

Chapter 2

The Historical Development of the Collective Presidency in China

The innovation, formation, and development of the collective presidency with Chinese characteristics did not come about by accident: it is the historical product, function, and outcome of an era. It has certainly undergone change. The initial form of this system was the collective leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC); that system was formed during a harsh period of war, and it gradually evolved thereafter. Subsequently, the system became the decision-making and coordinating mechanism of the ruling party tasked with governing a modern country with the largest population in the world. In over 60 years since the founding of the new China, the collective presidency with Chinese characteristics has developed along a long course that has involved considerable making and fixing of mistakes. From efficient collaboration to failure, from reconstruction and recovery to enhancement and completion, this system has finally matured into a system of political leadership and political decision making that is the most appropriate for the current situation in China and in the face of international competition.

2.1 Phase of Emergence (1927–1948)

This chapter examines the historical changes that have taken place with respect to China's collective presidency. It is divided into five phases: growth of the collective leadership of the CPC (1927–1948); the establishment of the collective leadership of the ruling party (1949–1957); serious damage to the collective leadership (1958–1976); the recovery and reconstruction of the collective leadership (1977–1991); consolidation and improvement of the collective leadership (1992–2012).

The system of collective leadership has changed with organizational changes in the Standing Committee. Before 1949 (i.e., before the phase of the new democratic revolution led by the CPC), collective leadership of the party developed from a rudimentary to a basically mature system. During this phase, the main task of the Standing Committee was one of implementing central political and military leadership over party organizations, which were distributed all around the country.

In the Shanghai massacre of April 12, 1927, the CPC suffered a fateful blow, and subsequently it had to reconstruct its institution of central leadership. On April 27 of that year, the Fifth National Congress of the CPC was held in Wuchang. On June 1, in the form of the Constitution of the CPC, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee stated its own duties as well as those of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, its Standing Committee, and the secretary-general: “The Central Committee elects one official central commissary as secretary-general and several other official central commissaries; together, they constitute the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC and guide all political actions in the country.” The Political Bureau also stated, “The members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee elect several members to jointly handle daily affairs of the party.” Hence, the Political Bureau is a decision-making authority and the Standing Committee is responsible for daily tasks.

On July 12, under instructions from the international central implementation committee of the CPC, the Central Committee was reformed and five people—Zhang Guotao, Li Weiham, Zhou Enlai, Li Lisan, and Zhang Tailei—constituted the temporary Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. From June 18 to July 11, 1928 (Party History Research Centre 2002), the Sixth National Congress of the CPC took place in Moscow. At the meeting, the following amendment to the Constitution of the CPC was approved: “the Central Committee elects the Political Bureau to guide political actions of the party before, during, and after the Plenary Session of the Central Committee and nominate a Standing Committee that is responsible for daily tasks.” This Congress elected Su Zhaozheng, Xiang Zhongfa, Xiang Ying, Zhou Enlai, Cai Hesen, Ju Qiubai, and Zhang Guotao as members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee. Among them, Su Zhaozheng, Xiang Zhongfa, Xiang Ying, Zhou Enlai, and Cai Hesen were designated as members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau. That was the first official National Congress in the history of the CPC.

Subsequently, at the Fifth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC, the National Congress Secretariat was renamed the Central Committee of the CPC, which performs the duty of the Central Committee when it is not in session.

At the Enlarged Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC, held in Zunyi in January 1935, Mao Zedong was elected as a member of the Standing Committee. Following the division of duties among members of the Standing Committee after this meeting, Mao Zedong became an assistant to Zhou Enlai in the military command. It was at this point that Mao Zedong officially joined the leadership of the Central Committee of the CPC and the Red Army.¹

On March 20, 1943, the central institutions of the CPC underwent modification. It was determined that the Political Bureau should be responsible for the actions of the CPC and coordinate the two central committees of the CPC. The Central Committee was thus entitled to determine all significant matters. It was determined that the Secretariat of the Central Committee would be responsible for implementing

¹Compiled by Party Literature Research Centre (2011, p. 78).

daily tasks according to the guidelines determined by the Political Bureau. The Secretariat consisted of three members—Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, and Ren Bishi—with Mao Zedong as chairman as elected by the Political Bureau.

