

Questions

Why was Hua Guofeng was
and his supporters.

reform agriculture in

to reform China's

abandoned by the CCP

policy towards the West,
showed that Deng and his
realism in China.' To what

Political developments under Deng, 1976–89

8

Introduction

From Mao's death in September 1976 until 1978, the power struggle between 'Leftists' and 'Rightists' continued, with various factions among the top Party and government leaders manoeuvring for overall control. By 1978, it was clear that Deng and his supporters were winning the first rounds, although it was not until 1980–81 that this was fully consolidated.

As was noted in Chapter 7, one reason for Deng's economic reforms was to secure the power of the CCP which it was felt had been damaged by the events of the Cultural Revolution and the policies of the Gang of Four. The period after 1976 would show that although Deng's political policies seemed to fluctuate from liberal to authoritarian, there was in fact a consistent desire to uphold the one-party system.

The first intimations of Deng's approach to politics were seen during the campaign against the Gang of Four: allowing protesters to place, on what became known as Democracy Wall, 'big-character' posters which attacked his political opponents, and called for his re-instatement to leadership positions. However, this was not an indication of his *underlying* political style, and his political legacy is likely to be most remembered as one of repression, not liberalism – as illustrated by the forceful suppression of the Democracy Movement's protests in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989.

TIMELINE

- 1978 Nov:** Start of Democracy Wall
- Dec:** Wei Jingsheng's 'Fifth Modernisation'
- 1979 Mar:** Arrest of Wei; Deng's 'Four Cardinal Principles'
- Oct:** Wei's show trial
- Dec:** Democracy Wall closed down
- 1980 Feb:** 'Four Big Rights' abolished
- Aug:** Third Plenum, 5th National People's Congress
- 1982 Sep:** 12th National Party Congress: older leaders 'retired'
- 1984 Apr:** Reagan's visit to China
- 1985 Sep:** National Conference of Party Delegates; more 'retirements' of older members

1986 Nov: National People's Congress: electoral reforms for local congresses

Dec: Student demonstrations

1987 Jan: Fall of Hu

1989 Jan: Fang Lizhi's Open Letter

Apr: Death of Hu; student demonstrations and protests in Tiananmen Square; start of Democracy Movement

May: Zhao says student demands are reasonable; protests increase; start of hunger strike; Gorbachev's visit; martial law declared

Jun: Military used to crush protests in Tiananmen Square; arrests and executions of ringleaders; Zhao dismissed – replaced by Jiang Zemin.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What was Deng's political approach in the period 1976–79?
- Why did political unrest re-emerge in the period 1980–87?
- What led to the Tiananmen Square Massacre of June 1989?

Overview

- Once the Gang of Four had been overthrown in 1976, and Deng had been rehabilitated once again, it seemed as though he favoured a more liberal political approach.
- At first, a Democracy Wall in Beijing was tolerated – but when students moved from attacking the Gang of Four to criticising Deng, and demanding democracy, his attitudes began to change. In December 1979, Democracy Wall was closed down.
- During the 1980s, Deng's political approach varied from some limited liberalisation to campaigns against 'bourgeois liberalisation'. While he carried out some reforms to the Party – including replacing older leaders with younger ones – he made it clear that he would maintain the CCP's monopoly of political power.
- However, his implementation of liberal economic policies increasingly resulted in demands from intellectuals and students for a

similar liberalisation of politics. Meanwhile, from 1985 the effects of his economic policies – and of growing signs of corruption – were creating distress and dissatisfaction among many workers and peasants.

- From late 1986, student protests again began to spread, with many calling for democracy. These Democracy Movement protests tailed off in early 1987 – but because of his support of pro-democracy intellectuals, Hu Yaobang was dismissed as General-Secretary of the CCP.
- Some protests occurred again in 1988 and, in January 1989, Fang Lizhi, a leading intellectual, issued an Open Letter calling for the release of political prisoners.
- This, and the death of Hu in April 1989, began a rapidly expanding number of student protests – the most famous of which took place in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. By May, these protests were often a million strong; and were increasingly supported by workers.
- After much debate and hesitation, Deng's government declared martial law, and the PLA was sent in to suppress the protests and clear the Square – with significant loss of life.
- Afterwards, there were many arrests of ringleaders, and executions of workers who had joined the protests. Deng had made it clear that he had no intention of adopting a more democratic political system.



Figure 8.1: The growing confrontation between protestors and soldiers in Tiananmen Square, June 1989.

from 1985 the effects of
ns of corruption – were
many workers

n to spread, with many
ovement protests tailed
rt of pro-democracy
General-Secretary of

in January 1989, Fang
Letter calling for the

gan a rapidly expanding
us of which took place
ese protests were often a
ted by workers.

overnment declared
ress the protests and

aders, and executions of
ad made it clear that he
atic political system.



tors and soldiers in

8.1 What was Deng's political approach in the period 1976–79?

After the rise of Hua Guofeng and the fall of the Gang of Four, there was at first a political relaxation or 'loosening', and a more open approach. Many of those who had either been imprisoned or 'sent down to the countryside' during the Cultural Revolution were released or allowed to return home. Several important leaders – including Deng – were rehabilitated.

Democracy Wall, 1976–80

One manifestation of this political relaxation was that, in several universities, students began to put up 'big-character' posters (known as *dazibao*, and easily read when pasted on walls) calling for rapid moves towards political liberalisation. These included a large number of posters attacking Jiang in the period from the fall of the Gang of Four to the conclusion of their trials. China's new government was happy at first to allow people to have their say about recent events. In November 1978, in the centre of Beijing, on a wall in Xidan Street, near the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, students (and later workers) put up 'big character' posters, letters, and poems. This wall soon became known as 'Democracy Wall'.

Following the line of the new government, which was to 'seek truth from facts', people used the wall to give their views about what had happened in China in the period since 1967 – and about a whole range of other things. Such people included former Red Guards and those who had missed out on formal education during the 'Ten Wasted Years' of the Cultural Revolution. However, during that turmoil, they had learned how to organise political action, and they used this to spread their ideas and form networks.

As at first most of their posters criticised the Gang of Four – and even Mao – the government tolerated them. In fact, Deng even encouraged them, as it helped him in his struggle against his opponents in the Party – especially the Leftists who were reluctant to adopt new economic policies. Many of these posters supported his return to power, and

supported the Four Modernisations, while some began to criticise Hua – Deng was thus happy for the Wall to continue. He also approved of the posters that called for a reappraisal of the April 5th Movement of 1976 (see Chapter 6). Some of these posters now called for the protests to be re-termed ‘revolutionary’ rather than ‘counter-revolutionary’.

At first, this only really affected people living in Beijing, but news of Democracy Wall spread to other parts of China, and foreign journalists reported what these posters said. Especially important was the BBC World Service, which was listened to by many Chinese people.

In December 1978, when some posters began to criticise Deng, the government still took no action – and what later became known as the Democracy Movement can be seen as having begun at this point. Then the protests widened, with a number of pro-democracy activists publishing pamphlets and even underground magazines. Some magazines – such as *Beijing Spring* – sold 100 000 copies to Chinese people. These increasingly called for more far-reaching changes, and some even began to criticise the government, the Party as a whole and the socialist system itself.

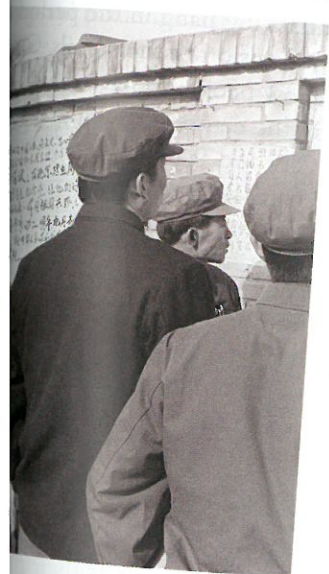


Figure 8.2: In December 1978, posters criticising Deng appeared on Democracy Wall.

While some began to criticise Hua
continue. He also approved of
of the April 5th Movement of
protesters now called for the protests
than 'counter-revolutionary'.

Living in Beijing, but news of
China, and foreign journalists
important was the BBC
many Chinese people.

began to criticise Deng, the
that later became known
as having begun at this
number of pro-democracy
underground magazines. Some
100 000 copies to Chinese
far-reaching changes, and
ent, the Party as a whole and



g appeared on

Their main calls were for freedom, political self-determination and human rights. These pro-democracy activists even addressed appeals to Western leaders and countries – such as US president Jimmy Carter – asking them to condemn human rights abuses in China.

This was a step too far for Deng, as he did not support increased democracy. In addition, large numbers began to arrive in Beijing from rural areas to call attention to abuses of power and corruption by Party officials, and to present petitions asking the government for redress. When this did not happen, they began to gather in Tiananmen Square and organise marches and protest demonstrations. Unlike the earlier phase, which had been directed against abuses in the period before 1976, they were now criticising the very recent past and the present.

Despite Deng's intentions, his various economic policies – and especially the opening up to the West – implemented as part of the Four 'Modernisations', soon led to the rise of open political dissent, with the demand for the 'Fifth Modernisation' – political democracy – being raised. In particular, many students and intellectuals believed that the economic reforms should be accompanied by political reforms that would increase democracy.

The 'Fifth Modernisation'

The most famous of all these pro-democracy pamphlets during this period was the 'Fifth Modernisation', by **Wei Jingsheng**.

