

30 years of Tiananmen Square Protest

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[Manifest Pedagogy](#)

Tiananmen Square incident is a major event in modern World History. It defined to the world the peculiar form of Communism which got established in China post-Mao which integrates a form of market capitalism with an authoritarian government. This year marks 30 years of Tiananmen square which might be a trigger for UPSC to target Chinese History.

In news

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Placing it in the syllabus

History of World

Dimensions

- China at the end of Mao rule
- Four modernisations of Deng Xiaoping
- Tiananmen Square protests
- Government Repression

Content

China at the end of Mao rule

Mao Zedong/ Mao Tse-tung was a Chinese communist revolutionary who became the founding father of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which he ruled as the Chairman of the Communist Party of China from its establishment in 1949 until his death in 1976. **Following are the key events of his rule and changes that he made;**

Economy

- Mao Zedong played a pivotal role in improving Chinese Economy(which some accepted and some criticised), it was Mao who launched the **first five-year plan(1953-1958)**(with the help of USSR) which aimed to end Chinese dependence upon agriculture in order to become a world power.
- The success of the 1st plan motivated to launch the **second Five Year Plan in 1958** (without the help of USSR) as the **Great Leap Forward**, a plan intended as **an alternative model for economic growth to the Soviet model** focusing on heavy industry that was advocated by others in the party. Under this economic program, the relatively small agricultural collectives that had been formed to date were rapidly merged into far larger people's communes, and many of the peasants were ordered to work on massive infrastructure projects and on the production of iron and steel. Some private food production was banned, and livestock and farm implements were brought under collective ownership.
- **Under the Great Leap Forward**, Mao and other party leaders ordered the **implementation of a variety of unproven and unscientific new agricultural techniques by the new communes**. The combined effect of the diversion of labour to steel production and infrastructure projects, and cyclical natural disasters led to an approximately 15% drop in grain production in 1959 followed by a further 10% decline in 1960 and no recovery in 1961. It was further suffered by Great Chinese Famine.
- The Communist Party of China(CPC) under Mao introduced price controls as well as a Chinese character simplification aimed at increasing literacy. Large-scale industrialization projects were also undertaken. Exporting food grains even during the famine led to the death of about 52 million citizens(especially peasants)

between 1959 and 1962, hence Great Leap Forward (GLF) was a big blow to Mao.

Cultural

- In 1966, China's Communist leader Mao Zedong launched what became known as the **Cultural Revolution in order to reassert his authority over the Chinese government.** Believing that current Communist leaders were taking the party, and China itself, in the wrong direction, Mao called on the nation's youth to purge the "impure" elements of Chinese society and revive the revolutionary spirit that had led to victory in the civil war 20 years earlier and the formation of the People's Republic of China.
- The Cultural Revolution continued in various phases until Mao's death in 1976.

Political Economy:

- **A poor agrarian nation in the decades of Mao's leadership was to have achieved developmental and socialistic goals** which defied most post-colonial and developing nations. These include;
 1. A self-sufficient and self-reliant economy free from foreign capital and foreign control.
 2. The elimination of capitalist exploitation and the creation of a **highly egalitarian and participatory society.**
 3. The feeding of one billion people of China, that is the solution to the problem of hunger, and the **provision of basic welfare guarantees for all.**
 4. Rapid industrialisation including both heavy industry and small-scale decentralised rural industry.
 5. **The solution to the peasant question: equity via land reform cooperation** and communication for the peasant majority and avoidance of a host of

problems from unemployment to marginality associated with the rush to cities elsewhere.

- Following the establishment of the PRC (People's Republic of China) in 1949, Mao was responsible for many of the **political initiatives that transformed the face of China. These included land reform, the collectivization of agriculture, and the spread of medical services.** In particular, this leader of the revolution remained alert to what he saw to be new forms of oppression and sensitive to the interests of the oppressed.
- In 1958 he advocated a self-reliant "Great Leap Forward" campaign in rural development. The failure of the Leap led Mao to turn many responsibilities over to other leaders (Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, etc.) and to withdraw from active decision making.
- **In foreign policy, he led China's divorce from the Soviet Union.** Domestically, he became increasingly wary of his subordinates' approach to development, fearing that it was fostering deep social and political inequalities.

Following the death of Mao and an intense political turmoil and faction fighting Deng Xiaoping became the premiere of the Chinese Communist Party.