At the Seventh National Congress of the CPC, which took place from April to May 1945, amendments to the Constitution of the CPC provided that “when the Central Committee is not in session, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee is the central guiding authority of the party and is responsible for undertaking all actions on behalf of the party.” Further, “the Secretariat of the Central Committee is responsible for handling daily actions according to resolutions of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC,” and the “chairman of the Central Committee also acts as chairman of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC and the Secretariat of the Central Committee.” On June 19 of that year, the First Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the CPC elected five secretaries to the Secretariat of the Central Committee—Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Ren Bishi. At that meeting Mao Zedong was nominated chairman of the Central Committee and chairman of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC.² In August of the same year, the Enlarged Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC designated Chen Yun and Peng Zhen as secretary candidates of the Secretariat. In this way, an authoritative and powerful collective leadership was created that was able to consolidate the activities of the entire party.

On September 20, 1948, a decision was made regarding the party committee system for the Central Committee of the CPC. The important aim of the party committee system was to ensure collective leadership and prevent individual autocracy. It was decided that a complete party committee meeting system had to be established and that all important matters had to be submitted to the committee for discussion; attending members were free to express their opinions before a clear decision was made and then implemented accordingly. It was concluded that the committee should consist of two forms—a standing committee and a central committee—and that their functions should remain separate. The emphasis was on collective leadership instead of individual responsibility. Later, in September 1956,³ Deng Xiaoping pointed out that within the CPC, a political tradition developed at that point: significant matters were determined by the collective leadership of the party, not by individuals. That decisions made by the Central Committee regarding the party committee system in September 1948 played a substantial role in enhancing the system of collective leadership within the CPC (Xiaoping Deng 1994).

Though this phase was marked by national war, civil war, and competing rivalries within the party, the central collective leadership of the CPC basically enjoyed a state of stability from 1943: it established the mechanism of collective leadership and individual responsibility. This mechanism developed into an official system in

²Compiled by Party Literature Research Centre (2011, p. 437).

³Compiled by Party Literature Research Centre (2011, p. 601).

1948. It came to provide a strong institutional foundation for the CPC from which the successes of the new democratic revolution could be achieved, along with the smooth running of collective leadership in the early period of the new China.

2.2 Phase of Establishment (1949–1957)

After the new China was founded in 1949, the CPC, as the ruling party, led the people in establishing socialist industrialization and modernization, and it also set up a series of socialist democratic systems. As Deng Xiaoping declared, the leadership of the party and the state depends on “a system of democratic life, collective leadership, democratic centralism, and individual responsibility.” (Xiaoping Deng 1994) First, it should be noted that these are democratic systems. Democracy allows for different opinions and suggestions to be heard. Second, these systems are also centralist, being based on extensive democracy and centralized action. As Mao Zedong noted, “Centralism is a system of unified realization, unified policy, unified planning, unified command, and unified action.” (Zedong Mao 1999) Third, these systems are based on collective leadership, rather than an individualistic approach. The principle of adhering to the majority decision is closely followed within the CPC.⁴ The final point is that these systems also depend on individual responsibility: different members are responsible for various matters in different fields through a division of work duties. This unique form of leadership of both the party and state combines a strong democracy with a centralist approach, and it also combines collective leadership with a division of work.

The collective leadership of the CPC gradually developed into a form of collective presidency during this second phase. After this phase, the principle of collective leadership followed something of a zigzag course: it went from operating efficiently to being seriously damaged before achieving recovery and being reconstructed and then finally it was able to be consolidated and optimized. The collective presidency contributed to the great feats of the reform and opening-up policy and modernization and construction efforts in China as it pushed the country’s political system toward democratization, institutionalization, and normalization.

The phase during which the collective presidency of the new China was operating efficiently began in the early period and led to industrialization and reform (1949–1957). I refer to this phase as the first “golden period” for economic development in the new China. During this phase, economic and social development in the country proved that the key to a stable China was a stable political situation,

⁴Mao Zedong pointed out that the leadership of the party committee was collective leadership and not dependent on the arbitrary decisions of the first secretary. He said that only democratic centralism should be implemented within the party committee and relations between the first secretary and other secretaries and members depended on majority decisions. This was normal among the members of the Standing Committee of the Central Committee or Political Bureau. “No matter what I said was right or wrong, if others disagree, I would obey their opinions because they were the majority.” Mao Zedong (1999).

the key to a stable political situation was a stable group of leaders, and the key to a stable group of leaders was the institutionalization, democratization, normalization, and routinization of the leadership (Angang Hu 2008, p. 207). As was decided in the Seventh National Congress of the CPC, the party was led by the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Ren Bishi (who died in October 1950), and Chen Yun acted as secretaries of the Secretariat during that period.