Wei Jingsheng (b. 1950):

Wei was a worker, and had been a Red Guard. Imprisoned in 1979, he was released in 1993. He then resumed his criticisms, and was sentenced to another 14 years in 1995 – this time for 'conspiracy to subvert the government' ('counter-revolution' had been removed as an offence). He was released in 1997, and went into exile.

In it, he argued that for full modernisation to succeed in China, there needed to be a Fifth Modernisation – democracy – to ensure that the economic changes worked. Intellectuals like him saw the economic reforms as an opportunity to reform the political system as well. Wei openly criticised Deng and his policies in a series of articles – he even claimed Deng was becoming a fascist dictator, and that therefore his power should be restricted. On 5 December 1978, in a 'big-character'

poster (Source 8.1), Wei called for this 'Fifth Modernisation' to be granted, in order create full modernisation.

SOURCE 8.1

After the arrest of the Gang of Four, people eagerly hoped that Vice-Chairman Deng, the so-called 'restorer of capitalism,' would once again appear as a great towering banner... However, to the people's regret, the hated old political system has not changed, and even any talk about the much hoped for democracy and freedom is forbidden...

Why Democracy?... Others have conducted careful analyses and indicated on the Democracy Wall how much better is democracy than autocracy...

People should have democracy... Do the people have democracy now? No. Do they want to be masters of their own destiny? Definitely yes... Freedom and happiness are our sole objectives in accomplishing modernization. Without this fifth modernization all others are merely another promise...

Today... the people have... a clear orientation, and they have a real leader. This leader is the democratic banner, which is [sic] now taken on a new significance. Xidan Democracy Wall has become the first battlefield in the people's fight against reactionaries... Let us unite under this great and real banner and march toward modernization for the sake of the people's peace, happiness, rights and freedom!

Extracts from Wei Jingsheng's 'The Fifth Modernisation'.

From: www.rjgeib.com

Consequently, on 29 March 1979, Wei was arrested – at his brief show trial in October, he was found guilty of treason and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in solitary confinement. He can thus be seen as the first martyr in what became known as the 'Democracy Movement'.

Deng decided to make it clear that despite economic reforms, demands for democracy were an example of 'bourgeois liberalism', from which the Chinese people needed protection. So, on 30 March 1979, he made a speech setting out the 'Four Cardinal Principles' that the Party needed to uphold as the Four Modernisations were implemented (parts of his speech are shown in Source 8.2).

th Modernisation' to be

eagerly hoped that Vice-capitalism, would once again, to the people's regret, and even any talk about is forbidden...

careful analyses and better is democracy than

we have democracy own destiny? Definitely objectives in accomplishing all others are merely

and they have a real ch is [sic] now taken on a some the first battlefield is unite under this great for the sake of the

sation'.

ed – at his brief show and sentenced to 15 can thus be seen as the cracy Movement'.

nic reforms, demands talism', from which March 1979, he made hat the Party needed ented (parts of his

Political developments under Deng, 1976–89

Sometimes also referred to as the Four Basic or Fundamental Principles, these were:

- The Socialist Road
- The Dictatorship of the proletariat
- The Leadership of the Communist Party
- Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought.

This, he stated, was because China was aiming for *socialist* modernisation, rather than other modernisations. He saw 'bourgeois liberalisation' as leading China to capitalism; hence the need to uphold the Four Cardinal Principles, and carry out a protracted struggle against 'bourgeois liberalisation'.

SOURCE 8.2

To achieve the four modernizations and make China a powerful socialist country before the end of this century will be a gigantic task...

The Central Committee maintains that, to carry out China's four modernizations, we must uphold the Four Cardinal Principles ideologically and politically...

As we all know, far from being new, these Four Cardinal Principles have long been upheld by our Party. The Central Committee has been adhering to these principles in all its guidelines and policies adopted since the smashing of the Gang of Four, and especially since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee...

To sum up, in order to achieve the four modernizations we must keep to the socialist road, uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat, uphold the leadership of the Communist Party, and uphold Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought... The Central Committee considers that we must now repeatedly emphasize the necessity of upholding these four cardinal principles, because certain people (even if only a handful) are attempting to undermine them. In no way can such attempts be tolerated... To undermine any of the four cardinal principles is to undermine the whole cause of socialism in China, the whole cause of modernization.

Extracts from Deng's speech, 30 March 1979.

Source: www.english.peopledaily.com.cn

These, he said, were the basis of the Chinese state, could not be debated, and would not be abandoned. In part, this was a fictional attempt to

8

The People's Republic of China (1949–2005)

claim that the 'old revolutionary road' was still being followed by the Party leadership. Although, in a way, the implication was that other political issues could be debated and discussed, events soon showed that the Party, despite the various reforms, was determined to maintain its monopoly of political power.

QUESTION

Why did Deng see the Four Cardinal Principles as being so important?

By the end of 1979, Deng no longer needed the posters on Democracy Wall in his struggle against his opponents. In December, he ordered the closing down of the wall, which was moved to a more remote part of Beijing. The government then began quietly to arrest and detain, or 'send down to the countryside', the most important activists of the Democracy Movement – possibly as many as 100 000. Those from outside the main cities had their residents' permits to live in those cities revoked, in an obvious attempt to prevent urban organisation and resistance.

In February 1980, the 'Four Big Rights' – *daming* (to speak out freely), *dafang* (to air views fully), *dabianlun* (to hold great debates), and *dazibao* (to write big-character posters) – were abolished. These rights dated back to the Cultural Revolution, and had been incorporated into the 1978 constitution. This action made it illegal to put up any more wall posters, and was a clear warning to intellectuals and journalists that post-Maoist China would not allow unlimited criticism of the Party and government.

Although this forced the pro-democracy groups – and reform communists – underground, they managed to retain contact with each other and, occasionally, limited protests continued to emerge.

ACTIVITY

See what more you can find out about Wei Jingsheng. Then write a couple of sentences to explain why he called his demand for democracy the 'Fifth Modernisation'.

8.2 W re-em 1980–8

The 1980s in C
intellectuals w
liberalisation –
reintroduced. I
most serious c
and workers.

Reform c

The only real j
He realised tha
various develo
some changes
abandoning th

The idea of a s
The 1921 Bols
intended as an
the 'norms of s
USSR could c
a return to Len
with Stalin, wa
breaking with
socialist democ

However, he al
automatic hara
words, it woul
people were ta
long as the aut
more demands
citizens could l

8.2 Why did political unrest re-emerge in the period 1980–88?

The 1980s in China were, politically, rather confusing in that, at times, intellectuals were encouraged to speak out in a limited form of political liberalisation – yet it was stated that no ‘bourgeois’ values were to be reintroduced. By the end of the decade, Deng’s regime would face its most serious challenge from national protest movements of students and workers.

Reform of the CCP

The only real political reform Deng favoured was reform of the CCP. He realised that the standing of the Party had been damaged by the various developments since 1967, and that it was necessary to make some changes to restore its credibility and authority – but not by abandoning the idea of a single-party system.

The idea of a single-party system was a Stalinist, not a Marxist, belief. The 1921 Bolshevik ban in Soviet Russia on all other parties had been intended as an extraordinary and temporary pragmatic departure from the ‘norms of socialist democracy’. Thus, in the 1980s, Gorbachev in the USSR could claim that his more democratic style of politics was simply a return to Leninist practice. The CCP, despite Mao’s disagreements with Stalin, was mainly organised along Stalinist lines. Deng, though breaking with Mao on economic policies, remained a Stalinist as far as socialist democracy was concerned – in other words, he opposed it.

However, he also wanted it made clear that there would be no automatic harassment of Party members with different ideas – in other words, it would not be like during the Cultural Revolution, when people were targeted for being ‘revisionists’ and ‘capitalist roaders’. As long as the authority and leadership of the Party was accepted – and no more demands for greater political freedom were made – then Chinese citizens could be confident that they could live in peace and quiet.

In the struggle between pragmatists such as himself, and those 'Leftists' who did not want government policies to deviate too much from communist ideology, Deng saw the advantage of separating the very close links between Party and government. But this did not mean he was no longer a communist. What Deng – and his younger supporters – wanted was to reform the system to make it more efficient and productive. While he advocated economic policies that had Western capitalist features, he had no intention of adopting a democratic political system similar to those existing in the major capitalist states. Indeed he preferred the regimes in lesser capitalist states – such as Malaysia – which were often ruled by authoritarian systems.

His reorganisation of the Party along these lines was approved in August–September 1980 by the Third Plenum of the 5th National People's Congress. This plenum also condemned as 'liberal bourgeois views' the idea that people have the 'right to speak out freely' or 'hold great debates'.

At the top of the Party, Deng was keen to make it clear that the adoption of capitalist-style mechanisms and technologies was all part of a Chinese-style socialism. Any open renunciation of socialism would undermine the Party leadership and the Party itself – and thus the whole political and power structure in Communist China.

He was, however, aware that the Party had become isolated from the mass of the Chinese people – and that many of the Party members and officials were poorly educated and not very efficient. Yet they remained in post, even at the highest levels, because they were politically 'reliable'. In the upper reaches of the party, in the Politburo and the Central Committee, a small number of old men – including Deng himself – monopolised power.

Consequently, in 1982 (building on his previous actions in 1980), Deng began another campaign to 'encourage' senior members of the Party to retire. At the 12th National Party Congress, in September, older leading members were 'promoted' to the Central Advisory Commission – headed by Deng – and their official positions were taken by younger members. In September 1985, the National Conference of Party Delegates oversaw further retirements, so that younger and better-educated members could take their place. Similar changes were encouraged at the lower levels too.



