

POLITICS

Chinese Political History II Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

A political-institutions history of China from Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening-up through the party-state's structure, Tiananmen, the Jiang and Hu eras, China's economic rise, Xi Jinping's consolidation of power, the 2018 removal of presidential term limits, Hong Kong and Taiwan — with contested figures and unverified claims marked throughout.

10 Chapters

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CHAPTER 1: DENG XIAOPING'S REFORM & OPENING-UP

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 1 · Deng Xiaoping's Reform & Opening-Up

Chinese Political History I ended by asking who held power after Mao: it traced the contest between Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping to the December 1978 Third Plenum and stopped there. This course begins by asking what the winners then did. This chapter does not retell the Deng–Hua struggle (see Chinese Political History I Chapter 10); it looks at the policy content of that moment and at the first institution it produced, the Special Economic Zones. Each date and figure was checked against sources, and where sources disagree the chapter says so.

What the Third Plenum Actually Decided

The Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee met in Beijing from **18 to 22 December 1978**, at the Jingxi Hotel. It was the formal end of a longer process: the plenum largely ratified positions worked out at a Central Work Conference held in the weeks before, where Deng had cemented his advantage over Hua. Its real decisions fall into three groups.

1. A change of focus

The plenum decided to stop using the slogan "take class struggle as the key link" and shifted the focus of the party's and state's work to economic construction. Its communiqué declared that large-scale, turbulent mass class struggles had "in the main come to an end." The "Two Whatevers" policy was repudiated.

2. Rehabilitations

The campaign over the 1976 Tiananmen Incident was reversed, and figures including Peng Dehuai (whose purge is covered in Chinese Political History I Chapter 8), Tao Zhu, Bo Yibo and Yang Shangkun were rehabilitated. Chen Yun had pushed for exactly these "leftover problems" at the preceding conference.

3. New people in new posts

Chen Yun joined the Politburo Standing Committee, became a party vice-chairman and first secretary of the newly re-formed Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. Hu Yaobang, Deng Yingchao and

Wang Zhen joined the Politburo, and nine more members were co-opted onto the Central Committee.

The "Four Modernizations" — agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology — were not new. Zhou Enlai had called for them at a January 1963 conference in Shanghai and restated them at the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975, with the goal of comprehensive modernization by the end of the twentieth century. What changed in December 1978 was that they became the party's organizing task, in place of continuing class struggle.

Not a Clean Break With Mao — Yet

The plenum's repudiation of Maoist practice was partial. One account notes that the Cultural Revolution was openly rejected as a whole only in 1981. December 1978 changed the party's priorities and freed a number of victims of earlier campaigns; it did not yet produce a full official verdict on Mao's era.

Deng's Speech of 13 December

The text most often cited from this period is Deng's speech "Emancipate the Mind, Seek Truth from Facts, and Unite as One in Looking to the Future." It is often described as a plenum speech. The published text's own heading places it a few days earlier, on **13 December 1978**, at the closing session of the Central Work Conference that was preparing the plenum. The plenum then adopted the direction it set out.

What Deng said (from the published text)	What it signalled
"Our drive for the four modernizations will get nowhere unless rigid thinking is broken down."	Ideology was named as an obstacle to the economy: the same argument as the "practice is the sole criterion of truth" debate, applied to policy.
"Allow some regions and enterprises and some workers and peasants to earn more and enjoy more benefits sooner than others."	Openly unequal outcomes were to be accepted as a route to growth. This is the policy root of the special zones later in the chapter.

What Deng said (from the published text)	What it signalled
"Expand the decision-making powers of mines, factories and other enterprises and of production teams."	Decisions were to move away from central planners toward the units doing the work.
"It is better to have some laws than none."	A modest, practical statement about legality, made after the Cultural Revolution's disregard for it.

What the Plenum Did Not Decide

It is easy to read "1978 launched reform" as if the plenum had approved the changes that followed. On agriculture, the largest sector of the economy, it had not. The plenum endorsed devolving production responsibility to production *groups* (*baochan dao zu*) but still prohibited delegating it to individual *households* (*baochan dao hu*). Its communiqué, in effect, forbade dividing the collective land among families.

Reform From Below: Xiaogang

In Xiaogang village, in Fengyang county, Anhui province, eighteen farm households signed a secret agreement to divide the commune's land into family plots. Each household would deliver its quota of grain to the state and the collective, and keep whatever was left. Each pressed a fingerprint onto the contract. The date is given as **24 November 1978** in one source and simply as **December 1978** in another, so it came either just before or during the plenum; either way it was illegal under the policy the plenum then confirmed.

The often-repeated results — a 1979 harvest larger than the previous five years combined, and per-person income rising from 22 to 400 yuan — come from later retellings of the story and are widely reported rather than independently audited. The vivid details, such as the villagers' pledge to raise one another's children if one were punished, are similarly part of the tradition around the contract.

What is better documented is how the practice was later handled at the top. In May 1980 Deng remarked of the household system that worries it would hamper the collective economy were

"unnecessary"; the Central Committee's **No. 1 Document of 1982** officially established it. The pattern is worth noticing: local actors, among them provincial leaders such as Wan Li in Anhui, ran the experiment first, and central approval came after results were visible. It recurs below with the special zones.

Two Slogans Deng Did Not Coin

Two phrases are attached so often to Deng and to this period that they are treated as its motto. Both need correcting.

"Black cat, white cat"

The saying that a cat that catches mice is a good cat is a Sichuan proverb, and its usual form is *yellow* cat, black cat. Deng quoted it in a 1962 piece on restoring agricultural production, after the Great Leap Forward famine, and reportedly borrowed it from General Liu Bocheng. It predates the reform era by sixteen years and was not a plenum statement.

"Crossing the river by feeling the stones"

The phrase is associated with Deng but was put forward by Chen Yun, the man given the discipline commission at the plenum. He emphasized it at a Central Work Conference in December 1980; some accounts trace an earlier use to 1950. It describes reform as cautious experiment, which fits the way the zones were built.

Opening: From Idea to Special Zones

Reform at home was matched by opening to the outside world. The route from an idea to four legally defined zones took about two years, and the sequence matters.

Date	Event
31 January 1979	Li Xiannian approves the Shekou project, a China Merchants investment on the Guangdong coast. The slogan "Time is money, efficiency is life" later becomes identified with Shekou.
April 1979	At a Central Work Conference, Xi Zhongxun, first secretary in Guangdong since December 1978, submits a proposal for special zones. Deng agrees, and proposes the name.

Date	Event
15 July 1979	The central government decides Guangdong and Fujian should take the lead in opening up, with "special policies and flexible measures."
May 1980	"Special export zones" is changed to "special economic zones."
26 August 1980	The 15th meeting of the Fifth National People's Congress Standing Committee, chaired by Ye Jianying, approves the Regulations on Special Economic Zones in Guangdong Province. Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shantou in Guangdong, and Xiamen in Fujian, are designated.

Two Details to Handle Carefully

The quotation. Deng is widely quoted as telling Xi Zhongxun that the central government had no funds but could offer favourable policies, and that Guangdong should "fight a bloody path out." The quoted lines come from a secondary account that does not document their source, so treat the wording as attributed, not certain.

The date. One reference page gives 26 August 1979 for the zones' establishment. The primary text of the Regulations states approval on 26 August 1980, and the July 1979 decision came first. The 1979 date is an error.

The rename in May 1980 was deliberate: one account says the word "economic" was chosen to stress that only economic, not political, experiments were to be carried out. That is worth holding on to when reading the Regulations themselves.

Reading the Regulations

The 1980 Regulations are short, and the text survives in English translation, so the zones can be read as written rather than as later described. They cover the three Guangdong cities; Xiamen was designated in the same decision but under Fujian's own arrangements.