When the new China was founded on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong was elected chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC, chairman of the Central People's Government, and chairman of the People's Revolutionary Military Committee of the Central People's Government. In this way, the leadership system featured centralization of the powers of the CPC, the state, and the army. Mao also acted concurrently as chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) until 1959. Zhu De acted as vice chairman of the Central People's Government, vice chairman of the People's Revolutionary Military Committee, commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army of China, and later (in November of that year) he also concurrently became secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Central Committee. Liu Shaoqi was elected vice chairman of the Central People's Government and vice chairman of the People's Revolutionary Military Committee. Zhou Enlai was appointed premier of the Government Administration Council and vice chairman of the People's Revolutionary Military Committee. Chen Yun was nominated vice premier of the Government Administration Council. The five secretaries of the Secretariat of the Central Committee represented the six major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC; the Central People's Government; the Government Administration Council; the Central Military Committee; the CPPCC; and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

At the first meeting of the First National People's Congress (NPC) in 1954, Mao Zedong was elected chairman of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and chairman of the Central Military Committee. Liu Shaoqi was appointed chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Zhu De was nominated vice chairman of the PRC and vice chairman of the Central Military Committee and remained acting secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. Zhou Enlai was designated premier of the State Council, chairman of the CPPCC, and vice chairman of the Central Military Committee of the CPC. Chen Yun assumed the office of vice premier of the State Council. The five secretaries of the Secretariat of the Central Committee represented the six major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC; the NPC; the State Council; the CPPCC; the Central Military Committee; and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. This formed the basis for a rudimentary collective presidency.

The political creativity of the collective presidency with Chinese characteristics originated with Mao Zedong, and its institutional innovation also derived from him. Collective presidency is thus not only the outcome of practical innovations by the PRC but also the product of theoretical innovations by Mao Zedong in governing the party and the state.

In 1956, at the Eighth National Congress of the CPC, further amendments to the Constitution of the CPC were approved. The constitution declared, “At all levels, the party organization follows a combination of collective leadership and individual responsibility. Significant matters are subject to a collective decision while ensuring the necessary role of individuals.” The congress reestablished the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC as the core of collective leadership. The Constitution also stipulated, “The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC and its Standing Committee exercise the duties of the Central Committee during plenary sessions of the Central Committee when the committee is not in session. The Secretariat of the Central Committee is responsible for dealing with daily business under the direction of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC and its Standing Committee.”

When Mao Zedong was considering plans for central leadership, he examined the position of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. He proposed that this committee be composed of the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary-general of the Central Committee of the CPC and that this would be the core of central collective leadership (Shi Zhongquan et al. 1998). Mao Zedong believed that a chairman and a vice chairman (he was referring here to Liu Shaoqi) were somewhat “exposed,” and as such several “windbreaks” were required to help them. Mao said that something unexpected could happen at any time, and so it was important to take preventive measures. If any one individual among the collective leadership was unable to perform their duty for some reason, such as through disease or death, other members would be able to take charge and the country would be safe. He thought that this would be in contrast to the position in Soviet Russia, which was in chaos after the death of Stalin. Mao believed that it was necessary to prevent such a state of affairs from developing. In addition, he believed, increasing the number of members would lead to the sharing of the workload. Mao stressed that the main goal of this arrangement was the safety of the state and that everyone having less individual responsibility would be more beneficial. Mao suggested that the Standing Committee (the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC) should consist of the chairman, vice chairman, and secretary-general. Mao Zedong also made comments about Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun, who he referred to as “young Turks.” (Zedong Mao 1999) At that time, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun were, respectively, 52 and 51 years old. As a result, two echelons were formed among the members of the Standing Committee: Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun belonged to the “young Turk” echelon, as determined by Mao.