Four modernisations of Deng Xiaoping

Following are the four modernisations of Deng Xiaoping;

- **Modernizing Agriculture: Deng Xiaoping, the successor to Mao Zedong, wanted to modernize farming by introducing mechanization, which is the use of machines. By doing this, food production would increase, and hopefully make China self-sufficient in food production. However, to fulfill this goal, every farmer in China needed to be involved. Xiaoping introduced the responsibility system as a way to involve the people.**

This system required each farm family to make its own living by producing crops. If they did not have enough land, the government leased land to them. After a harvest, the family would sell a portion to the government in return for a set price. The rest could be sold to the open market for a profit. This encouraged farmers to produce more crops, which benefited both the country and the people. However, China did not adopt capitalism – the government was still in control of most of the economy.

- **Expanding Industry: Under Mao Zedong, China was undergoing very heavy industrialization. It was developing mining and military weapons. Many factories were set up all over the country, making manufactured goods like tools and furniture. However, Zedong focused on quantity over quality, leaving products to be low quality. Xiaoping shifted emphasis to light industry, such as consumer goods. Managers of the factories were given the ability to choose what they were going to sell but were still responsible for making a profit. He extended the responsibility system to industry to make them more efficient. By doing so, managers were not only responsible for making a profit but were allowed to make money for themselves.**
- Developing science and technology: After Mao Zedong passed away, Xiaoping removed China's policy of isolation from the world. He wanted ideas about technology and trade to flow into China once more and had opened the door to foreign trade and investment. To encourage foreign trade, Xiaoping created Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in southeastern China. This further increased trade and ideas for technology.
- Upgrading China's defence forces: When Xiaoping came to power, he and his military advisers realized China's lack of up-to-date military weapons. This was an obvious sign that their military was not modernized. Xiaoping quickly began to prioritize the deployment of modern

weaponry. However, he prioritized research overproduction, and gave both old and new weapons a place in the army. Also, Xiaoping encouraged modern training for his soldiers, learning the newest of tactics and strategies to improve battle techniques. Increased nationalism in China also increased the number of soldiers who joined to serve and defend their country.

About Tiananmen Square Protest

30 years ago in 1989, hundreds of thousands of students and workers gathered in Tiananmen Square, in the heart of the Chinese capital, to call for greater democracy as well as political and social reforms.

- The Tiananmen Square protests were student-led demonstrations **calling for democracy, free speech and a free press in China.**
- Pro-democracy protesters, mostly students, initially marched through Beijing to Tiananmen Square following the death of Hu Yaobang. Hu, a former Communist Party leader, had worked to introduce **democratic reform in China.**
- In mourning Hu, the **students called for a more open, democratic government.** Eventually, thousands of people joined the students in Tiananmen Square, with the protest's numbers increasing to the tens of thousands by mid-May.
- During the protest at the height of the protests, it seemed like they could be successful, forcing a government that was already pursuing economic reform to also accept limited political liberalization. But hardliners won an internal battle within the ruling Communist Party and a crackdown was ordered. That decision changed China forever, ending hopes of a gradual move towards democracy.

Reasons for protest:

1. There was a frustration with the **limits on political freedom in the country**—given its one-party form of government, with the Communist Party holding sway—and ongoing **economic troubles**.
2. Although China's government had instituted a number of reforms in the 1980s that established a limited form of capitalism in the country, the poor and working-class Chinese still faced significant challenges, including **lack of jobs and increased poverty**.
3. The students also argued that China's educational system did not adequately prepare them for an economic system with elements of free-market capitalism.

Government Repression

- The Chinese government declared Martial law to suppress the protests
- After seven weeks of protests by students and workers, soldiers and tanks chased and killed demonstrators and onlookers in the streets leading to Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989.
- While the initial presence of the military failed to quell the protests, the Chinese authorities decided to increase their aggression. In June, Chinese soldiers and police stormed Tiananmen Square, firing live rounds into the crowd. Consequently, Hundreds, or possibly more than 1,000, were killed, although the precise number of deaths remains unknown
- Critics say the Tiananmen crackdown, which left hundreds, possibly thousands, dead, set the ruling Communist Party on its present course of ruthless suppression, summary incarceration and the frequent use of violence against opponents in the name of "stability maintenance."
- Recently China defended the bloody Tiananmen crackdown on student protesters in a rare public acknowledgement

of the event.