Article	What it provides	Why it matters
1	Zones exist to develop economic cooperation and technical exchange with foreign countries and to promote	Foreign and diaspora capital was the target, and

Article	What it provides	Why it matters
	"the socialist modernization programme"; investors include foreign citizens, overseas Chinese, and compatriots from Hong Kong and Macao.	the goal is stated in socialist terms.
2	Enterprises and individuals must abide by the laws and decrees of the People's Republic.	The zones were economic exceptions, not legal or political ones.
9	Products are to be sold on the international market; sales into the interior need approval and must pay customs duties.	The zones were export platforms, kept separate from the domestic economy.
12	Land is owned by the People's Republic; investors get it according to need, with preferential use fees and terms.	Land was leased, not sold: state ownership was kept.
13	Capital goods, spare parts and raw materials imported for production are exempt from import duties.	The inputs for export manufacturing came in cheaply.
14	Enterprise income tax of 15 percent, with special treatment for firms set up within two years, investing US\$5 million or more, or in higher technology.	An explicit, quantified incentive, with a deadline to reward early movers.
16	Investors who reinvest profits in the zone for five years or more may apply for a tax reduction or exemption.	A reward for staying.
19–20	Workers are tested before employment and sign labour contracts; enterprises may dismiss them by the procedures in the contract, and workers may resign.	A very different arrangement from the guaranteed-job model of state enterprises.
23–24	A Guangdong Provincial Committee for the Administration of Special Economic Zones plans and approves investment; Shenzhen is under its direct management.	Control stayed with the province. The zones were not self-governing.

"Special" Meant Separate

Read together, Articles 2, 9 and 23 describe a walled experiment: legally inside the People's Republic, commercially separated from the interior by customs procedures, and

administratively under provincial supervision. This is the practical meaning of the 1980 decision to keep the experiments economic. A relaxed tax and labour regime was allowed in a defined area precisely because it was defined and controlled.

The Scale of What Followed

The figures below are as reported in one reference source, and the two years may not cover exactly the same territory, so the ratios are rough. Before designation, Shenzhen was Bao'an county.

	1980	1990	Rough change
Population	332,900	1,677,000	about 5×
GDP (current yuan)	270 million	17.167 billion	about 64× in nominal terms

The GDP ratio is nominal and takes no account of price changes, so it overstates real growth. It still marks an enormous change. The experiment was extended in 1984, when fourteen more coastal cities were opened, and in 1988, when Hainan became the largest SEZ; both are taken up in later chapters.

A Pattern to Carry Forward

Two different reforms in this chapter — household farming and the zones — share a sequence: a local experiment, then central permission for it, then formal codification. Shekou was under way in 1979; the Regulations came in 1980. Xiaogang's contract came in 1978; the No. 1 Document endorsing the system came in 1982. Later chapters will ask how far that sequence, experiment first and law second, shaped how the party governed a changing economy.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

The Third Plenum is often said to have launched reform, yet it still prohibited household contracting in agriculture. Explain what that shows about how the reform actually moved, using the Xiaogang episode and the later official approval.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Using Articles 2, 9, 14, 19–20 and 23–24 of the 1980 Regulations, identify which features made the zones "special" compared with the rest of the country, and which features show how limited the experiment was meant to be.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Choose one popular claim about this period that the chapter corrects (the cat saying, "feeling the stones," the plenum-as-launch idea, or the date of the special zones), say what the evidence shows, and explain why such attributions tend to gather around one leader.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **13 December 1978:** Deng's "Emancipate the Mind" speech, closing the Central Work Conference that prepared the plenum
- **18–22 December 1978:** Third Plenum; class struggle dropped as the "key link," focus moved to economic construction; Two Whatevers repudiated
- **Also decided:** rehabilitations (Peng Dehuai, Tao Zhu, Bo Yibo, Yang Shangkun), the Tiananmen Incident reversed, Chen Yun to the Standing Committee and discipline commission
- **Not decided:** household contracting, still prohibited; group contracting was allowed. Xiaogang's 1978 secret contract (24 November or December, sources differ) went

further. Official establishment came with the 1982 No. 1 Document

- **Slogans corrected:** the cat saying is a Sichuan proverb quoted by Deng in 1962 (yellow cat, black cat); "feeling the stones" is Chen Yun's phrase
- **July 1979:** Guangdong and Fujian given special policies; **May 1980:** "export" replaced by "economic"
- **26 August 1980:** NPC Standing Committee approves the Regulations (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou; Xiamen designated in the same decision). 15% income tax, duty-free capital goods, labour contracts, sales into the interior by approval and customs duty
- **Shenzhen, as reported:** 332,900 people and 270 million yuan (1980) to 1,677,000 and 17.167 billion yuan (1990)

CHAPTER 2: THE REAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY-STATE

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 2 · The Real Structure of the Chinese Communist Party-State

Chapter 1 showed the National People's Congress Standing Committee approving the 1980 Regulations on Special Economic Zones, while the ideas behind them came from a party conference. To read the rest of this course you need a map of who actually holds which power. China has two parallel hierarchies, a state and a party, and the constitution describes one while much of the real authority sits in the other. This chapter draws the map. Figures are from a small number of reference sources and are marked where I could not check them further.

Two Hierarchies, One Leadership

Every level of government has a state organ and a party organ beside it. The state side is what the constitution mostly describes; the party side is how the leadership steers it.

Function	State side	Party side
Nominally supreme body	National People's Congress (NPC)	National Party Congress
Standing body between sessions	NPC Standing Committee	Central Committee (meets in plenums, usually at least once a year)
Executive	State Council (led by the premier)	Politburo and its Standing Committee
Head	President (a mostly ceremonial post in the constitution)	General Secretary (also chairs the Central Military Commission at present)

The Same Person, Several Offices

Xi Jinping is reported as General Secretary of the party, chair of the Central Military Commission, and president of the state. That is the practical answer to "who leads China": the party posts are the ones that carry command, and the state posts give the same

leader a formal constitutional title. Chapter 6 asks how this arrangement came about, and Chapter 7 covers the 2018 change to the presidency.

The National People's Congress: Supreme on Paper

The 1982 constitution, adopted on 20 September 1982, calls the NPC the "supreme organ of state power." Its deputies number about 2,847 in the current (14th) NPC, and it is elected for five years. It has a Standing Committee of about 163 members that sits between sessions and does most of the legislative work. The NPC is elected indirectly, through provincial and local people's congresses.

What it formally does

Amends the constitution, makes basic laws, elects the president and state leaders, approves the premier on the president's nomination, and approves the budget and plans. The Standing Committee passes most other laws.

What it does in practice

Meets briefly, in an annual session, and ratifies decisions largely settled elsewhere. Its Standing Committee is the active body, which is why the 1980 zone Regulations came from it, not from a full congress.

What it is not

A body with independent judicial review or with a competing party. The sources I checked mention no judicial review mechanism in the constitutional system.

Dissent Exists, Rarely, and Is Recorded

The vote most often cited as unusual is the 1992 approval of the Three Gorges Dam. Of 2,633 delegates, 1,767 voted in favour, 177 against, 664 abstained and 25 did not vote. That is described as an unusually low approval rate of 67.75 percent. The percentage matches the yes votes divided by those who cast a ballot (1,767 of 2,608), not by all delegates (about 67.1 percent), so the headline number depends on who is counted.

Either way, it stands out because most NPC votes pass by very large majorities. One vote does not show independence, but it shows the chamber can register objections.

The State Council: The Working Government

The State Council is the "highest state administrative organ" and is constitutionally accountable to the NPC and its Standing Committee. It is made up of the premier, vice premiers, state councillors, ministers and commission heads, an auditor general and a secretary-general. Its executive meeting (premier, vice premiers, state councillors and secretary-general) meets two to three times a month. It directly oversees 26 constituent departments, down from about 100 before 1982. That reduction is a measure of how the ministries were consolidated during the reform years; the last adjustment I found was in 2023, and I could not verify its details.

The Party Leads the State Council, in Law

The State Council's Organic Law states that the CCP Central Committee exercises leadership over it, and that it must follow the party's ideology and policies. Apart from a few, State Council members are also members of the Central Committee. The party's leadership is therefore written into the state's rules, not just exercised informally.

