

CONSTITUTION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (1982)

Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has had four constitutions, promulgated in 1954, 1975, 1978, and 1982. The current version, adopted on December 4, 1982 by the Fifth National People's Congress of the PRC, has since been amended four times, in 1988, 1993, 1999, and 2004. It was created as a part of the reform program in which China moved away from the planned socialist economy and toward a mixed economy in which the market and private property have played increasingly large roles.

Document Excerpts with Questions

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1982)

Adopted on December 4, 1982, by the Fifth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China at its Fifth Session.

Preamble

China is one of the countries with the longest histories in the world. The people of all nationalities in China have jointly created a splendid culture and have a glorious revolutionary tradition.

Feudal China was gradually reduced after 1840 to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. The Chinese people waged wave upon wave of heroic struggles for national independence and liberation and for democracy and freedom.

Great and earth-shaking historical changes have taken place in China in the 20th century.

The Revolution of 1911, led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, abolished the feudal monarchy and gave birth to the Republic of China. But the Chinese people had yet to fulfill their historical task of overthrowing imperialism and feudalism.

After waging hard, protracted and tortuous struggles, armed and otherwise, the Chinese people of all nationalities led by the Communist Party of China with Chairman Mao Zedong as its leader ultimately, in 1949, overthrew the rule of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism, won the great victory of the new democratic revolution and founded the People's

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Republic of China. Thereupon the Chinese people took state power into their own hands and became masters of the country.

After the founding of the People's Republic, the transition of Chinese society from a new-democratic to a socialist society was effected step by step. The socialist transformation of the private ownership of the means of production was completed, the system of exploitation of man by man eliminated and the socialist system established. The people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants, which is in essence the dictatorship of the proletariat, has been consolidated and developed. The Chinese people and the Chinese People's Liberation Army have thwarted aggression, sabotage and armed provocations by imperialists and hegemonists, safeguarded China's national independence and security and strengthened its national defense. Major successes have been achieved in economic development. An independent and fairly comprehensive socialist system of industry has in the main been established. There has been a marked increase in agricultural production. Significant progress has been made in educational, scientific, cultural and other undertakings, and socialist ideological education has yielded noteworthy results. The living standards of the people have improved considerably.

Both the victory of China's new-democratic revolution and the successes of its socialist cause have been achieved by the Chinese people of all nationalities under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, and by upholding truth, correcting errors and overcoming numerous difficulties and hardships. The basic task of the nation in the years to come is to concentrate its effort on socialist modernization. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese people of all nationalities will continue to adhere to the people's democratic dictatorship and follow the socialist road, steadily improve socialist institutions, develop socialist democracy, improve the socialist legal system and work hard and self-reliantly to modernize industry, agriculture, national defense and science and technology step by step to turn China into a socialist country with a high level of culture and democracy.

Questions:

1. How does the Preamble work to justify Communist Party rule?
2. What evidence do you see to indicate that with this 1982 constitution, China was moving away from the policies of the Cultural Revolution years?
3. In what respects does this preamble employ rhetoric that is similar to the kind of rhetoric used during the Cultural Revolution?
4. As you read this, what can you deduce about the concerns of the men and women who drafted the document? What issues seem to be most important to them?