

Political rigidity under Deng?

Politically rigid:

- Response to the 1986 student demonstrations
 - Causes: the effects of the open door policy
 - After 30 years of isolation, the open door policy suddenly threw open foreign ideas, news, films, plays, music, literature, and etc.
 - In the 10 years that followed 1978, 60,000 students and visiting scholars, as well as tens of thousands of officials and delegates, went abroad to study and visit, creating international exchange between China and the outside world
 - In 1986 gigantic student demonstrations broke out in 15 major cities in China
 - 100,000 students from 150 colleges and universities marched in the streets to demand the freedoms of speech, assembly and of the press as well as democratic elections
 - Intra-party split in response:
 - Hu Yaobang, General Secretary: felt that the youth's idealism should not be blunted but guided towards constructive goals
 - But the conservatives managed to tighten control of China's student population
 - Government reinstated military training and political indoctrination on campus and revived popular policy of sending students to farms and factories for a year before being sent to their job assignments
 - Further triumph of the conservatives: the dismissal of Hu in 1986
- Tiananmen massacre
- Closing of the democracy wall
 - Though divergent views were tolerated to a degree, acts of dissidence such as posters on "Democracy Wall" attacking the government were not tolerated
 - Wei Jingsheng put up a wall poster in 1978 entitled 'the fifth modernisation' in reference to real democratic freedom – but later imprisoned for 15 years
 - The wall was closed down in 1979

Not politically rigid:

- Political restructuring
 - Retirement of the old conservatives
 - But less to induce more democracy than to protect economic reforms
 - These old conservatives opposed progressive economic reform
 - In 1985 140 elderly CCP leaders stepped down; nearly 1 million cadres over 60 years old retired
 - Was replaced by a group of younger, technologically trained cadres
 - In the 13th Party Congress held in October 1987,
 - There was leadership renewal in the Politburo and the Central Committee
 - Conservative hardliners like Chen Yun and Peng Zhen resigned
 - Primacy of the rule of law
 - With the development of an efficient legal system, people's rights would be protected from arbitrary official violations and extra-legal procedures
 - Meritocratic civil service system

- Democratic centralism remained
 - o Continued since Mao's time
 - o People's congresses at different levels, democratic centralism, would continue while grass-roots participation in government increased
- Anti-bourgeois liberalism campaign failed
 - o Started by Peng Zhen and Deng Lizhun
 - o A media and publications office was created under the state council in Jan 1987 to monitor news media and publication of books, magazines and newspapers
 - o Three leading critics of the party were summarily dismissed from the party
 - o But not as harsh as in the cultural revolution period
 - o The hardliner called for the revival of Maoist three way coalition among the old, the middle-aged and the young and promoted the old values of frugality, hard work, plain living and devotion to the state as an antidote to Western influence
 - o However,
 - The majority of people did not want to return to the old days – once exposed to economic prosperity, they did not want to go back to the Spartan living standards of Maoist times
 - Thus, the party elders painfully discovered that they were not moving in the main stream of society
- Political control of the economy was reduced (see econ policies notes)
- Deng's political mediation
 - o Deng himself was a curious mixture of economic progressivism and political conservatism, endowed with a gift for playing a balancing act as political necessity dictated
- Existence of intra-party democracy
 - o Liberals like Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang against the conservatives
 - o See the 1986 demonstrations notes and Tiananmen massacre notes

Tiananmen square massacre:

- Reasons for the democracy movement
 - o The problems that came as a result of economic policies
 - In 1989 the country was facing inflation, falling ethics, widespread corruption, official profiteering, a widening income between the privileged few and the great masses and an increasing loss of faith in Communism (see economic notes)
 - o The inspiration of democracy from outside
 - Westernisation (see part above about the 1986 – the effects of open door policy)
 - Democracy movements elsewhere
 - The rising tide of democracy and freedom, and the retreat of communism in Hungary, Poland and the Baltic states
 - Even in the USSR, greater freedoms were promoted by glasnost and perestroika
- Hu yaobang's funeral: chance for the democracy movement to raise their views (pressure the government)
 - o Death of Hu in April 15, 1989
 - o Hu: a symbol of openness and political liberalisation

- Some had wanted to use this occasion to insist on clearing Hu's name and to push forward demands for freedom of speech, assembly and the press as well as strong anti-corruption measures
- The party split
 - On the one hand, zhao ziyang – supporter of liberalisation + gain in political power by following the tide of the students, against the conservatives
 - On the other hand, conservatives wanted to remove the liberals from power
 - Ideological purity
 - The most senior party elders concluded that in the final analysis, the situation was paramount to a war between communism and democracy and to give in to the demands of the protestors would be to lead to the downfall of the leadership, the overthrow of the socialist order and ultimately to capitalist restoration of a bourgeois government
 - Power
 - Keep the existing position which keeps their privileges
 - The elders wished to cling on to their political power and economic privileges and to defend the socialist order that made possible their special status
 - A power struggle between these two groups
- Conservatives managed to convince deng that the protests, despite peaceful, were threatening to overthrow the ccp and the socialist order
 - Further enraged by the continuation of student protests during Gorbachev's visit – humiliation for the CCP's leaders
- Essentially deng was progressive economically but not politically
- Deng and yang developed an elaborate, well-planned military operation
 - Declaration of martial law in June 20
 - Bloody crackdown in June 4
 - Number of dead was estimated into the hundreds and thousands; official estimate was that 300 died including several dozen soldiers
- Consequence: political repression
 - House arrest of zhao ziyang
 - Exile of top student leaders
 - The government showed special ferocity to the workers where many were arrested and executed