The Party Ladder

The party's formal structure is a chain of elections, each body choosing the one above the working level:

Body	Size (as reported)	Role
National Party Congress	Meets every five years	Elects the Central Committee
Central Committee	205 members and 150 alternates (20th)	Elects the Politburo and its Standing Committee; meets usually at least once a year in a plenum
Politburo	About 24–25	Larger decision-making body

Body	Size (as reported)	Role
Politburo Standing Committee (PSC)	Seven currently; five to eleven historically	Decides major matters when the Politburo is not in session

The current Standing Committee, chosen at the 20th Congress in 2022, is Xi Jinping, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi. No woman has ever served on it.

Elected on Paper, Selected in Practice

Formally the Central Committee elects the Standing Committee. In practice, one source says that since the 1990s Politburo membership has been decided through deliberations and straw polls among current and retired members of the Politburo and its Standing Committee. The formal chain runs upward from the congress; the working selection runs downward from the top. Chapter 4 shows how this was made more predictable under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

How to Read the System

- **Ask which ladder you are on.** A law passed by the NPC Standing Committee is a state act; the decision behind it usually came from a party body.
- **Watch overlapping membership.** Most senior state officials are also party leaders, which is how the two ladders stay aligned.
- **Separate formal from working power.** The NPC is supreme in the constitution's words. The Standing Committee of the Politburo is where major decisions are actually taken.

Link Back to Course I

Chinese Political History I traced this same gap between titles and power from Puyi to Hua Guofeng, and closed with Hua holding formal posts while Deng held real influence. This chapter shows that the gap is built into the institutions, not only into individual rivalries.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Draw the two hierarchies from memory (state and party) and mark where each is elected or appointed by the body below or above it. Then say why the 1980 zone Regulations came from the NPC Standing Committee even though the policy was set by party bodies.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Recalculate the 1992 Three Gorges approval rate two ways (against all delegates and against those who voted) and explain what each figure means and which you would quote.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

The State Council's Organic Law says the Central Committee leads it. Explain in a paragraph what that changes about calling the State Council "accountable to the NPC," and name one claim in this chapter you could not verify and why it is hedged.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **Constitution:** adopted 20 September 1982; the NPC is "supreme organ of state power"
- **NPC:** about 2,847 deputies (14th), five-year term, indirectly elected; Standing Committee about 163
- **1992 Three Gorges vote:** 1,767 yes, 177 no, 664 abstain, 25 did not vote, of 2,633 (67.75 percent of those who cast a vote)

- **State Council:** premier, vice premiers, state councillors, secretary-general; 26 constituent departments (about 100 before 1982); led by the Central Committee under its Organic Law
- **Party ladder:** Congress → Central Committee (205 + 150 alternates) → Politburo (about 24–25) → Standing Committee (seven)
- **20th PSC:** Xi Jinping, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi
- **Unverified:** details of the 2023 State Council reorganisation; the informal age-limit norm for the Standing Committee, which the sources did not state

CHAPTER 3: TIANANMEN SQUARE, 1989

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 3 · Tiananmen Square, 1989

Chapter 1 described a decade of reform that loosened economic controls; Chapter 2 mapped the institutions that stayed under party leadership. In spring 1989 the two collided. This chapter follows the main events and then asks the institutional question the earlier chapters set up: how did a leadership committee that was supposed to decide collectively end up deciding through a few senior men who held no post on it? Sources for the internal decision-making are limited and partly disputed, and this chapter says so where it matters. The number of dead is also uncertain, and it is given below as a range, with the sources behind each figure.

From a Funeral to a Square

Date (1989)	Event
15 April	Hu Yaobang, the former general secretary removed from that post in 1987, dies of a heart attack. Students gather in Tiananmen Square to mourn him.
22 April	State funeral; it lasts about 40 minutes as emotion runs high in the square.
23 April	The Beijing Students' Autonomous Federation is formed. Zhou Yongjun is elected chair; Wang Dan and Wu'erkaixi emerge as leaders.
26 April	A People's Daily editorial condemns the demonstrations as "turmoil." Accounts differ on who drove it; one summary attributes it to Li Peng.
May	A student hunger strike begins. Gorbachev visits Beijing on 15–18 May, and by 17 May about a million people are reported to be in the square.
19 May	Zhao Ziyang, the general secretary, visits the square in the early hours and tells the students "We came too late. We are sorry," urging them to end the hunger strike.
20 May	Martial law is declared. Up to 300,000 troops are reported to have been mobilized to Beijing.

Date (1989)	Event
3–4 June	The army clears the square and the approach roads. The largest number of killings is reported in Beijing's western suburbs along Chang'an Avenue.
5 June	An unidentified man briefly stands in front of a column of tanks. The image is among the best known of the century, and it remains censored in China.

Where the Square Was and Was Not

The chapter's date table says "clears the square and the approach roads" because the fatal violence was not concentrated in the square itself. The sources I checked place most killings along Chang'an Avenue in the western suburbs. Saying "the massacre in the square" is common, but it compresses where and when it happened.

How the Leadership Actually Decided

Under the Chapter 2 structure, martial law was a matter for the Politburo Standing Committee. Only some of what happened inside it is documented. According to accounts drawn from Zhao Ziyang's memoir and other sources, on the night of 17 May the five Standing Committee members did not agree: Li Peng and Yao Yilin supported martial law, Zhao Ziyang and Hu Qili opposed it, and Qiao Shi abstained. The accounts say there was no clear majority until Deng Xiaoping, chairman of the Central Military Commission, and Yang Shangkun, its vice chairman, were brought in and sided with Li Peng.

Formal Body, Informal Tie-Break

If those accounts are right, the decision went to two men whose formal posts were military, not on the Standing Committee at all. That fits the Chapter 2 distinction between the formal ladder and working power, and it echoes Chinese Political History I Chapter 10, where Deng held real influence without Hua's titles. It also shows why the "collective leadership" label can hide how a deadlock is resolved.

How Much to Trust the Inside Story

Two sources carry most of the weight. *Prisoner of the State*, Zhao's memoir, was published in 2009 and draws on recordings he made under house arrest between 1999 and 2000. *The Tiananmen Papers* (English edition, January 2001) presents itself as a compilation of secret documents, but its editors never received originals, only reformatted versions, and the government calls it a fabrication. Treat the vote as reported, not as proven, and note that the memoir is the account of the man who lost.

The Casualty Question

No single figure is agreed. A summary source gives three sets of numbers.

Source	Figure
Official Chinese government tally	241 dead
Independent estimates	300 to 2,700 dead
Modern scholarship (as summarized)	700 to 2,600 dead

The same source says thousands more were wounded and that estimates of the dead run from several hundred to the low thousands. The ranges depend on what is counted (civilians only, or soldiers too; the square or the whole city) and on who could collect the data at the time. I have not tried to reconcile them; a careful statement is that the number is not known precisely and that the official one is the lowest.

Aftermath

- **Zhao Ziyang.** Deng decided to remove him. The Fourth Plenum on 23–24 June dismissed him from all his posts, and he was held under house arrest at No. 6 Fuqiang Hutong in Beijing for about fifteen years. He died on 17 January 2005, aged 85.
- **Succession.** Deng promoted Jiang Zemin to lead the party after the crackdown. Chapter 4 picks up this leadership.
- **Repression.** The government carried out mass arrests. "Operation Yellowbird" helped several protest leaders escape.

- **Memory.** The Tank Man image and the events themselves remain censored in mainland China.