Figure 8.3: 'The Observer, a British leading older man'

QUESTION

In what way ironic as reg If in doubt, i

By 1986, a tot supervised a 'c expelled over abuse of power steps to improv 60% of the Par younger men a

Many of these those who wer However, unde Deng's commi



Figure 8.3: 'The Long March' – a cartoon by Kevin Kallaugher, published in *The Observer*, a British newspaper, 22 September 1985. It shows the departure of leading older members of the CCP.

QUESTION

In what way was the title of the cartoon in Figure 8.3 particularly ironic as regards the old CCP leaders shown heading for the exit? If in doubt, refer to the *Background* section of Chapter 1.

By 1986, a total of 1.8 million senior members had gone. Deng also supervised a 'cleansing' purge – between 1983 and 1987, the CCP expelled over 150 000 cadres (officials) for various offences (including abuse of power, and bribery and corruption). At the same time, he made steps to improve the overall educational level of cadres – as a result, over 60% of the Party membership below the Politburo soon consisted of younger men and women with college qualifications.

Many of these changes also contributed to Deng's ability to remove those who were less than enthusiastic about his economic reforms. However, underlying all these reforms of the Party, there remained Deng's commitment to his version of communism.

Inner-party divisions

By 1982, Deng had full control over both the government and the party. He himself never formally held any high political post, such as premier, or Chairman or General-Secretary of the CCP. Instead, he chaired important economic committees, preferring to put his supporters into the top positions – in particular Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. By then, in fact, it seemed fairly clear that Deng would eventually be replaced either by Zhao, the premier, or by Hu, the General-Secretary of the CCP.

Hu in particular favoured a more democratic approach to dissent, and tried to protect intellectuals when Deng periodically launched attacks on 'bourgeois liberalisation' – especially during 1983–84. For example, during 1980, Hu made speeches in which he announced the rehabilitation of intellectuals (who had been known as the 'stinking ninth' – one of the groups previously singled out as 'revisionists', 'bourgeois' and 'capitalist roaders'). His reforms to the educational system restored the emphasis on improving the quality of specialist schools and of higher education, thus reversing certain aspects of the Cultural Revolution.

Under Mao, students had to have a good work record and the support of their work team before acceptance at a university. He had also placed more emphasis on a good basic education for all, rather than spending more money on the education of those who were more able. In part, this was because he had worried that the children of important Party officials were getting an advantage in schools and universities, and would thus become a new middle class, at the expense of workers and peasants.

Hu also backed the official Party newspaper, the *People's Daily*, in the early 1980s, when it promoted democratic reform and exposed official corruption. Indeed, Deng's government initially relaxed controls on newspapers, allowing them to report on certain negative aspects about life in China. In particular, several important middle-level Party leaders criticised the growing evidence of corruption. This had been a growing problem for some time. In the late 1970s, a case of corruption and embezzlement of state funds had come to light in Heilongjiang province, resulting in the trial and execution of the main guilty parties, all of whom had been leading members of the local CCP.

QUESTIONS

Why did the 1980s

This support lost position by Mao in Secretary. T activists kno Zhengtian, known nati Socialist D covering a

However, it him Deng's policies – t becoming p economic i

Though D greater poli was as cons he saw it, if it needed in the chaos c educational on political – he believ modern an that task.

Renewal

During a v made two s the people' uncensorec

QUESTION

Why did corruption become such a problem in China during the 1980s?

This support for greater political freedom was shared by Zhao. Having lost position during the Cultural Revolution, Zhao had been restored by Mao in 1972, being put in charge of Guangdong province as Party Secretary. There he had quietly supported three young democratic activists known by the acronym 'Li-Yi-Zhe'. These activists were Li Zhengtian, Chen Yiyang and Wang Xizhe. They had first become known nationally in November 1974, when their pamphlet 'On Socialist Democracy and the Legal System' was put on a wall in Canton, covering a hundred yards.

However, it was not Zhao's support of democratic activists that got him Deng's support, but his introduction of market-reform economic policies – this had resulted in his being elected to the Politburo and becoming premier in 1980, where he enthusiastically supported Deng's economic reforms and especially the 'Open Door' policy.

Though Deng promoted these two, he did not share their approach to greater political democracy. On the contrary, as regards politics, Deng was as conservative politically as he was 'progressive' economically. As he saw it, if China's economy was going to be modernised successfully, it needed internal political stability – he was not alone in believing that the chaos of the Cultural Revolution had impeded both economic and educational progress. What he wanted was for China to turn its back on political debates, and instead get on with economic transformation – he believed that politics was less important than turning China into a modern and powerful country, and so should be subordinated to that task.

Renewal of student activism, 1986–87

During a visit to China in April 1984, US president Ronald Reagan made two speeches, which included references to 'freedom' and 'trust in the people'. Despite government attempts to censor these, it appears that uncensored translations of the speeches began to circulate in China.

8

The People's Republic of China (1949–2005)

These, as well as the earlier newspaper articles against corruption, helped resurrect the pro-democracy groups. In 1985, a 17 000-strong student demonstration at the élite China University of Science and Technology (CUST) in Hefei, in Anhui province, called for greater reform – especially political reform. Most of the students here were the children of high-ranking officials and prominent intellectuals.

In May 1986 (on the 30th anniversary of Mao's launch of the Hundred Flowers campaign), Deng ended another more repressive period – during which **Wang Ruoshui**, a democratic Marxist, had been dismissed in 1983 as managing editor of the *People's Daily* – by launching another period of political relaxation.

Wang Ruoshui (1926–2002):

Wang studied philosophy in the late 1940s, became a Marxist philosopher and joined the CCP before its victory in 1949, and became the political theory editor on the *People's Daily*. He was originally a Maoist, but later became an exponent of Marxist humanism and liberalism. His beliefs and his journalism led to his losing this editorial job and to being expelled from the CCP in 1987, in one of Deng's campaigns against 'bourgeois liberalism'.

This encouraged ideological flexibility and stressed the need for 'political reform'. In the summer of 1986, Wang had his treatise 'On the Marxist Philosophy of Man' published in a Shanghai newspaper, in which he stressed the democratic and humanitarian strands of Marxist philosophy and politics.

In November 1986, the National People's Congress introduced some changes to the election of candidates to local congresses. More student demonstrations were held – ostensibly to encourage more students to get involved in local government. However, they soon moved on to demanding better living standards and the need for greater freedom. At first, the government concentrated on simply dispersing the demonstrations, without arresting the organisers.

The students were supported by Professor Fang Lizhi and, more circumspcctly, by intellectuals associated with Hu Yaobang.

s against corruption, helped
a 17 000-strong student
of Science and Technology
or greater reform –
ts here were the children
ectuals.

s launch of the
other more repressive
democratic Marxist, had
the *People's Daily* – by
n.

os, became a Marxist
s victory in 1949, and
People's Daily. He
an exponent of Marxist
his journalism led to his
led from the CCP in
'bourgeois liberalism'.

ssed the need for
g had his treatise 'On
Shanghai newspaper, in
rian strands of Marxist

gress introduced some
ongresses. More student
rage more students to
soon moved on to
for greater freedom.
dispersing the

Lizhi and, more
a Yaobang.

Fang Lizhi (b. 1936):

Fang was a popular astrophysics professor and Vice President at CUST in Hefei, and an outspoken activist for democratic reform. As a result of his support of the student protests in 1986–87, he was expelled from the CCP and, on 5 June, the day after the Tiananmen Square massacre, he sought asylum in the US embassy in Beijing.

In a speech delivered on 18 November (see Source 8.3), Fang made the point that China would only be able to develop towards modernity if there were freedom to think freely. He also said socialism had failed, and that for modernisation to work, it would be necessary to adopt Westernisation as well.

SOURCE 8.3

...I have to judge this era [since 1949] a failure. This is not my opinion only... many of our leaders are also admitting as much, saying that socialism is in trouble everywhere. Since the end of World War II, socialist countries have by and large not been successful... Are the things done in the name of socialism actually socialist? We have to take a fresh look at these questions and the first step in that process is to free our minds from the narrow confines of orthodox Marxism.

We've talked about the need for modernization and reform, so now let's consider democracy... the word 'democracy' is quite clear, and it is poles apart from 'loosening up'. If you want to understand democracy, look at how people understand it in the developed countries... In democratic countries, democracy begins with the individual. I am the master, and the government is responsible to me... If you want reform – and there are more reforms needed in our political institutions than I have time to talk about – the most crucial thing of all is to have a democratic mentality and a democratic spirit.

Extracts from Fang Lizhi's speech of 18 November 1986, in Fang, L., 1990, (trans. Williams, J. H.), Bringing Down the Great Wall: Writings on Science, Culture and Democracy in China, New York, W.W Norton, pp. 157–88

8

The People's Republic of China (1949–2005)

QUESTION

Why would Deng and his supporters have been against Fang's speech?

DISCUSSION POINT

How far is the idea of 'actually existing' democracy in the West, as was held by intellectuals such as Fang, an 'ideal' which, in reality, often falls far short of what China's Democracy Movement thought democracy to mean? Try to identify some specific examples to make your points.

During December 1986, in the leading universities of Hefei, Shanghai and Wuhan, students called for even greater changes to the electoral system – in Hefei, on 5 December, about 3000 students of CUST demonstrated for greater reforms. On 20 December 1986, over 50 000 demonstrated in Shanghai – this time, there were minor clashes with the police. Deng and his supporters were particularly worried by the fact that, in Shanghai and one or two other places, the student demonstrations had attracted the support of some workers.