Mao Zedong was forward-looking in this respect. China is a socialist country with the largest population in the world. It would be extremely dangerous to tie the destiny of such a state to one or two leaders. Following the death of Stalin, Khrushchev became his successor. Khrushchev was able to repudiate Stalin’s actions, and this caused a good many problems for the whole cause of socialism. Mao Zedong designed the core system of the collective leadership—the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC—to avoid binding the whole future of China to any one individual, himself included.

On September 28, 1956, the First Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC elected Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yun,

and Deng Xiaoping as members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. They were the core of the first generation of the central collective leadership of the new China, as pointed out by Deng Xiaoping: “The formation of real mature leadership in the history of our party started with the generation of Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Zhu De” (Xiaoping Deng 1993, p. 302).

In 1958, the Fifth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC elected Lin Biao as a new member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. Lin was to assist Mao in presiding over the daily activities of the Central Committee of the CPC in 1959.⁵

The First Meeting of the Second NPC took place in April 1959. Liu Shaoqi was elected chairman of the PRC. Zhu De was nominated chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Zhou Enlai was appointed premier of the State Council and chairman of the CPPC. Chen Yun, Lin Biao, and Deng Xiaoping were designated vice premiers of the State Council.

That is the earliest collective presidency. Seven members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC represented the five major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC; the NPC; the State Council; the CPPCC; and the Central Military Committee. The Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC fully executed its core role in collective leadership, division of responsibility, internal coordination, and teamwork. Mao Zedong was the key element in this mechanism, which combined a central collective leadership system with institutional design: it opposed individual power, enhanced the collective leadership of the party, limited the authority of the supreme leader, and consolidated the functions of the national party congress in supervision and decision making (Angang Hu 2008, pp. 208–212). This was the essential political basis for the first golden period of the new China.⁶ To use the words of Lenin, it was “the most authoritative, the most influential, the most experienced” (Lenin Vladimir 1986); it was as Deng Xiaoping noted, a very mature central collective leadership (Xiaoping Deng 1993) until the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

2.3 Phase of Serious Damage (1958–1976)

The period of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution (1958–1976) saw the collective presidency suffer a phase of serious damage. In 1956, the Eighth National Congress of the CPC had made what was then the best institutional

⁵On September 26, 1959, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee appointed Mao Zedong chairman of the Military Committee of the CPC Central Committee; Lin Biao, He Long, and Nie Rongzhen as vice chairmen and Lin Biao as the person in charge of daily work of the Military Committee.

⁶A detailed analysis can be found in Hu Angang (2008).

arrangements in the history of the party (Angang Hu 2008, p. 213). However, Mao then stopped acting as president of the state and changed the leadership system so that one person simultaneously held the offices of chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC, president of the state, and chairman of the Central Military Committee. Mao Zedong introduced the notions of “front line” and “back line,” but he retreated to the back line. This notion theoretically involves a joint power structure, but there was an asymmetry of information between Mao Zedong and the collective leadership on the front line. As Mao’s power increased, so did his personal prestige, and he increasingly tended to make arbitrary decisions. In this way, he made the change from being a member of the collective leadership of the party to becoming a controller, supervisor, and autocrat; the democrat who had once advocated collective leadership became the man who dispensed “supreme instructions.” (Angang Hu 2008, p. 550) As a result, the Standing Committee was downgraded to an institution that simply implemented the personal instructions of Mao Zedong. The membership of the Standing Committee underwent frequent changes in a non-institutionalized manner; the collective leadership of the CPC was seriously impaired, and it existed in name only.

In this phase, the power structure of the Central Committee of the CPC operated at three levels: the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC; the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC; and the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Among these three levels, the Standing Committee represented the core leadership and decision-making body; however, Mao himself was always the decision-making centre, the one who had the final say during the period of the Cultural Revolution. In practice, a unique decision-making system that had Mao at its core existed above the level of the Political Bureau and its Standing Committee; this is the feature of the dual-power structure that existed in China during this period. The dual-power structure (or two-line system) changed frequently during this phase of development, as detailed below.