What This Chapter Does Not Do

It does not give a full day-by-day account of the protests or of the army's movements, and it does not weigh the contested motives of the student leaders. It keeps to the events that bear on the course's question: how reform-era institutions handled a crisis, and what the outcome did to the leadership that followed.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Using the Chapter 2 structure, explain why the martial-law decision could not be treated as an ordinary Standing Committee vote, and say what the reported 17 May split implies about who held decisive power.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

A student essay says "several hundred students were killed in the square on 4 June." Identify what is imprecise or unsupported in that sentence and rewrite it as a careful, sourced statement.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Rate the reliability of Zhao's memoir and *The Tiananmen Papers* as sources for the 17 May decision, and say what you would need to see before treating the reported vote as established.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **15 April:** Hu Yaobang dies; **22 April:** funeral; **26 April:** "turmoil" editorial
- **15–18 May:** Gorbachev in Beijing; about a million people in the square by 17 May
- **19 May:** Zhao's visit, "We came too late"; **20 May:** martial law, up to 300,000 troops
- **17 May (reported):** Standing Committee split, Li Peng and Yao Yilin for; Zhao and Hu Qili against; Qiao Shi abstaining; Deng and Yang Shangkun added and sided with Li Peng
- **3–4 June:** army clears the square; most killings reported along Chang'an Avenue
- **Dead:** official 241; independent 300–2,700; scholarship 700–2,600; thousands wounded
- **Aftermath:** Zhao dismissed 23–24 June, house arrest to death on 17 January 2005; Jiang Zemin promoted; memoir published 2009
- **Source caution:** memoir is the loser's account; Tiananmen Papers authenticity unresolved

CHAPTER 4: THE JIANG ZEMIN & HU JINTAO ERAS: CONTINUITY & MANAGED SUCCESSION

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 4 · The Jiang Zemin & Hu Jintao Eras: Continuity & Managed Succession

After Tiananmen (Chapter 3), the leadership had to rebuild its authority, restart reform, and solve a problem the Mao and Deng eras never solved: how to hand power on without a purge. This chapter covers roughly 1989 to 2012, from Jiang Zemin's appointment to Hu Jintao's departure. It follows the sequence of policy moves and the succession pattern that came out of them. It also marks which parts of that pattern rest on documented events and which are informal norms the sources I checked did not confirm.

A Compromise Leader

Jiang Zemin became general secretary on 24 June 1989, the day the Fourth Plenum dismissed Zhao Ziyang (Chapter 3). One summary describes him as a compromise candidate. He started with limited power and consolidated it with Deng Xiaoping's backing. That origin explains a lot about the period: Jiang could not simply command, so he built consensus inside the Standing Committee, and one source describes him as "first among equals" within a body Deng wanted to rule by consensus.

Restarting Reform: The Southern Tour

By 1992 market reform had stalled. After the Tiananmen crackdown and the Soviet Union's 1991 collapse, conservative party leaders had halted it, fearing instability. Deng, aged 87 and holding no formal post, toured the south from 18 January to 21 February 1992, visiting Wuhan, Changsha, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai.

What he said

A planned economy does not equal socialism, and a market economy does not equal capitalism; development is of overriding importance. In Shenzhen, the first

How it was received

Beijing media initially ignored it. Hong Kong reporters and local outlets carried it, and by April 1992 Jiang Zemin had aligned with Deng's line.

of the Chapter 1 zones, he urged officials to be bolder, "not like women with bound feet."

What followed

At the 14th Party Congress in October 1992, Jiang introduced "socialist market economy." Growth reached roughly 13 percent a year in the following years, as reported.

A Retired Man Moves the Party

A man without an official position reversed the policy stall, and the sitting general secretary then adopted the line. That repeats the pattern from Chapter 3: informal authority overrode formal posts. The difference is direction. In 1989 it decided a crackdown; in 1992 it restarted reform.

The Jiang Years, in Brief

- **Reform.** Restructuring of state enterprises and lower tariffs, ending with WTO accession in 2001 (Chapter 5 takes this up).
- **Sovereignty.** The Hong Kong handover in 1997 and Macau's return in 1999 (Chapter 8).
- **Ideology.** The "Three Represents," launched in 2000, written into the party constitution in 2002 and the state constitution in 2004. It is described as legitimizing private business owners inside the party.
- **Controls.** A crackdown on Falun Gong beginning in 1999.

The First Managed Handover

Jiang stepped down as general secretary in November 2002 and Hu Jintao succeeded him. Hu became president in March 2003. Jiang kept the chairmanship of the Central Military Commission until September 2004, when Hu took it.

Post	Jiang → Hu	Hu → Xi
General Secretary	November 2002	November 2012
President	March 2003	March 2013
Central Military Commission chair	September 2004 (Jiang kept it about two years)	Hu stepped down from all positions in November 2012

Two Transfers, Two Patterns

The first handover split the posts: Hu held the party's top post from 2002 while Jiang stayed as commander of the military for two more years. The second was complete: one summary says Hu voluntarily stepped down from all his positions in November 2012, a departure praised for setting a precedent. Only one of the two is a clean example of full retirement, and it happened in the last case of this period, so it is not enough to call the practice established.

Hu Jintao: Continuity and Caution

Hu served as general secretary from November 2002 to November 2012. His slogans were the "Scientific Outlook on Development" and a "harmonious society," aimed at reducing inequality, and one source reports that by 2012 about 95 percent of the population had some form of health insurance, far above 2003. His term included crises: the 2003 SARS outbreak, the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, the 2008 Tibetan unrest and the 2009 Ürümqi riots. Growth averaged around 10 percent a year.

What "Managed Succession" Means

The pattern of this period, as far as these sources document it, is:

1. A successor is identified early and the post passes in a congress year (2002, 2012).
2. The outgoing leader leaves the party post, with a further step on the military and state posts.
3. Decisions are taken by a committee of the Standing Committee, described by one source as consensus-seeking under Deng's wish.

Two often-cited features are not confirmed by the sources I checked: the informal "seven up, eight down" age rule for Standing Committee membership, and a formal two-term limit on party posts. The two-term limit on the presidency was in the constitution and was removed in 2018 (Chapter 7). The others may be true, but treat them as unchecked here.

A Pattern the Next Chapters Test

If the norms were real, they were a practice, not a law. Chapter 6 asks what changed under Xi Jinping, and Chapter 7 covers the 2018 amendment that removed the presidential limit and how far it broke them.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain how the 1992 southern tour and the 14th Congress show the same pattern of informal authority as the 1989 decision (Chapter 3), and say what was different about the outcome.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Compare the 2002 and 2012 handovers post by post, and explain why the second is treated as more of a precedent, and why one instance of it does not establish a norm.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

A writer says "China had a firm two-term limit and a retirement age of 68 for everyone." Separate what the chapter supports, what it does not, and rewrite the claim accurately.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **24 June 1989:** Jiang becomes general secretary as a compromise candidate
- **18 January–21 February 1992:** Deng's southern tour; "development is of overriding importance"
- **October 1992:** 14th Congress adopts "socialist market economy"
- **1997 / 1999 / 2001:** Hong Kong handover / Macau return / WTO accession
- **2000–2004:** Three Represents launched, in party constitution 2002, state constitution 2004
- **Nov 2002 / Mar 2003 / Sep 2004:** Hu becomes general secretary / president / CMC chair
- **Nov 2012:** Hu gives up all positions to Xi Jinping
- **Unverified here:** "seven up, eight down"; a two-term limit on party posts

CHAPTER 5: CHINA'S ECONOMIC RISE & ITS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 5 · China's Economic Rise & Its Political Implications

Chapters 1 to 4 described how the leadership opened the economy and kept the political system under party control. This chapter asks what the economic results did to that political bargain. It follows the 2001 entry into the World Trade Organization, summarizes the scale of growth, and then turns to the central question of the reform era: how far does the party's claim to rule depend on economic performance? The figures below come from a small number of reference sources and are marked where they are single-source or contested.

Joining the WTO

China became a member of the World Trade Organization on **11 December 2001**, after a long process that dates to 1986, when it first sought observer status in the GATT, the WTO's predecessor. The steps that followed included a US–China agreement on terms reached in Beijing in November 1999, the US House passing permanent normal trade relations in May 2000, and the final approval at the Doha ministerial conference in November 2001. One source names President Bill Clinton, Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji as the leaders whose decade-long efforts made it possible.

The terms

China accepted "considerably harsher conditions than other developing countries," including tariff cuts, market opening, industrial policy reform, intellectual property protection and services liberalization.

Why accept them

Accession locked in access to export markets and gave reformers an outside deadline for restructuring. Whether that was the leaders' motive is my inference; the sources here describe the terms and the negotiators, not their reasoning.

After 2001

China became the world's largest exporter in 2009, and one source says its economy

was 11 times its 2001 size by 2025.