These student pro-democracy protests then spread to Beijing. Many students were concerned about the relatively slow pace of expansion of job opportunities for the growing number of graduates as the Chinese economy began to slow down in the mid 1980s. In the late 1970s, along with the removal of the need to perform manual labour to get into university, there had been a rapid expansion of university places. Now, however, graduates were finding it difficult to get jobs.

Such student discontent has often been a critical factor in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations – including China in 1919. As hope and idealism tend to be more of a feature of youth than of middle-age, young people – especially those who continue their education – are often attracted to revolutionary movements. Especially if they live in a society that tends to ignore or exclude the young, and where power is in the hands of middle-aged – or even older – people.

Deng condemned the work of a small number of intellectuals, including Fang, giving him no room to monitor him more closely. Some saw him as a reformer. Other prominent intellectuals, such as Ruoshui. Both of them were among government officials. His editorial position was not their posts. However, he continued to speak in part by some of the Secretaries of the Party.

As exams began, the protests mostly faded away. A small number of officials in the regime was tough on these were given government then liberalisation' in 1980 and 1983).

The fall of

Deng decided to promote a prominent victim of the criticism. He criticised the slow pace of the students' movement. As General-Secretary, it seems that Deng's exposure of corruption and his close ties with Party leaders.

He had also criticised two years of assistance work; and that to them by the measures to try lecturers, and so

Deng condemned these protests in January 1987, dismissing them as the work of a small number of 'anti-socials'. The government then dismissed Fang, giving him a new post in Beijing, where the authorities could monitor him more effectively. However, he continued to speak out – some saw him as a Chinese equivalent of Andrei Sakharov in the USSR. Other prominent dissidents were the journalists Lin Binyan and Wang Ruoshui. Both of these had continued to investigate cases of corruption among government and Party officials, even after Wang's removal from his editorial position – and both were expelled from the CCP and their posts. However, despite these government actions, intellectuals continued to speak out in favour of democracy. They were encouraged in part by some sympathetic comments made by Hu, the General Secretary of the CCP.

As exams began in January, the 1986 pro-democracy student movement mostly faded away. The main ringleaders were arrested, although the small number of students arrested were soon released. However, the regime was tougher on the workers who had joined them – many of these were given prison sentences for 'counter-revolution.' Deng's government then launched a new campaign against 'bourgeois liberalisation' in 1987 – his third 'witch hunt' (the other two were in 1980 and 1983).

The fall of Hu

Deng decided that these protests required a new purge – and the most prominent victim was Hu Yaobang. In January 1987, Hu – who had criticised the slow pace of political reform and had supported some of the students' demands for political liberalisation – was dismissed as General-Secretary, though he remained on the Politburo. In fact, it seems that Deng had decided on this move in late 1986, as Hu's exposure of corruption among the children of senior Party leaders, and his close ties to democratic intellectuals, had angered several senior Party leaders.

He had also criticised recent reforms to higher education: these said two years of assigned labour were necessary before graduates could start work; and that 30% of each graduating class had to accept jobs assigned to them by the government. These were seen for what they were – measures to try to limit student access to dissident intellectuals and lecturers, and so limit the spread of protest.

Deng had first planned to remove Hu – who, in 1986, had suggested that Deng was too old and should therefore resign – at the Thirteenth Party Congress, due in the autumn of 1987. However, the events of the winter 1986–87 made Deng decide to act earlier. So Hu was dismissed at an informal meeting of Deng and a group of the most senior Party ‘elders’ who soon became known as the ‘Gang of Old’, after being forced to admit he had made ‘serious mistakes’. Officially, it was announced that the Politburo had dismissed him. His dismissal and treatment made him a hero to many students who later became very active in the Democracy Movement in the late 1980s.

He was replaced by Zhao Ziyang – Zhao’s place as premier being taken by **Li Peng**, who was more of a conservative. These changes of leadership were later formally approved by the Thirteenth Party Congress in late October 1987. It was at this Congress that Deng retired from the Standing Committee of the Politburo – forcing other elderly members to resign as well. This action, as well as removing possible opponents, also reduced the average age of Committee members from 77 to 63. Of the older ones, only Zhao remained.

Li Peng (b. 1928):

Li was a hardliner, who was totally opposed to making concessions to the democracy movement. Hence the growing conflict between him and Zhao. In particular, Li disapproved of Zhao’s idea of including trades unions and student organisations in discussions over economic and political reform. Instead, Li supported Deng’s continuing belief that the CCP needed to retain an authoritarian political system to keep control of the economic reforms.

However, Deng remained chair of the Military Affairs Commission, as well as ‘paramount leader’. He also retained great influence through the establishment of the ‘retired’ senior Party elders as a ‘Gang of Old’. Deng and this group continued to exert great influence informally, behind the scenes. Deng reiterated that Western-style democracy was not part of the modernisation programme – in part, because of China’s vast size and its mixed population, and the low educational level of the majority. Thus the leadership of the Communist Party was still essential – without that, there could be ‘no building of socialism.’

Contin

These actions
attitude to
– they prot
but also abo
living cond
calling for
such as Fan
included ca
student der
by workers
involved de
new academi

These prot
struggle be
Maoists in
on age gro
down. Esse
odd mixtu
– as noted
technology
strengthen
who was a
CCP hard
democracy

Impac

What help
to the 198
with the s
economic

As seen in
freedom f
basic nece
state indu
(SOEs) ha
also lost th
addition, i

in 1986, had suggested
resign – at the Thirteenth
Congress. However, the events
did not act earlier. So Hu was
and a group of the most
known as the 'Gang of Old',
serious mistakes'. Officially, it
dismissed him. His dismissal and
those who later became very
in the late 1980s.

place as premier being
conservative. These changes
by the Thirteenth Party
Congress that Deng retired
– forcing other elderly
as removing possible
Committee members from
power.

used to making concessions
the growing conflict between
of Zhao's idea of
organisations in discussions
lead, Li supported Deng's
to retain an authoritarian
economic reforms.

Affairs Commission, as
at influence through the
as a 'Gang of Old'. Deng
informally, behind the
democracy was not part of
of China's vast size and
level of the majority. Thus
essential – without that,

Continuing unrest

These actions in 1987 were a clear signal from the government about its attitude to the student demonstrations. Though fewer, these continued – they protested not only against the new reforms of higher education, but also about student grants (or stipends), which were low, and poor living conditions. In 1988, student organisers circulated a petition calling for greater reform. Encouraged and inspired by intellectuals such as Fang, and some radical student leaders, these demands soon included calls for democracy. The summer of 1988 saw another wave of student demonstrations in cities across China. But they were not joined by workers or peasants and, as exam time approached, the numbers involved declined. However, unrest in the universities continued in the new academic year 1988–89.

These protests worried Deng, who seems to have feared another power struggle between his pragmatist 'faction', and the more hard-line Maoists in the Party. He managed to get several more of these to retire on age grounds – though Deng, at 83, had no intention of stepping down. Essentially, as described by Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, Deng was an odd mixture of an economic progressive and a political conservative – as noted previously, he saw the market mechanisms and Western technology as a means to strengthen the Chinese economy and to strengthen Communist rule. Michael Lynch, too, sees him as someone who was a reformer but only in the economy – in politics, he was a CCP hardliner. Hence an eventual show-down between Deng and the democracy activists was almost inevitable.

Impact of Deng's economic reforms

What helped make the later protests of 1988–89 so serious compared to the 1986 protests was the greater number of workers who joined with the students. This was largely the result of the impact of Deng's economic policies on living standards.

As seen in Chapter 7, one of the results of Deng's moves to greater freedom for enterprises was less state involvement in guaranteeing basic necessities for Chinese peasants and industrial workers. In the state industrial sector, greater freedom for the State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) had meant growing unemployment, while industrial workers also lost their food coupons, free health care and free education. In addition, inflation and rising food prices – in early 1985, the cost of

8

The People's Republic of China (1949–2005)

basic necessities increased by 30% – were reducing real wages, especially for factory workers and lower-level government employees.

One result of all this was a change in public attitudes to Deng's reforms – by 1985, there was a growing feeling that things were going wrong, and by 1989, Deng's popularity among the people was much lower than it had been in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It also began to produce divisions within the CCP – especially between Deng and Chen Yun, an old-style economic planner, who felt that market mechanisms should only play a supplementary role.

At first, Deng tried to avoid any direct confrontations with those voicing political or economic criticisms. He had been observing events in Poland, where the rise of Solidarity (an unofficial independent trade union that began to organise strikes against Poland's Communist government) in 1980 had led to the introduction of martial law – this was something he wished to avoid for China. However, despite such concerns, Deng had no intention of reversing his economic policies.

Nonetheless, as these economic policies were pushed through, the social impact increased – by early autumn 1988, inflation in the main cities had reached 30% a year, the economy was out of control, and the government imposed further austerity measures, which reduced spending on social services and kept wages low – which particularly hit the TVEs. By late 1988, living standards for many had dropped dramatically – resulting in an increasing number of workers' strikes and 'slow-downs' in factories; while in rural areas, as farmers found the purchase of expensive fertilizers increasingly difficult, and rural industrial jobs were lost, there were clashes with local officials. Renewed student activism saw protests spread into the city streets, and illegal 'big-character' posters began to appear in the winter of 1988–89.

