 November 1969	70 years, 353 days			
	Presidency vacant									
acting	Dong Biwu	5 March 1886	85 years, 356 days	2 years, 327 days	88 years, 318 days	2 April 1975	89 years, 28 days			
Hon.	Soong Ching-ling	27 January 1893	88 years, 109 days	Honorary ^{[26][27]}	_	29 May 1981	88 years, 122 days			
	Presidency abolished									
3	Li Xiannian	23 June 1909	73 years, 360 days	4 years, 295 days	78 years, 290 days	21 June 1992	82 years, 364 days			
4	Yang Shangkun	3 August 1907	80 years, 250 days	4 years, 352 days	85 years, 236 days	14 September 1998	91 years, 42 days			
5	Jiang Zemin	17 August 1926	66 years, 222 days	9 years, 353 days	76 years, 210 days	30 November 2022	96 years, 105 days			
6	Hu Jintao	21 December 1942	60 years, 84 days	9 years, 365 days	70 years, 84 days	Living	80 years, 298 days (Living)			
7	Xi Jinping	15 June 1953	59 years, 272 days	10 years, 215 days (Incumbent)	Incumbent	Living	70 years, 122 days (Living)			

Spouse of the president

Since the first president, six presidents have had a spouse during their term in office. The current spouse is Peng Liyuan, wife of President Xi Jinping.

No.	Image	Spouse	President	Tenure
1	3	Jiang Qing	Mao Zedong	27 September 1954 – 27 April 1959
2	75	Wang Guangmei	Liu Shaoqi	27 April 1959 – 31 October 1968
3		Lin Jiamei	<u>Li Xiannian</u>	18 June 1983 – 8 April 1988
	Vacant		Yang Shangkun	8 April 1988 – 27 March 1993
4		Wang Yeping	Jiang Zemin	27 March 1993 – 15 March 2003
5		Liu Yongqing	<u>Hu Jintao</u>	15 March 2003 – 14 March 2013
6		Peng Liyuan	Xi Jinping	14 March 2013 – Incumbent

See also

- List of Chinese leaders
- List of leaders of the People's Republic of China
- Orders of precedence in China
- Air transports of heads of state and government



Notes

1. The presidency is listed as such in the current Constitution; it is thus equivalent to organs such as the State Council, rather than to offices such as that of the premier.

- 2. In <u>Chinese</u>, the president of the PRC is termed <u>zhuxí</u>, while the presidents of other countries are termed <u>zongtong</u>. Furthermore, <u>zhuxí</u> continues to have the meaning of "chairman" in a generic context. Incidentally, the president of the <u>Republic of China</u> is termed <u>zongtong</u>.
- 3. Currently, a specially configured <u>Boeing 747-8i</u> is used to carry the president on international trips. See Air transports of heads of state and government#China, People's Republic of (China) for more details.

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