Effects Abroad Are Contested

The same source reports that Chinese imports lowered US manufactured-goods prices by an estimated 7.6 percent from 2000 to 2006, and that about a million US manufacturing jobs were lost to import competition between 1999 and 2011. Economics Fundamentals 9 covers the research behind such estimates and how the authors later revised the net picture. Treat these as estimates from one summary, not settled totals. A 2024 WTO statement also flagged a lack of transparency about Chinese subsidies to some industrial sectors.

The Scale of Growth

Measure	Reported figure	Caution
Average GDP growth after the 1978 reforms	About 10 percent a year for 30 years	A summary figure; growth was uneven year to year.
Extreme poverty	88.1 percent (1981) to 0.2 percent (2019); another source: 67 percent (1990) to under 1 percent (2015)	Different years and poverty lines, so the two series are not comparable. Both point the same way.
People lifted out of extreme poverty	About 800 million, 1978–2018	A single-source claim.
State-owned enterprises	About 40 percent of GDP, private firms about 60 percent	In 2025, private firms are 40 percent of the top-100 listed companies and SOEs 45 percent.

The Statistics Question

Data reliability is disputed. Former Premier Li Keqiang is reported to have called GDP estimates "man-made" and unreliable. A 2025 Federal Reserve analysis, on the other hand, found the official figures aligned closely with alternative indicators. Both claims

should be held together: the numbers are questioned, and they have also been checked and found broadly consistent.

What Growth Did to the Political Bargain

1. Performance legitimacy

Scholars describe the party's approach since the reforms as "performance legitimacy": ruling authority resting on delivering concrete results such as growth, stability, national strength and good governance. It has a history: Dingxin Zhao links it to the traditional Mandate of Heaven (see Chinese Political History I Chapter 10 for the imperial version). Zhao also argues it is intrinsically unstable, because it carries concrete promises and so triggers political crisis when they go unmet.

A Common Overstatement

"The party rules because it delivers growth" is a popular summary, and the research is more mixed. One review found no strong evidence that economic performance is the sole, or even the principal, pillar of legitimacy, and scholar Heike Holbig is reported to have noted an impression that growth alone no longer generates a high degree of public consent. Performance matters; it is not the whole story.

2. A wider party

The Three Represents (Chapter 4) legitimized private business owners inside the party. That connects the economy and the political system directly: the groups the reforms enriched were invited into, not set against, the ruling organization.

3. The state stays large

State-owned enterprises still account for roughly 40 percent of GDP, and the leadership kept the top posts in party hands (Chapter 2). The reforms shifted economic decisions toward firms and markets without moving political authority.

4. Problems that growth created

The Jiang-era reforms produced regional disparities, and Hu Jintao's "harmonious society" (Chapter 4) was aimed at inequality. The recent property-sector crisis is one source's example of a current strain on growth.

Looking Ahead

If legitimacy rests partly on performance, slower growth becomes a political question and not only an economic one. Chapter 6 asks how Xi Jinping's rule responded to that pressure.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Two sources give different extreme-poverty figures (88.1 to 0.2 percent for 1981–2019, and 67 to under 1 percent for 1990–2015). Explain why they cannot be combined into one series and what conclusion is still safe.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Summarize Dingxin Zhao's argument that performance legitimacy is unstable, and say what evidence in this chapter would count for or against it.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

A headline says "WTO entry cost the US a million jobs." Rewrite it as an accurate, sourced statement using the chapter's wording and cautions.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **1986:** China seeks GATT observer status; **Nov 1999:** US–China terms agreed; **11 December 2001:** WTO membership
- **2009:** largest exporter; economy 11 times its 2001 size by 2025 (single source)
- **Growth:** about 10 percent a year for 30 years after 1978
- **Poverty:** two series, not comparable; both show a steep fall
- **SOEs:** about 40 percent of GDP; private about 60 percent
- **Data:** Li Keqiang reportedly called GDP figures "man-made"; a 2025 Fed analysis found them close to alternatives
- **Performance legitimacy:** Zhao says it is unstable; other work says growth is not the only pillar

CHAPTER 6: XI JINPING'S RISE & THE CONSOLIDATION OF POWER

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 6 · Xi Jinping's Rise & the Consolidation of Power

Chapter 4 described a leadership pattern in which power passed on schedule and decisions were made by a committee. This chapter follows what happened to that pattern after 2012. It covers Xi Jinping's succession, the anti-corruption campaign and the argument over what it was for, and the ideological and institutional changes that raised one leader above the rest. The 2018 constitutional amendment is left to Chapter 7. The sources are Wikipedia summaries; contested points are marked as such.

The Succession

Xi Jinping became general secretary of the party on 15 November 2012 and chair of the Central Military Commission in the same month, then president on 14 March 2013. Compare this with Chapter 4: Hu Jintao gave up all his posts at once, so Xi received the party and military posts together and did not have to wait as Hu had in 2002–2004.

Background

Born in Beijing in 1953, the son of the revolutionary Xi Zhongxun (who appears in Chapter 1 as the Guangdong leader who proposed special zones). During the Cultural Revolution he was sent to rural Shaanxi and lived in a cave dwelling for seven years.

Career

Provincial posts in Fujian and Zhejiang, a brief spell as Shanghai party secretary in 2007, vice president in 2008 and vice chair of the CMC in 2010, which positioned him as Hu's successor.

Expected style

The succession followed the Chapter 4 script. The break in style came afterwards, with the concentration of authority described below.

The Anti-Corruption Campaign

The campaign began after the 18th Congress concluded in November 2012. Xi pledged to go after both "tigers and flies," meaning senior officials and grassroots civil servants. It was run mainly by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, led by Wang Qishan from 2012 to 2017. In 2018 the National Supervisory Commission was created as the highest supervisory body, consolidating anti-corruption functions.

Person	Position held
Zhou Yongkang	Former Politburo Standing Committee member
Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong	Former Central Military Commission vice chairmen
Sun Zhengcai	Sitting Politburo member, targeted in 2017

The Headline Number

One source says about 2.3 million officials had been "prosecuted" as of 2023. That figure is very large compared with the number of senior cases, and I could not check what it counts (party discipline, criminal prosecution, or both), so quote it as reported and do not read it as convictions.

Two readings of the campaign

Scholars dispute whether the campaign was mainly genuine anti-corruption work or mainly a tool of factional advantage. The evidence in this chapter does not settle it, but it shows why both readings are plausible.

Reading	What supports it
Genuine anti-graft	A large number of cases at every level, including the "flies"; a permanent supervisory body created in 2018.
Political tool	Targets included former leaders and military chiefs (Zhou, Xu, Guo) and a sitting Politburo member (Sun); the campaign removed potential rivals and strengthened one leader's control of the party and army.

Reading	What supports it
Both at once	The two are not exclusive: a campaign can be real in scale and selective in targets. Chapter 7 returns to this.

Raising One Leader Above the Rest

"Core" status, 2016

In 2016 Xi was designated the "leadership core," an honor previously held only by Mao, Deng and Jiang, according to one source. That places him in the line of leaders whom the party itself treated as first among equals, and it contrasts with Chapter 4's picture of a consensus-seeking committee.

Xi Jinping Thought, 2017–2018

The full title is "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era." It was written into the party constitution at the 19th Congress in October 2017 and into the state constitution in March 2018. The party describes it as building on earlier ideologies and as "a new breakthrough in the Sinicization of Marxism." Its components are set out as ten affirmations, fourteen commitments, thirteen areas of achievements and six musts. The doctrine develops from Xi's speeches starting in 2012.

A Comparison With the Predecessors

Chapter 4 recorded that Jiang's Three Represents entered the party constitution in 2002 and the state constitution in 2004, after Jiang's own tenure was well established. Xi's doctrine went into the party constitution five years into his first tenure and into the state constitution the next year, carrying his own name. Treat this as a difference of degree that the sources show; whether it marks a change of kind is what Chapter 7 examines.

More authority in his own hands

One summary describes expanded state control over private sectors including technology and real estate, alongside military restructuring and poverty alleviation. A separate passage in the

same source, marked as lacking citation, describes new commissions and leading groups under Xi. I have not used those details.