KEY CONCEPTS QUESTION

Causation and consequence: Why did Deng's economic reforms result in many workers joining students in the growing political unrest of 1988–89?

Neo-Auth

One response of the latest crowd work out some programme – the continued p developed the n They argued tha Singapore show development it 'tame the masse 8.4 describes th suffered as a cor

SOURCE 8.4

...China could Party politics a to a market ec democracy wa presupposed a This did not ye time in the fut Neo-authoritar Secretary Zha so its propone intellectuals. M associated wit themselves in Xiaoping and 2 Meisner, M., 1. Republic. Nev

QUESTION

Why were De protests'?

Neo-Authoritarianism

One response of the authorities was to send police abroad to learn the latest crowd control and anti-riot techniques. Another was to work out some ideological backing for the practical results of Deng's programme – combining an essentially capitalist market economy with the continued political dictatorship of the CCP. The intellectuals who developed the new 'politics' became known as the 'new authoritarians'. They argued that the experiences of places such as Taiwan and Singapore showed that in order to achieve rapid modern economic development it was necessary to have states that were strong enough to 'tame the masses' and 'discipline the working population' (or, as Source 8.4 describes them, '*the victims of the transition to a market economy*') who suffered as a consequence.

SOURCE 8.4

...China could not afford democracy, which would bring the chaos of Party politics and disruptive protests by the victims of the transition to a market economy, thus delaying China's modernization. Political democracy was not ruled out entirely, but the neo-authoritarians said it presupposed a highly developed economy and a viable capitalist class. This did not yet exist, and thus democracy was put off until an indefinite time in the future...

Neo-authoritarian doctrines, tacitly endorsed by Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang and based on the ideas of Deng Xiaoping, or so its proponents claimed, brought criticism from democratic Marxist intellectuals. Many democratic Marxists, such as Su Shaozhi, had been associated with ousted Party head Hu Yaobang, and thus now found themselves in political limbo, increasingly in opposition to both Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang.

Meisner, M., 1999, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*. New York, The Free Press, p. 494.

QUESTION

Why were Deng's economy policies likely to lead to 'disruptive protests'?

This political debate revealed how things had moved on since 1978, when Deng's re-emergence was seen by many intellectuals as ushering in 'socialist democracy'. Both sides of the debate accepted the need for a market (ie. essentially capitalist) economy – the difference was over whether the regime should be democratic or authoritarian. Deng's supporters had come to accept a capitalist autocracy.

ACTIVITY

Try to find out the names of those who belonged to the inner Party group known as the 'Gang of Old'. Then write a couple of paragraphs to explain why students might have seen their moves as a significant obstacle to demands for increased democracy in China.

8.3 What led to the Tiananmen Square Massacre of June 1989?

Developments in the second half of 1988 rapidly snowballed into the well-known confrontation in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Democracy salons

During the summer and autumn of 1988, democratic Marxists and intellectuals who had been dismissed or sidelined following the disturbances of 1986–87 held informal lectures at Beijing University and elsewhere. The most famous of these discussion groups – known as 'democracy salons' (named after those that had contributed to the start of the French Revolution of 1789) – was organised by Wang Dan, an undergraduate history student at Beijing University. These meetings discussed aspects of democracy and politics, and attracted growing numbers.

In December 1988, Su Shaozhi, a prominent Marxist theoretician, who had been sacked from his post of head of the Marx-Lenin-Mao Institute after the fall of Hu, attacked the new official ideology of Deng's regime,

and called for Marxism. The aspects of Marxism-Leninism. Then, on 6 June, calling for the anniversary of the French Revolution. This inspired appeals for

By early 1989, regular demonstrations at the same time, at universities and in 1919 May Day

The de

In the end, Hu Yaobang. He was the catalyst of his removal and undergo at the catalyst

Hu's death and the tradition of several major events in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, which people gathered for issues, including

As the days went by, some students that represented petitions for freedom of expression – joined by (where top

had moved on since 1978, many intellectuals as ushering the debate accepted the need for – the difference was over or authoritarian. Deng's autocracy.

belonged to the inner. Then write a couple of might have seen their moves increased democracy

The Tiananmen of June 1989?

gradually snowballed into the square in June 1989.

democratic Marxists and followed the the at Beijing University and groups – known had contributed to the organised by Wang Dan, university. These politics, and attracted

Marxist theoretician, who Marx-Lenin-Mao Institute ideology of Deng's regime,

and called for an open debate about the various strands of Western Marxism. This placed greater emphasis on the democratic and libertarian aspects of Marxism than did the authoritarian Chinese version of Marxism-Leninism, and had always been banned in Communist China. Then, on 6 January 1989, Fang Lizhi wrote an Open Letter to Deng, calling for the release of Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners. In it, he argued that this would be a good way to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic, the 70th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement – and the bicentennial of the French Revolution, which had proclaimed '*liberty, equality and fraternity*'. This inspired an unprecedented number of intellectuals to issue similar appeals for a general amnesty for all political prisoners.

By early 1989 the 'democracy salons' of 1988 had transformed into regular democracy discussion groups in Beijing University. At the same time, secret political groups were organised in Beijing and other universities to plan their own unofficial demonstrations to mark the 1919 May Fourth Movement anniversary.

The death of Hu

In the end, things moved faster because of the unexpected death of Hu Yaobang. His death, on 15 April 1989, was rumoured to be the result of his removal from office and the subsequent 'self-criticism' he had to undergo at the hands of 'anti-reformers' in the Party. His death became the catalyst for the dramatic events in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Hu's death provided an opportunity for renewed dissent, as part of the tradition of 'mourning the dead to criticise the living'. There were several marches and rallies, especially in Beijing (10 000 strong in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on 16 April) and Shanghai (1000 strong), in which people spoke in favour of change. These calls covered a range of issues, including freedom of information and a free press.

As the days went by, the marches and demonstrations grew larger – some students staged a sit-in at the Great Hall of the People, demanding that representatives of the National People's Congress receive their petitions calling for democratic rights such as free organisation and freedom of the press, and condemning corruption and nepotism. Others – joined by some workers – tried to break into the old Forbidden City (where top Party leaders had their homes) – but were met by police and

8

The People's Republic of China (1949–2005)

clashes took place. Meanwhile, the numbers in Tiananmen Square grew, as students were joined by workers and others.



Figure 8.4: Soldiers keep student demonstrators away from the official memorial for Hu Yaobang at the Great Hall of the People, where the service was being held.

The Politburo decided against giving into the students' demands, and fixed 22 April as the official day of mourning. As Li Peng and other government officials tried to go into the official ceremony, three students attempted to give him a petition demanding political liberalisation. However, Li and the others refused to accept the petition. By then, over 100 000 were standing in the Square in a silent protest against Deng's regime; and more than 1 million lined the streets to watch the funeral procession.

The government issued a ban on demonstrations and called for them to end; Zhao, who might have argued against this, was away in North Korea on an official visit. The pro-democracy activists ignored the ban and, after their mass memorial service on 22 April, began a number of sit-ins and boycotts of university classes. These started on 24 April – and were soon joined by many non-students, including significant numbers of workers. The protests, which continued throughout April, called for greater democracy and an end to corruption among officials.

The

Student
Federat
a studen
street co
democr

Deng v
Daily o
plotters
CCP an
the edit
peasant
collecti
across C
efforts t
by the c
concern
dialogu

The

The ne
in Beiji
keep th
streets c
local re
and mo
Square.
April 1'
as the s
democr

This wa
importa
Wuhan
and pro
democr
returne
joined t
capital,

***The People's Daily* editorial, 26 April**

Student leaders then announced the formation of an 'Autonomous Federation' to coordinate student activities. In particular, they declared a student 'strike', while some students began to make speeches on street corners appealing to ordinary citizens to support their calls for democracy and denunciations of corruption.

Deng was increasingly annoyed – writing in an editorial in *The People's Daily* on 26 April, Deng denounced the protesters as a small handful of plotters who were aiming to cause chaos and undo the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system, and who must be crushed. Even though the editorial had forbidden the students to associate with workers and peasants, transport workers showed solidarity with the students by not collecting fares as they travelled to Beijing from over 40 universities across China. The students – especially those who had made great efforts to show their loyalty to the CCP and socialism – were angered by the editorial, and became more united and determined. However, concerned that they might be repressed any time soon, they called for dialogue with top government and Party leaders.

The 'Beijing Spring'

The next day, 27 April, over 100 000 students from the various campuses in Beijing broke through the police and militia cordons intended to keep them from leaving their universities. Others marched through the streets of Beijing for over 12 hours, with approval expressed by many local residents (about 500 000 onlookers gave their support via food and money, and even by joining them), and then went to Tiananmen Square. This was the largest demonstration since the death of Zhou in April 1976 – the Democracy Movement's actions on 27 April were seen as the start of the 'Beijing Spring', and the beginning of a new era of democracy for China.

This was similar to the 'Prague Spring' in Czechoslovakia in 1968. It is important to note that many other Chinese cities – such as Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou and Xian – were also the scenes of demonstrations and protests. Several travelled to Beijing to record the speeches for democracy – along with music by China's main rock bands – and then returned to play them to protesters in their areas. Workers increasingly joined the students in mass demonstrations which, like the ones in the capital, called for greater political reform.

