

**Abstract**

**Political Leadership in the People's Republic of China in the Late Twentieth Century and the First Two Decades of the Twenty-First Century. The Leadership of Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a country that currently plays a crucial role in the international arena and is characterized by a unique political system called socialism with Chinese characteristic.

Throughout several thousand years of Chinese history, a strong individual in power has been a constant element of China's political system. Confucius advocated the need for the state to function on a family basis, with a strong leader acting as a father. Even today, in socialism with Chinese characteristics, the political leader, despite the formal collectivism in governing China (the constitutional primacy of the Chinese Communist Party), remains the central figure in the state, determining the direction and dominant ideology of China's domestic and foreign policy.

The aim of this dissertation is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the nature of contemporary political leadership in the People's Republic of China. It will be based on an analysis of the leadership of the last three leaders of the People's Republic of China (1993-2023) – Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping. They held power at a time when the leadership system, with its characteristic element of generationality, was already established. The early 1990s also saw a significant ideological shift in political discourse, as patriotism began to be prioritized over the pursuit of the socialist revolution.

The dissertation also includes an analysis of the conditions for the strong position of top state leaders in contemporary China and the way they come to power, govern and strengthen their position in the state hierarchy and within the Communist Party of China.

The main thesis of the dissertation is: The governing strategy of subsequent leaders of the PRC after 1993 differs from that represented by Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, and the way of governing of each leader differs from that presented by their predecessors.

The main research question is: how does a particular leader's governance influence the conduct of China's domestic policy? This question is accompanied by specific research questions, such as: what are the career paths within the Chinese Communist Party and what are

the relations between the Chinese leader and other state authorities? The hypothesis arising from these questions assumes that incumbent leaders must constantly seek support from as many factions within the CCP as possible to maintain their legitimacy.

The dissertation consists of six chapters. In the first, the author analyzes existing theories on political leadership. The second chapter examines the specific characteristics of Chinese political leadership throughout history. The third chapter, concerning the reigns of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, serves as a starting point for research on the rule of the last three leaders of the People's Republic of China. Mao and Deng shaped the fundamental ideological and institutional framework within which contemporary China operates. The next three chapters are empirical analyses of the last three leaders of the People's Republic of China. The conclusion includes a comparative analysis of their rule.

The dissertation uses many research methods, including system analysis, the comparative method, the behavioral method, and the genetic method.

As a result of the conducted research, an original model of political leadership in the contemporary PRC was presented, taking into account all its characteristic features, such as: strong position of the leader, the central constitutional role of the Chinese Communist Party in the political system, a core ideology incorporating elements of both socialism and those coming from Chinese traditions, the crucial role of *guanxi* in gaining supporters within the Party, and the long-term planning of the effects of political and economic actions. The main thesis of the work was confirmed. The answers to the research questions demonstrated that the leader is the most important figure in the PRC's political system, and that the manner of governance and the possible delegation of tasks to other authorities depend on him. Each leader also sets their own political ideology and the governing program they implement. The CCP is a party strongly divided into competing factions, which means that the hypothesis arising from the aforementioned research questions was also confirmed.