A third term

Xi was re-elected for a third term in 2022, after constitutional amendments in 2018 removed presidential term limits. The amendment itself is the subject of Chapter 7.

Reading the Pattern

Chapter 2 separated formal from working power. Under Xi the two came closer together: the same person held the top party, military and state posts and also carried a personal doctrine and a "core" title. The question for Chapter 7 is whether that changed the succession rules or only made them more visible.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Compare Xi's 2012 takeover with the Jiang-to-Hu handover in Chapter 4 post by post, and say what the difference did to the timing of his control of the military.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Using only the cases and facts in this chapter, build the strongest case for each reading of the anti-corruption campaign, then say what evidence would separate them.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

A report says "2.3 million officials were jailed for corruption under Xi." Identify what the chapter cannot support in that sentence and rewrite it.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **15 Nov 2012:** Xi becomes general secretary; CMC chair the same month; **14 Mar 2013:** president
- **2012–2017:** Wang Qishan leads the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; campaign of "tigers and flies"
- **Cases:** Zhou Yongkang; Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong; Sun Zhengcai (2017)
- **2018:** National Supervisory Commission created
- **2016:** designated "leadership core" (previously Mao, Deng, Jiang)
- **Oct 2017 / Mar 2018:** Xi Jinping Thought written into the party / state constitution
- **2022:** third term, after the 2018 amendments (Chapter 7)
- **Contested:** whether the campaign was mainly anti-graft or mainly factional

CHAPTER 7: THE 2018 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT & THE END OF TERM LIMITS

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 7 · The 2018 Constitutional Amendment & the End of Term Limits

Chapter 4 described a pattern of scheduled handovers, and Chapter 6 described how authority gathered around one leader. This chapter looks at the formal act that most clearly marks the break: the March 2018 amendment that removed the two-term limit on China's presidency. It sets out what the text said, how the vote went, what the state said it was for, and what happened after. It is the subject the capstone in Chapter 10 comes back to, so the facts here are kept narrow and marked where sources disagree.

What Was Changed

Article 79 of the constitution previously said that the president and vice president had the same term as the National People's Congress and "must not serve more than two consecutive terms." The 2018 amendment removed the two-term language. The change took effect for the president who would otherwise have had to leave office after his second term in 2023.

Only One Post Had a Written Limit

State media's rationale, as one summary reports it, was to bring three top positions into line: party general secretary, state president and Central Military Commission chairman. The other two, it says, already lacked formal term restrictions. That matters for reading the change. The amendment did not remove a limit on the leader's real power base; it removed a limit on the third, mostly formal, post so that all three could be held together without a legal end date.

The Vote

Item	Detail
Body and date	First session of the 13th National People's Congress, 11 March 2018
Result	2,958 in favor, 2 against, 3 abstentions
Proposal made public	Xinhua announced the Central Committee's proposal on 25 February 2018, about a week before the congress's opening session; several reports say it had been kept secret until then. One summary instead gives 26 January 2018 as the proposal date; the two may refer to different steps, and I could not reconcile them.

Compare this with the 1992 Three Gorges vote in Chapter 2, where 664 of 2,633 delegates abstained and 177 voted against. Five delegates out of about 2,963 recorded in this tally did not vote in favor, which is about 0.2 percent. The difference in dissent between the two votes is large, and it illustrates the Chapter 2 point that the congress is a body for approving decisions made elsewhere. It does not by itself show how many delegates privately disagreed.

What Else the Amendment Did

Party leadership in the text

The amendment wrote the leadership of the Communist Party into the main text of the constitution, not only the preamble.

Xi Jinping Thought

The preamble was expanded to include "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" (Chapter 6).

Supervision and oaths

It established the National Supervisory Commission (Chapter 6) and codified constitutional oaths for state officials.

A Package, Not a Single Change

The term-limit removal was one part of an amendment that also set out the party's leadership, the leader's doctrine and the anti-corruption body. Read together, they align

the constitution with the arrangement Chapter 6 described. The amendment made the informal concentration formal.

What Followed

- **2022, third term as general secretary.** At the 20th Party Congress (16–22 October 2022, 2,296 delegates), Xi secured a third term at the first plenary session immediately after. Official results are reported as unanimous, with no abstentions or votes against.
- **A leadership with no designated successor.** The new seven-member Standing Committee (Chapter 2) contained no clear successor. Reuters is quoted as noting that four of the previous seven members stepped down.
- **A third presidential term.** The constitutional change is what allowed Xi to be re-elected president in 2023.
- **Hu Jintao's exit.** On 22 October 2022 the former president was escorted from his seat in the hall before voting. Xinhua attributed this to health, and foreign analysts disagreed about whether it carried a political message. The event is contested and should not be used as evidence of either.

Public Opinion Is Hard to Read

A 2023 study reported by one summary found support for the change ranging from 37 to 60 percent depending on how the question was framed. The range shows that public opinion in a system with limited free expression is hard to measure, not that the true figure is anywhere in the middle.

How This Changes the Succession Story

Chapter 4's pattern (a successor identified in advance, a handover at a congress, a complete retirement in 2012) depended on norms. Chapter 4 noted that two informal norms, the age rule and any limit on party posts, could not be verified. This chapter has now shown the one written limit being removed.

1. It ended a formal end date for the president's office.

2. The party posts never had a written end date, so after 2018 none of the three top posts had one.
3. Whether a successor is prepared is an open question in the sources: the 2022 committee had none designated.

Where the Course Goes Next

Chapter 8 covers Hong Kong and Chapter 9 Taiwan, both places where the constitution's text and the party's leadership interact directly. Chapter 10 returns to this amendment as its worked case, so keep the vote, the text of Article 79 and the state's stated rationale in mind.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Explain why the state's rationale (aligning the three top posts) makes the amendment a change to one post and not to the leader's power in general, and say whether that makes the change smaller or larger than it looks.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Compare the 2018 vote with the 1992 Three Gorges vote (Chapter 2) and write two careful sentences about what the difference does and does not tell you.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

A commentator writes "China abolished term limits for its leader in 2018." Identify what is imprecise and rewrite the sentence.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **Article 79:** two-consecutive-term limit on the president and vice president, removed in 2018
- **Vote:** 11 March 2018, 2,958 for, 2 against, 3 abstentions
- **State rationale:** align the general secretary, president and CMC chair, two of which had no formal limit
- **Same amendment:** party leadership in the main text; Xi Jinping Thought in the preamble; National Supervisory Commission; oaths
- **20th Congress:** 16–22 October 2022; third term; no designated successor; Hu Jintao escorted out on 22 October
- **Third presidential term:** 2023
- **Proposal:** made public by Xinhua on 25 February 2018; a conflicting 26 January 2018 date (single source) is unreconciled

CHAPTER 8: HONG KONG: ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS AND ITS REAL STRUCTURAL TENSIONS**Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China**

Chapter 8 · Hong Kong: "One Country, Two Systems" and Its Real Structural Tensions

Chapters 2 and 7 showed a system in which the party leads and the constitution's text follows. Hong Kong is the test of a different promise: that a region with its own legal and economic system could stay inside that system for fifty years. This chapter covers the framework, the events that strained it, and the 2020 law that changed how it works. It is limited to what the sources I fetched establish. The 2014 events and the 2021 electoral changes are not covered because I did not research them, and I have marked the other gaps.

The Framework

Deng Xiaoping formulated "one country, two systems" in the early 1980s during the negotiations with the United Kingdom over Hong Kong's future. The idea is "one China" with regions that keep separate economic and administrative systems, including their own governments, legal codes, financial arrangements and foreign trade relations.

Hong Kong

Following the Sino-British Joint Declaration, Hong Kong reverted to Chinese control on 1 July 1997. The Basic Law guaranteed its capitalist economy, the Hong Kong dollar, its legal system and legislative autonomy for 50 years.

Macau

Returned by Portugal in 1999 under a similar Joint Declaration, with 50-year protections for its systems.

Taiwan

China has proposed the model for unification and Taiwan has consistently rejected it. One source cites 2025 polls with

over 80 percent of Taiwanese opposed (Chapter 9).