Splits in the CCP

The actions of the students began to lead to a split in the CCP leadership, with several now wanting to back down from Deng's uncompromising attitude. These divisions widened on 30 April, when Zhao returned from North Korea. Evidence suggests that the relationship between Deng and Zhao had been deteriorating since the start of the year, with Deng becoming increasingly suspicious of Zhao's links with pro-democracy intellectuals.

Unpopular because of his pushing of the new economic policies, and with his two sons' involvement in corruption, Zhao seems to have calculated that he was about to be dismissed. He therefore decided to support those CCP leaders who wanted compromise with the students. This put him on an unavoidable collision course with Deng.

While this struggle over what to do went on for much of May, the Democracy Movement was able to continue to spread and grow – and to organise a demonstration in Tiananmen Square, outside the headquarters of the CCP.

Tiananmen Square, May–June 1989

On his return, Zhao tried to appease the protesters, without having to use force, and suggested opening a dialogue with the student leaders. He also suggested that *The People's Daily* had gone too far in attacking the protesters – but he was very much in a minority in the Politburo. His attitude, similar to that of Hu in 1986–87, led to a growing conflict with Premier Li Peng.

On the anniversary of the May 4th Movement, 1919 – when a Chinese student protested against the World War I treaties that allowed Japan to take over German concessions in China – Zhao characterised the students' demands as 'reasonable', and urged that they be implemented in democratic fashion and by legal means. However, the majority of student leaders were no longer prepared to cooperate with sympathetic government leaders like Zhao, and instead increased their protests, holding another mass demonstration of over 60 000 in the capital, which the police were unable to control, shortly followed by another, 300 000 strong rally in Tiananmen Square. This involved students from all over China, and also several non-student groups – older intellectuals, journalists and workers.

Though Zhao made their demand for a democratic negotiation of Old' (most of wh Revolution) – still support of most of t

The hunger strike

By 13 May, the stud camps. However, by The split was essent started the Democr leaders such as Zhao nothing to do with

This split helped D On 14 May, a group Square and, surrou strike which had be Kaixi. These studen with the CCP lead

The hunger strikers rock bands, which merely increased th government leaders end the hunger stri

Gorbachev's imp

Just as Gorbachev's reform communist increasing reduction many Chinese influ of greater openness spring of 1989, it s moving towards er hopes among Chi

The students thus contrary, they wer journalists, who ha This visit – the fir

Though Zhao made no contact with the student leaders, he did support their demand for a retraction of the 26 April editorial and called for democratic negotiations with the students. But Deng – and the ‘Gang of Old’ (most of whom, like Deng, had been victims of the Cultural Revolution) – still refused any compromise, and managed to get the support of most of the generals of the PLA.

The hunger strike

By 13 May, the students had filled Tiananmen Square with makeshift camps. However, by then, a split in the students had begun to emerge. The split was essentially between the older graduate students who had started the Democracy Movement, and who wanted to work with leaders such as Zhao, and younger more radical ones who wanted nothing to do with the existing leadership, which they distrusted.

This split helped Deng win the upper-hand within the Party leadership. On 14 May, a group of about 300–500 students marched into the Square and, surrounded by thousands of supporters, began a hunger strike which had been called by students such as Wang Dan and Wuor Kaixi. These students belonged to the group opposed to compromise with the CCP leaders.

The hunger strikers’ morale was boosted by visits by China’s main rock bands, which often performed impromptu rock concerts. This merely increased the numbers of those in the Square. For the first time, government leaders made contact with student leaders, urging them to end the hunger strike – as Gorbachev was due to arrive the next day.

Gorbachev’s impact

Just as Gorbachev’s policies and statements since 1985 had encouraged reform communists and others in Eastern Europe (leading to an increasing reduction of communist influence and power), so too were many Chinese influenced by his ideas of *perestroika* – especially those of greater openness (*glasnost*) and democracy (*demokratizatsiya*). In the spring of 1989, it seemed that several East European satellites were moving towards ending single-party rule – this encouraged optimistic hopes among Chinese pro-democracy activists.

The students thus had no intention of calling off their protests – on the contrary, they were emboldened by the presence of world TV crews and journalists, who had arrived early to cover Gorbachev’s visit to China. This visit – the first Sino-Soviet summit since 1959 and the start of the

split between Mao and Khrushchev – was seen as very important by the leaders of the Chinese government.

Consequently, the protests were becoming known world-wide, turning a national problem into an international embarrassment for the CCP leaders. The students also believed that the imminent arrival of the Soviet leader would tie the government's hands, and that therefore it would not carry out any repression during Gorbachev's visit.

When he arrived on 15 May, the students ignored orders to disperse, and were joined by 500 000 people. By 17 May, there were 1 million protesters in the Square (now including members of the CCP, government office workers, policemen and even PLA cadets), calling for democratic reforms and the resignation of Deng.

The protests were so huge that Deng was forced to abandon part of the official schedule. The official reception was moved to Beijing airport, and his tour of the Forbidden City and a wreath-laying ceremony in Tiananmen Square were cancelled. Gorbachev was then kept in indoor meetings until his departure for Shanghai on 18 May. All this was seen as hugely embarrassing, and it strengthened the hands of the hardliners who called for strong measures to end the protests.

On 18 May, Li Peng agreed to a televised interview with student leaders such as Wang Dan and Wuer Kaixi – including some of the hunger strikers. The students continued to raise the issues of greater democracy, and the need for the government and Party to listen to the people about what should happen next in China. However, the Politburo had already decided that there would be no real dialogue, and that no concessions would be made.

Instead, that day, the Politburo decided to declare martial law. Though apparently some other members were reluctant, they did not want to oppose the 'paramount leader', so only Zhao voted against.

Zhao's speech

On 19 May, at 4.50 am, on the day Gorbachev was due to leave China, Zhao visited the demonstrators in the Square to call on them to end their hunger strike – Figure 8.5 shows him with megaphone in hand. He also apologised – tearfully – for the actions of the Politburo, and (as Source 8.5 shows) admitted that mistakes had been made and that the students' criticisms were justified.



Figure 8.5: Zhao (centre) in Tiananmen Square, 19 May 1989

SOURCE 8.5

Students, we can understand your criticism about us. We accept your forgiveness. It's now the severe test. The most important is to let the people know that the Party is open, and some of the members are still young. You are still young. It's healthy to see the mistakes realised... Now the nation are very rich and have the independence. Go out of control.

as seen as very important by the

known world-wide, turning
embarrassment for the CCP
the imminent arrival of the
hands, and that therefore it
Gorbachev's visit.

ignored orders to disperse,
May, there were 1 million
members of the CCP,
even PLA cadets), calling for
Deng.

forced to abandon part of the
moved to Beijing airport,
reath-laying ceremony in
heav was then kept in indoor
n 18 May. All this was seen
the hands of the hardliners
protests.

interview with student leaders
ing some of the hunger
issues of greater democracy,
o listen to the people about
the Politburo had already
and that no concessions

are martial law. Though
t, they did not want to
voted against.

was due to leave China,
o call on them to end
h megaphone in hand.
of the Politburo, and (as
een made and that the



Figure 8.5: Zhao (centre, holding the megaphone) talks to students in Tiananmen Square, 19 May 1989, in what turned out to be his last public appearance.

SOURCE 8.5

Students, we came too late. Sorry, students. Whatever you say and criticise about us is deserved. My purpose here now is not to ask for your forgiveness... You have been on a hunger strike for six days, and it's now the seventh day. You cannot go on like this... Now what is most important is to end this hunger strike. I know, you are doing this in the hope that the Party and the government will give a most satisfactory answer for what you are asking for. I feel, our channel for dialogue is open, and some problems need to be resolved through a process...

You are still young and have much time ahead of you. You should live healthily to see the day that the Four Modernisations... of China are realised... Now the situation is very dire as you all know, the Party and nation are very anxious, the whole society is worried... You mean well, and have the interests of our country at heart, but if this goes on, it will go out of control and will have various adverse effects... If you stop

the hunger strike, the government will not close the door on dialogue, definitely not! What you have proposed, we can continue to discuss. It is slow, but some issues are being broached... All the vigour that you have as young people, we understand as we too were young once, we too protested and we too laid on the tracks without considering the consequences.

Finally I ask again sincerely that you calmly think about what happens from now on. A lot of things can be resolved. I hope that you will end the hunger strike soon and I thank you.

Extracts from Zhao's speech, taken from: www.theasiamag.com/

ACTIVITY

Look on YouTube to see footage of Zhao making this speech. Can you think of a prominent political figure in your own country who has personally intervened in this way in such a large protest?

Martial law

On the evening of 19 May, Li Peng broadcast a speech announcing that the government was declaring martial law, in order to deal with the 'rioting' students. PLA units were ordered to take up positions in Beijing, but did not enforce martial law. The students reacted by resuming the hunger strike, which they had only just suspended. In Beijing, local people were able to disarm these PLA, as many soldiers were sympathetic and unwilling to use force against the protesters.

On Sunday 21 May, over 1 million people protested and, on 23 May, an equally large number of protesters gathered, and many workers and citizens helped construct barricades and road blocks across streets to prevent military action. Factories went on strike and transport in Beijing was severely disrupted. Workers and students plastered walls with posters, leaflets were produced and distributed, and street-corner speeches were made.

At the same towns and ci Congress dec to be repeale to Deng, po not 'stand in

By then, som and disperse, to avoid a blo students deci the Square.

These develo and so delaye from the Squ with the stud joined by wo the roads lea troops from

Worryingly t mass popular the demonst in singing re the comman Beijing. At tl the corruptio May, art stud a symbol of

Their statue the central g to the Statue as showing tl liberal parlia for socialist c connections 'Fraternity' –

At the same time, the Democracy Movement spread to even more towns and cities. The Standing Committee of National People's Congress declared its support for the students, and called for martial law to be repealed; while several retired PLA generals issued an Open Letter to Deng, pointing out that the PLA belonged to the people and could not 'stand in opposition to the people'.

By then, some protesters wanted to end the demonstrations altogether and disperse, as suggested by several sympathetic professors who wanted to avoid a bloody confrontation. After some serious discussions, the students decided to end the hunger strike, but to continue occupying the Square.

These developments led to serious continuing divisions over what to do, and so delayed immediate government orders to disperse the protesters from the Square. Deng himself was uncertain at first about how to deal with the students and their demands. However, when the students were joined by workers and ordinary citizens of Beijing, who then blocked the roads leading to the Square and so prevented the first wave of PLA troops from reaching the Square, his concerns increased.

Worryingly for the government, many soldiers were confused by the mass popular resistance – some soldiers had begun fraternising with the demonstrators, and responded to invitations to join the protesters in singing revolutionary songs. After discussions with student leaders, the commanders ordered their troops to withdraw to the outskirts of Beijing. At the same time, the protesters made increasing references to the corruption of Party leaders and officials. Then, between 27 and 30 May, art students built the *Goddess of Democracy and the Spirit of Liberty* as a symbol of their hopes and aims.

Their statue was erected opposite the official painting of Mao over the central gate at the north end of the Square. Because it was similar to the Statue of Liberty in New York, many commentators saw this as showing that students were asking for Western or capitalist-style liberal parliamentary democracy. However, many students were calling for socialist democracy, and these saw the statue as having greater connections with the French Revolution's demands for 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' – the last two not generally seen as aspects of capitalism.

8

The People's Republic of China (1949–2005)



Figure 8.6: This photograph, entitled 'Goddess of Democracy versus Chairman Mao', was taken by an anonymous photographer and posted online in June 1989.

QUESTION

What message are the protestors trying to get across with statue in Figure 8.6? Why would it have angered many of the CCP leaders?

After its unveiling, the numbers in the Square itself stood at over 300 000, and as the protest continued, more and more people began to side with the pro-democracy protesters.

Repression

However, Deng and Li had at last decided to take strong action. On 29 May, many trade union and workers' leaders who had supported the protests were arrested. By the end of May, more politically reliable troops, numbering 200 000, from outside the capital and led by commanders especially appointed by the government, began to move to Beijing. Under this kind of pressure, the Democracy Movement began to crumble, and the large-scale marches and demonstrations ceased, with many students returning to their colleges.

Soon, the number from outside Beijing moved to workers based economic re

Yet there was no latter had never sh fact, in the early d who they felt mig excuse to take rep the CCP leadersh

By 2 June, new tr routes leading to a 3 June, with the fi and others – using could to prevent t

It was in the side casualties were su the tanks reaching finally ordered th control of the Squ

In full view of T the Square and er most did not – ho were fired upon, deaths at about 1. 10 000 injured).

Towards the end, rock star Hou De protesters at the s the *Internationale*, Consequently, th on 4 June, the six

Soon, the number remaining in the Square had dropped to 5000 – most from outside Beijing. As the student activists faded away, the protests moved to workers' districts, which had been suffering from the market-based economic reforms.

Yet there was no real alliance between the workers and intellectuals. The latter had never shown much interest in the workers' grievances, and in fact, in the early days, students had actively sought to exclude workers, who they felt might be undisciplined and so give the authorities an excuse to take repressive action. So the 'Polish fear', which so worried the CCP leadership, was less of a problem than first thought.

By 2 June, new troops had surrounded the Square, and controlled the routes leading to and from it. The first actions began in the evening of 3 June, with the first shots being fired at 10.00 pm. Workers, students and others – using sticks, bricks and Molotov cocktails – did what they could to prevent the troops reaching the Square.

It was in the side streets, out of sight of the cameras, that most of the casualties were suffered, as workers in residential areas tried to prevent the tanks reaching the Square. Then, at midnight on 3-4 June, Deng finally ordered the army to 'take all necessary measures' to re-take control of the Square and arrest activists.

In full view of TV cameras, troops and tanks went into action, to clear the Square and end the demonstrations. Some tried to fight back, but most did not – however, all those who tried to remain in the Square were fired upon, and hundreds were killed (some put the figure of deaths at about 1500, while others go as high as 7000, with up to 10000 injured).

Towards the end, last-minute discussions between the army officers and rock star Hou Dejian and literary critic Liu Xiaobo, allowed a group of protesters at the south end of the Square to leave – they did so, singing the *Internationale*, the anthem of the international communist movement. Consequently, there were fewer casualties in the Square itself. By midday on 4 June, the six-week occupation was over.

ACTIVITY

Look on YouTube for a report of the suppression, by BBC journalist, Kate Adie. There is also a video section on YouTube of Kate Adie's update and interviews with pro-democracy dissidents in 2009, 20 years after the events of 1989.

Once you have watched these short clips, compare them with what you have read about the suppression of the pro-democracy demonstration, and then write a couple of paragraphs on their value and limitations. Explain how useful such reports are to historians studying the events in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

There were also riots and resistance reported in 80 other cities. Nevertheless, the government was able to quickly suppress all the uprisings and protests.

According to the first official accounts, no civilians had been killed in the Square, but 23 students had been killed in fighting that took place in the surrounding streets. The government also claimed 150 soldiers had been killed and 5000 wounded.

Angry members of the crowd did attack and beat to death soldiers; but there were also unconfirmed reports that some troops against the repression had fired on those shooting the protesters. Later, official accounts said that fewer than 300 had been killed.

The government imposed a news blackout of the events in the Square. The official message by Deng, on 9 June was that the army had suppressed a 'counter-revolutionary rebellion' planned to spark a coup by 'misguided Party leaders'. Deng and the Party leadership condemned the student protests, and reaffirmed that the economic reforms would continue.

It has been argued that the recourse to live ammunition – rather than tear gas and water cannons – suggests the authorities wanted to make it clear to China's people that attempts to press for political democracy would not be tolerated.

It is estimated by the events of 4 June 1989, 29 had been eventually, several

The vast majority link workers' economic democracy. Though prison sentences. – were treated re

These conflicting the events of 4 June wanted to ensure that might stall h be sympathetic to some activists re

Many leaders of Kaixi, and Chai wanted a list of 21 to escape abroad struggle.

Chai L

Chai was Tiananmen the end of the CCP in the d 'genera sought massac

It is estimated by some that almost 5000 were arrested immediately after the events of 4 June; with 40 000 more arrested during June and July. By 17 July, 29 had been given quick trials and executed; some estimate that, eventually, several hundred were executed.

The vast majority of these were trade union activists who had tried to link workers' economic demands to the political demands for greater democracy. Thousands – most of them workers – were given long prison sentences. Students – many of whom had relatives in high places – were treated relatively leniently.

These conflicting statistics illustrate the confused situation that followed the events of 4 June. Yet, whatever the numbers might be, Deng clearly wanted to ensure no Solidarity-type movement would emerge in China that might stall his economic reforms. Members of the CCP known to be sympathetic to some of the demands were purged. As late as 2007, some activists remained in prison.

Many leaders of the protests – such as Fang Lizhi, Wang Dan, Wuer Kaixi, and Chai Ling – managed to avoid arrest, despite being on a 'most wanted' list of 21 sought by the authorities, and eventually were able to escape abroad, where they continued the Democracy Movement's struggle.

Chai Ling (b. 1966):

Chai was one of the main women leaders of the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, and helped organise the hunger strikes towards the end of the demonstrations. Her parents were both members of the CCP, as she was. However, in 1987, she began to get involved in the demonstrations calling for greater democracy. Known as the 'general commander', she became one of the top 21 dissidents sought by the Chinese government after the Tiananmen Square massacre. She later became a Christian.

Theory of Knowledge

History, ethics and utilitarianism:

When E. H. Carr came to the end of writing his massive history of the early years of the Russian Revolution, he concluded by saying:

'the danger is not that we shall draw a veil over the enormous blots on the record of the Revolution, over its cost in human suffering, over the crimes committed in its name. The danger is that we shall be tempted to forget altogether, and to pass over in silence, its immense achievement.'

Quoted in Ali, T., (ed), 1984, *The Stalinist Legacy: its Impact on Twentieth Century World Politics*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p 9.)

How far should the ethics of utilitarianism be applied to what happened in China under Deng in the period 1976–89 – and to what Mao achieved in China in the period 1949–76?

World reaction

Yet, despite the violence in the Square, and the repression that followed, after initial first-reactions of shock and condemnation, most democratic Western states soon began to ignore the repression and the abuses of human rights. Keen to get involved in the rapidly expanding Chinese economy, such countries wanted 'business as usual' to resume as soon as possible.

While foreign investment was halted for a time, and cultural exchanges were suspended, these were resumed relatively quickly. However, organisations such as Amnesty International did take up the cause of pro-democracy activists imprisoned by Deng's regime, and those sent to labour camps for *laogai* (reform through labour).



Figure 8.7: A cartoon *Independent*, a British newspaper, of the tank represents the massacre in Beijing

Why did the fail?