The Built-In Tension

The Basic Law is a national law, passed by the National People's Congress, that grants Hong Kong autonomy. Chapter 2 showed that the NPC and its Standing Committee are subordinate in practice to the party's leadership. So the guarantee depends on the willingness of the body that granted it to keep it, and the constitution contains no independent court to enforce the limit. This is the structural tension the chapter title refers to; it is an argument from the earlier chapters, not a claim from a source.

Everyday marker	Detail (one source)
Passports	Hong Kong residents hold SAR passports, not Chinese passports
Languages	Cantonese and English are used more than Mandarin
Borders	Special permits are needed to cross into the mainland

2019: The Extradition Bill and the Protests

The 2019 protests began with a bill proposed in February 2019 to amend the extradition law. The trigger was a murder case in which the suspect, Chan Tong-kai, had killed a tourist in Taiwan, and no extradition treaty existed to transfer him. Critics of the bill feared it could be used to send people to the mainland.

Date (2019)	Event	Numbers
9 June	Civil Human Rights Front demonstration	Police: 270,000. Organizers: 1.03 million.
16 June	Second, larger march	Organizers: about 2 million. Police: about 338,000 at peak.

Date (2019)	Event	Numbers
24 November	District Council elections	The pro-democracy camp won by a landslide; the pro-Beijing camp suffered its greatest electoral defeat.

Two Sets of Figures

Turnout figures differ by a factor of about four on 9 June and about six on 16 June. Both sets are reported and neither is verified here. Say "police estimated" or "organizers claimed" and give both. The protesters' demands grew to five: full withdrawal of the bill, retracting the "riot" characterization, releasing arrested demonstrators, independent police oversight, and universal suffrage. Two deaths are confirmed in the summary I read: student Chow Tsz-lok and elderly resident Luo Changqing.

2020: The National Security Law

On 28 May 2020 the National People's Congress adopted a decision to establish mechanisms to safeguard national security in Hong Kong. The Standing Committee then enacted the National Security Law as a national law on **30 June 2020**.

Four offenses

Secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

New body

The law created the Office for Safeguarding National Security.

Reach

Article 38 gives it extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Enacted Nationally, Not Locally

Article 23 of the Basic Law envisaged Hong Kong legislating on security itself. A 2003 local bill was withdrawn (the protests of that year are not covered here). The 2020 law bypassed local legislative processes and was imposed as national law, which is the sense

in which it altered how "two systems" works. Effects reported by one source include a chilling effect, major Western nations suspending extradition treaties, and mass emigration; I have not checked these effects independently.

In March 2024 Hong Kong passed its own Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, which is the local legislation Article 23 called for. I have not read its provisions, so I do not describe them here.

What "Structural" Means Here

1. **Two lines of authority.** Hong Kong's courts and legislature have their own powers, but the source of those powers is a national law that the NPC and party can change or supplement.
2. **A time limit.** The 50-year guarantee from 1997 runs to 2047 by simple arithmetic. The sources I fetched do not say what happens then.
3. **Different expectations.** Beijing and many Hong Kong residents appear to have understood "high degree of autonomy" differently, judging by the 2019 mobilization; the detail of each side's position is beyond what I verified.

What Is Not Covered

I did not research the 2014 political-reform dispute and protests, the 2021 changes to Hong Kong's electoral system, or the treatment of specific prosecutions and media outlets. Those are significant parts of the story, and this chapter should not be read as a complete account of the period.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Use the Chapter 2 structure to explain why the Basic Law's guarantee depends on the willingness of the National People's Congress, and say which part of this argument is inference and not sourced fact.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Report the size of the 9 and 16 June 2019 marches in a single careful paragraph, using both sets of figures, and explain why you would not average them.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Explain in two sentences what it means that the 2020 law was enacted as national law, compared with the Article 23 route, and name two claims about its effects that this chapter leaves unverified.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Framework:** formulated by Deng in the early 1980s; Hong Kong returned 1 July 1997, Macau 1999; 50 years of protections
- **2019:** extradition bill (February); marches on 9 and 16 June with police and organizer figures far apart; District Council landslide for the pro-democracy camp on 24 November
- **Five demands:** withdrawal, no "riot" label, release of detainees, independent police oversight, universal suffrage
- **2020:** NPC decision 28 May; National Security Law 30 June (secession, subversion, terrorism, collusion; Office for Safeguarding National Security; Article 38)
- **2024:** local Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (March)
- **Not covered:** 2014 dispute, 2021 electoral changes, specific prosecutions

CHAPTER 9: TAIWAN & CROSS-STRAIT POLITICAL RELATIONS

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 9 · Taiwan & Cross-Strait Political Relations

Chapter 8 ended with Taiwan's rejection of "one country, two systems." This chapter looks at why the status of Taiwan is unresolved, how different governments phrase their positions, and how relations between the two sides have moved between contact and confrontation since the 1990s. The subject is contested and language matters, so the chapter separates what each side says from what the sources establish, and notes where I have not been able to verify a point.

Where the Dispute Comes From

Taiwan passed from Japan to the Republic of China (ROC) in 1945. After losing the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the ROC government retreated to Taiwan (see Chinese Political History I Chapter 6). Since then the ROC has exercised authority over the island, while the People's Republic of China (PRC) claims Taiwan as "an inalienable province of China" on a theory of state succession, and asserts itself as the sole legitimate Chinese government under its "one China principle." The sources I read describe the ROC's position and Taiwan's domestic divisions as complex, and they place the dispute at the center of relations between China and the United States and between China and Japan.

"One China": Three Different Things

Term	Who uses it	What it says
One China principle	The PRC and a number of other states	There is one China; the PRC is its sole legitimate government; Taiwan is part of it.
One China policy	The United States, described as "strategic ambiguity"	In the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué the US "acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China" and "does not challenge that position."

Term	Who uses it	What it says
"One country, two systems"	The PRC's proposal for unification	Taiwan would keep separate systems within China. Taiwan has consistently rejected it (Chapter 8).

"Acknowledges" Is Not "Endorses"

The US wording in the Shanghai Communiqué acknowledges the claim held on both sides without adopting it. The source describes the US as recognizing the PRC as China's sole legal government while keeping unofficial relations with Taiwan and treating Taiwan's status as undetermined. Reading "one China policy" as if it meant the PRC's principle is a common error. I have only verified the 1972 wording; other US documents and the positions of other countries are outside what I checked.

From Talks to Standoff: A Timeline

Date	Event
Oct–Nov 1992	Quasi-governmental talks between the SEF and ARATS, led by Koo Chen-fu and Wang Daohan, produce the "1992 Consensus": "both sides of the strait upheld the position of one China," with different interpretations. The 1993 Wang–Koo summit followed.
March 2005	The 10th National People's Congress passes the Anti-Secession Law, which "authorized military action if Taiwan were to declare formal independence."
2008–2016	Under Ma Ying-jeou, elected on 22 March 2008, the two sides sign 23 agreements and hold eleven high-level talks. The approach is described as a shift "from 'mutual non-recognition' to 'mutual non-denial.'"
7 Nov 2015	Xi Jinping and Ma meet in Singapore, "the first meeting between leaders of the two sides since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949."
2016	Tsai Ing-wen wins a landslide. Beijing suspends official cross-strait communications on 25 June 2016 and calls her answer an "incomplete test paper."
2–4 Aug 2022	Nancy Pelosi visits Taiwan on 2 August; the People's Liberation Army begins live-fire drills from 4 August in six zones, described as China's biggest escalation in the region since

Date	Event
	the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1996.

The 1992 Consensus Is Itself Disputed

The sources describe the consensus as a formula in which both sides upheld one China with different interpretations. That "different interpretations" clause is why it has meant different things to different governments. I did not research how each side and each Taiwanese party now describes it, so the chapter does not settle what it committed anyone to.

What the Pattern Shows

- 1. **Contact depended on wording.** The 1992 formula and the Ma-era agreements worked while both sides could accept an ambiguous formula. Beijing suspended official contact in 2016 when Tsai's answer did not satisfy it.
- 2. **Law and force stand behind the claim.** The Anti-Secession Law was passed by the NPC (see the Chapter 2 structure and Chapter 7's amendment vote on how that body works). Its provision for military action is a formal statement, not only rhetoric.
- 3. **Escalation is episodic.** The 2022 drills followed a visit by a US official; the sources describe them as the largest escalation since 1996.

What I Did Not Verify

I do not have sourced figures on how many states recognize the ROC, on the 2024 Taiwan election result, or on recent opinion polling about unification and independence. The one poll figure in the sources (over 80 percent of Taiwanese oppose "one country, two systems," cited in Chapter 8) comes from a single source. Treat those areas as gaps, not as omitted good news or bad.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

A news article says "the US agrees that Taiwan is part of China." Using the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué wording, explain what is wrong and rewrite the sentence.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Trace the sequence from the 1992 Consensus to the 2016 suspension of contact, and say what role the "different interpretations" clause plays in it.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

List three claims about Taiwan that this chapter deliberately leaves unverified, and say what source you would look for to check each.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **1945:** Taiwan retroceded to the ROC; **1949:** ROC government retreats to Taiwan
- **PRC:** one China principle; Taiwan an "inalienable province"
- **US:** one China policy; 1972 wording "acknowledges" but "does not challenge"
- **1992:** SEF–ARATS talks, "1992 Consensus"; 1993 Wang–Koo summit
- **March 2005:** Anti-Secession Law
- **2008–2016:** Ma era, 23 agreements; 7 Nov 2015 Xi–Ma meeting in Singapore
- **25 June 2016:** Beijing suspends official communications after Tsai's win
- **Aug 2022:** live-fire drills after Pelosi's visit
- **Unverified here:** recognition count, 2024 election result, recent polls

CHAPTER 10: CAPSTONE: TRACING A REAL INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE — THE 2018 TERM-LIMIT AMENDMENT

Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China

Chapter 10 · Capstone: Tracing a Real Institutional Change — The 2018 Term-Limit Amendment

The course ends with one change followed stage by stage: the removal of the presidential term limit. Chapter 7 gave the facts of the vote. This chapter puts the amendment back in its setting, uses the tools from the earlier chapters to read each stage, and then asks what the whole course shows about how the system works. It adds only one new fact from earlier chapters, the amendment procedure, and it keeps the same discipline of saying what is sourced, what is inferred, and what is missing.

Stage 1: The Rule and How It Can Be Changed

Article 79 said the president and vice president served the same term as the National People's Congress and "must not serve more than two consecutive terms." Article 64 sets the procedure for amending the constitution: a proposal by the NPC Standing Committee or by more than one-fifth of the deputies, and adoption by a vote of more than two-thirds of all deputies.

Tool from Chapter 2: Which Ladder?

Article 64 names two state bodies as the source of a proposal. The proposal in 2018 was announced as coming from the Communist Party's Central Committee, a party body that Article 64 does not mention. This is the two-hierarchy point from Chapter 2 in a concrete case: the decision was taken on the party ladder and formalized on the state ladder.

Stage 2: The Preconditions

Precondition	Where it came from
The three top posts held by one person	Chapter 6: general secretary and CMC chair in November 2012, president in March 2013.

Precondition	Where it came from
Only one of the three had a written limit	Chapter 7: state media said the other two lacked a formal term restriction.
A raised personal status	Chapter 6: "leadership core" (2016) and Xi Jinping Thought in the party constitution (October 2017).
A body for enforcing discipline	Chapter 6: the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection under Wang Qishan, 2012–2017, and the campaign against senior figures.
A weakened set of norms	Chapter 4: the informal age and party-post limits could not be verified, so the written presidential limit was the main visible check.

Stage 3: The Proposal

The Central Committee's proposal was made public by Xinhua on 25 February 2018, a week before the legislature's opening session, and reports say it had been kept secret until then. (One summary gives 26 January 2018 as a proposal date; the two dates may refer to different steps and I could not reconcile them, as Chapter 7 notes.) The secrecy fits the pattern from Chapter 3: important decisions were taken in a small circle and announced when the state bodies were about to act.

Stage 4: The Vote

On 11 March 2018 the first session of the 13th NPC voted 2,958 in favor, 2 against and 3 abstentions. That is far above the more-than-two-thirds threshold in Article 64. I did not verify the total number of deputies in that session, so I cannot state the exact threshold in votes. Compare the Chapter 2 example of the 1992 Three Gorges vote, where about a third of delegates did not vote yes.

What the Margin Does and Does Not Show

A vote this lopsided fits a process in which the decision was settled beforehand and the congress ratified it. It does not show what deputies thought, and it does not show whether opposition was discouraged, since the sources I read do not address that. It also

says nothing about public opinion, which one study found ranged from 37 to 60 percent support depending on question framing (Chapter 7).

Stage 5: The Package and the Rationale

The amendment also wrote party leadership into the main text, added Xi Jinping Thought to the preamble, created the National Supervisory Commission and codified oaths. State media said the aim was to align the three top posts. Chapter 7 argued this makes the change small in legal power and large as a signal, since the party and military posts never had a written limit.

Stage 6: The Consequences

- **October 2022:** a third term as general secretary at the 20th Congress, with no designated successor on the new Standing Committee.
- **2023:** a third presidential term, which the amendment made possible.
- **Open questions:** the sources do not say what the succession arrangement is now, and I have not tried to predict it.

What the Whole Course Shows

Four threads run through the ten chapters. Each has a case in the first half of the course and a case in the second.

Thread	Earlier case	Later case
Formal posts versus working power	Chapter 2's party and state ladders; Chapter 3's Standing Committee deadlock decided by Deng and Yang Shangkun.	Chapter 7: the presidency's written limit removed to match posts that had none.
Informal authority moving policy	Chapter 1: Deng's Third Plenum speech and the zones; Chapter 4: the 1992 southern tour by a man with no post.	Chapter 6: a "leadership core" status and a personal doctrine beyond the formal titles.

Thread	Earlier case	Later case
Experiment first, law second	Chapter 1: Xiaogang and the special zones, codified afterwards.	Chapter 8: Hong Kong's autonomy, later reshaped by a national law in 2020.
Contested evidence, stated carefully	Chapter 3's casualty ranges; Chapter 5's two poverty series.	Chapter 8's turnout figures; Chapter 9's unverified counts.

A Reading Habit to Keep

For any claim about China's politics, ask which ladder it is on, who actually decided, what the source is, and whether the number is a single-source figure. The course used those four questions in every chapter, and they will still work on events it did not cover.

What This Course Did Not Cover

- Hong Kong's 2014 reform dispute and 2021 electoral changes (Chapter 8).
- Taiwan's recognition count, its 2024 election and recent polling (Chapter 9).
- How the party's secret decision-making works, beyond the accounts noted in Chapter 3.
- Foreign policy, ethnic-minority regions, the legal system in detail and the events after the sources I used, all outside the course's scope.

Hands-On Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Trace the 2018 amendment through the six stages and, for each, name the earlier chapter that supplies the tool used to read it.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 2

Choose one thread from the table, describe its earlier and later case in your own words, and say whether the later case is a repeat of the pattern or a change from it.

→ [Solution](#)

EXERCISE 3

Write a paragraph of about 120 words on the 2018 amendment that states only what the course sourced, marks one uncertainty, and makes no prediction about the future.

→ [Solution](#)

Quick Reference

- **Article 79:** two-consecutive-term limit on president and vice president; **Article 64:** amendment needs a proposal from the NPC Standing Committee or over one-fifth of deputies, and more than two-thirds of all deputies
- **Proposal:** announced by Xinhua on 25 February 2018 as coming from the Central Committee
- **Vote:** 11 March 2018; 2,958 for, 2 against, 3 abstentions
- **Package:** party leadership in the text; Xi Jinping Thought; National Supervisory Commission; oaths
- **After:** third term as general secretary (October 2022), third presidential term (2023)
- **Threads:** formal versus working power; informal authority; experiment first and law second; carefully stated evidence

Course Complete

This closes Chinese Political History II: Reform, Opening & the Rise of Modern China. Together with Chinese Political History I (Empire's Fall, Revolution & Mao's China), it covers the political history of modern China in twenty chapters.