Part of the reason for the failure of the reformers was that the reformers were not organised enough, and reformers made it difficult for them to negotiate with the authorities, who were not willing to compromise. The lack of organisation made it easier for Deng to clamp down on the reformers. China descending into

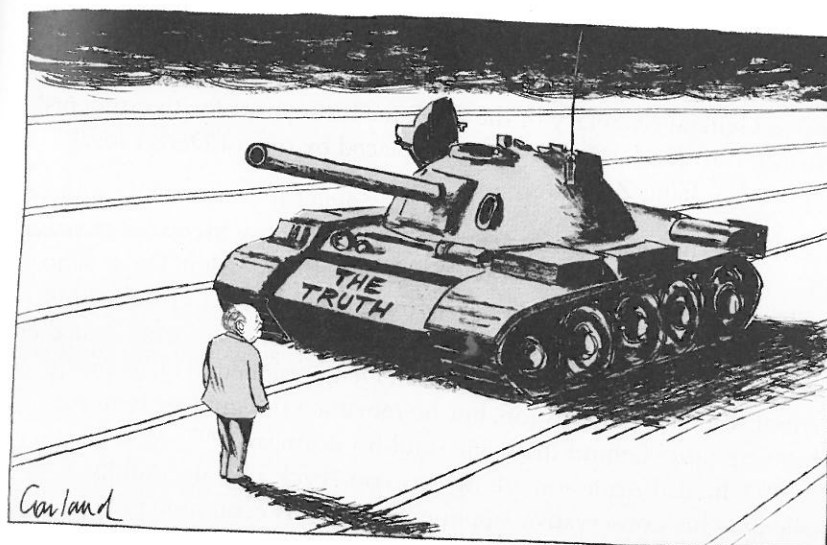


Figure 8.7: A cartoon by Nicholas Garland, which was published in *The Independent*, a British newspaper, on 16 June 1989. The man standing in front of the tank represents Deng Xiaoping trying to prevent the truth being told about the massacre in Beijing.

Why did the pro-democracy movement fail?

Part of the reason for the failure of the movement was that the organisers were not united in what they wanted. Beyond more freedoms, and reform of the Party, there was little to unite on. This made it difficult for sympathetic members of the Party and government to negotiate with them. There was also the problem that among the protesters there were groups that wanted a violent confrontation with the authorities, who therefore had no wish to discuss and agree some compromise. The lack of unity and an agreed list of demands made it easier for Deng to claim that the repression was necessary to prevent China descending into chaos.

The aftermath of the 'Beijing Spring'

One early result was the dismissal, on 24 June, of Zhao (like Hu before him) as General-Secretary of the CCP, for his support for the students' demands (see Section 8.2) – he was replaced by one of Deng's loyal supporters – Jiang Zemin.

In addition, the events in Tiananmen Square also saw increased criticism of Deng and his reforms from within the CCP leadership. Those who had been unhappy at the move away from Maoism now criticised his privatisation policies, and were even able to block – for a time – further investment in the SEZs. Later that year, Deng resigned as chair of the Central Military Commission, but he remained the guiding light in Chinese politics behind the scene until his death in 1997, aged 92. By 1994, he had made something of a comeback and successfully challenged his 'conservative' opponents – and his economic policies were soon restored.

For a time, in the period immediately following Mao's death, it had not been clear in what direction China was likely to go. But by 1989, the signs were pretty clear – under Deng, there would be economic modernisation and liberalisation. However, it was also clear that there would be no 'Fifth Modernisation' – i.e. no political democratisation or liberalisation. Instead, the Chinese Communist Party – unlike almost all of those in Eastern Europe – was determined to retain control. Thus Chinese political and intellectual life after 1989 was markedly more repressive than it had been during most of the 1980s.

Persecution of dissidents was harsher, and the activities of the secret police were stepped up. Prison sentences for protest became more common, and there was much more censorship of newspapers, books and journals and films.

KEY CONCEPTS ACTIVITY

Significance: Write a couple of paragraphs to explain the significance of CCP individuals such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang on the emerging pro-democracy movement's demands for greater democracy during 1988–89. Then draw up a list of other factors that also influenced this movement.

Paper 3

Question

Examine the rea
Tiananmen Squ

Skill

Writing a concl

Examiner

Provided you ha
should be relativ

For this question

- the oppositio
CCP
- the impact o
standards, an
- the growth o
higher educa
- the extent to

This question r
factors, and to s
knowledge – so

Also, such a que
of several reaso
judgement abou

Common

Sometimes, can
have written ea
Generally, conc
should be to co
what has alread
is a good way t

Paper 3 exam practice

Question

Examine the reasons for Deng's decision to disperse the protestors in Tiananmen Square in June 1989? **[15 marks]**

Skill

Writing a conclusion to your essay

Examiner's tips

Provided you have carried out all the steps recommended so far, it should be relatively easy to write one or two concluding paragraphs.

For this question, you will need to cover the following possible reasons:

- the opposition that Deng still faced within the leadership of the CCP
- the impact of his economic policies on Chinese workers' living standards, and on job opportunities for graduates
- the growth of opposition from both students and lecturers within higher education
- the extent to which the protests were being reported worldwide.

This question requires you to consider a range of different reasons/factors, and to support your analysis with precise and specific supporting knowledge – so avoid generalisations.

Also, such a question, which is asking for an evaluation/analysis of several reasons, implicitly expects you to come to some kind of judgement about which reason(s) was/were most important.

Common mistakes

Sometimes, candidates simply re-hash in their conclusion what they have written earlier – making the examiner read the same things twice! Generally, concluding paragraphs should be relatively short: the aim should be to come to a judgement/conclusion that is clearly based on what has already been written. If possible, a short but relevant quotation is a good way to round off an argument.

Remember to refer to the simplified Paper 3 mark scheme in Chapter 10.

Sample student conclusion

As I have shown, it is difficult to come to a single conclusion about why Deng decided to use military force to disperse the protestors in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. One important factor, I think, was the fact that, because of Gorbachev's visit, the CCP leadership were embarrassed by the large demonstrations which, they felt, showed their political weakness. This was made worse by the fact that, because reporters and television crews from around the world were present for Gorbachev's visit, the protests were being seen across the world.

More important, though, was the fact that the impact of several of his economic reforms which, by 1989, had led growing discontent among many Chinese workers – because of rising unemployment, worse working conditions and loss of social benefits for, I don't think this – of itself – was a major consideration. However, he was certainly worried by the fact that, from about 1987, many of these increasingly discontented workers began joining Democracy Movement students in their protests for greater political rights.

This was certainly a worry as – on their own – the CCP leadership had been able to control earlier student protests. But, with workers on the side of the students, there was the risk of a much wider protest movement. That this was an important factor is shown by the fact that, during the repression which followed, it was mainly workers who were either executed or given extremely long prison sentences. Equally worrying was the fact that, before the army was sent in to crush the protests, there were several cases where soldiers had fraternised with the protestors and even showed sympathy with their demands.

However, the main reason for his decision was that there was also a split emerging within the CCP leadership – not just about what to do as regards the protests, but also about whether his economic policies should be continued in their present form. Chen Yun was just one of those who'd begun to argue that the market mechanisms of Deng's economic reforms should be reduced. I think it was this – in conjunction with the worrying evidence of increasing worker participation in the protests (and signs of support among some of the military units) – that ultimately led him to declare martial law, order military action and carry out a violent repression of the protestors. It was this combination of reasons which ultimately lay behind his decision to make it clear that, under him, China would have no 'Fifth Modernisation'.

EXAMINER COMMENT

This is a good conclusion. It shows a clear understanding of the threads of the argument (and then a clear conclusion – and a memorable way.

Activity

In this chapter, the information from the available to you, and following Practice need to do full pl

Paper 3

- 1 Discuss the reasons for the 'loosening' of
- 2 Evaluate the impact of the parts of the 1
- 3 'The main reason for the end of 19
- 4 Examine the political opp
- 5 Examine the political mo

mark scheme in

conclusion about why
protestors in Tiananmen
was the fact that, because
arranged by the large
al weakness. This was made
m crews from around the
were being seen across the

t of several of his economic
among many Chinese
working conditions and loss
was a major consideration.
om about 1987, many of
Democracy Movement

CCP leadership had been
ers on the side of the
movement. That this was an
repression which followed,
ven extremely long prison
he army was sent in to
ers had fraternised with the
ands.

ere was also a split
t what to do as regards
ies should be continued in
ho'd begun to argue that
ould be reduced. I think
e of increasing worker
ng some of the military
g, order military action and
his combination of reasons
ear that, under him, China

EXAMINER COMMENT

This is a good conclusion as it briefly pulls together the main threads of the argument (without simply repeating/summarising them), and then also makes a clear judgement. In addition, there is an intelligent final comment which rounds off the whole conclusion – and no doubt the core of the essay – in a memorable way.

Activity

In this chapter, the focus is on writing a useful conclusion. So, using the information from this chapter, and any other sources of information available to you, write concluding paragraphs for at least two of the following Practice Paper 3 questions. Remember – to do this, you will need to do full plans for the questions you choose.

Paper 3 practice questions

- 1 Discuss the reasons for, and the results of, Deng's promotion of a 'loosening' of political controls in the period 1976–79?
- 2 Evaluate the reasons why political unrest affected China for large parts of the 1980s.
- 3 'The main reason why the Democracy Movement was defeated by the end of 1989 was because it was divided into several different factions.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 4 Examine the impact of Deng's economic reforms on the growing political opposition in China during the late 1980s.
- 5 Examine the ways in which Deng attempted to retain the CCP's political monopoly in the period 1980–89.