January 1958 to August 1966: Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and the Political Bureau. After the Nanning Meeting in 1958, Mao rarely attended meetings of the Political Bureau. Before the meetings, he often produced topics for other members to discuss, and afterward he read the reports of the meetings alone. A resolution could be approved only if he agreed (Xi Xuan and Jin Chunming 2006). Since Mao Zedong visited many cities in 1965, he was basically absent for meetings of the Standing Committee and meetings of the Political Bureau.⁷ But he was still the person in control of each meeting and the chairperson at each meeting reported to Mao and was responsible to him. Even for meetings of the Standing Committee, when Mao was supposed to be present, he still relied on reports by other committee members when he was in another city. Later Mao explained his actions as follows: the reason he initiated the Cultural Revolution was that his opinions could not be properly implemented in Beijing; this was because he found he could not trust others. He stated that a number of “independent kingdoms”

⁷See Hu Angang (2010, p. 297).

had appeared (meaning Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, and Lu Dengyi) since he set up the front line (which consisted of Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping, who were responsible for the daily activities of the Central Committee) and the back line of the Central Committee (referring to Mao himself, who had stopped intervening in the daily activities of the Central Committee following his exit). Therefore, the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC refined the front and back lines (Zedong Mao 1998a).

August 1966 to April 1969: Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and the Briefing Meeting of the Central Committee for the Cultural Revolution. At the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC, the seven-member central collective leadership headed by Mao Zedong was replaced by an 11-member collective leadership, whereby Lin Biao became the only vice chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC. Later, three members of the Standing Committee (Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and Tao Zhu) were removed and another three (Zhu De, Chen Yun, and Li Fuchun) became marginalized. In early 1967, five people—Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Chen Bodao, and Kang Sheng—became the core of the collective leadership. These were in effect the leaders of the Cultural Revolution. Initially, the leadership consisted of Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and the Political Bureau; this was followed by Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and the Briefing Meeting of the Central Committee; finally a leadership arrangement consisting of Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and the Briefing Meeting of the Central Committee on the Cultural Revolution replaced the Political Bureau Secretariat of the Central Committee. The Central Cultural Revolution Team became a special institution that was involved in decision making, having previously been constituted by members of the Standing Committee.⁸ The above situation lasted until the Ninth National Party Congress in April 1969. This was still the system of the front and back lines. Generally, Zhou Enlai chaired the Briefing Meeting of the Central Committee for the Cultural Revolution before reporting to Mao Zedong and Lin Biao. In most cases, Mao gave instructions and Lin Biao followed Mao's lead; Zhou Enlai then implemented these instructions at the Briefing Meeting.

April 1969 to September 1971: Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. In the Constitution of the CPC, which was approved by the Ninth National Party Congress, Lin Biao officially became the successor to Mao Zedong.⁹ The First Plenary Session of the Ninth CPC Central Committee elected Mao Zedong and Lin Biao as the chairman and sole

⁸On April 12, 1967, at the Enlarged Meeting of the Military Committee of the Central Committee of the CPC, Jiang Qing said that the whole Central Cultural Revolution Team was a team of the Standing Committee and also the “guard” and “brains.” The five major members of the Central Cultural Revolution Team—Chen Boda, Kang Sheng, Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, and Yao Wenyuan—constantly attended the Briefing Meetings of the Central Committee for the Cultural Revolution. See Hu Angang (2010).

⁹The sixth paragraph of the General Program of the Constitution of the CPC approved at the Ninth National Party Congress specified, “Holding the great flag of Mao Zedong thought, Lin Biao implements and guards the proletarian revolution of Mao Zedong most loyally and most

vice chairman, respectively, of the Central Committee of the CPC. The meeting elected five members to the Standing Committee—Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Chen Boda, and Kang Sheng. In this period, neither Mao Zedong nor Lin Biao attended meetings of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. They expressed their opinions via deputies (such as Wang Dongxing and Ye Qun), and then Zhou Enlai chaired meetings of the Political Bureau to discuss their opinions before submitting them for approval in written or other form.¹⁰ In most cases, Mao Zedong made decisions or provided approval, Lin Biao indicated his agreement, and then Zhou Enlai implemented the decision. For example, on July 10, 1970, Zhou Enlai chaired a meeting of the Political Bureau and delivered the instructions of Mao Zedong that related to modifying the constitution and establishing a drafting committee for this purpose. However, neither Mao nor Lin took part in drafting the document nor did they communicate directly about this matter. They entrusted the chairing of the committee to Zhou Enlai and Kang Sheng (Angang Hu 2010, p. 518). If Zhou Enlai was absent, Kang Sheng would attend to the daily business of the central government on Zhou Enlai's behalf. Kang was thus in effect a kind of deputy premier (Wu Faxian 2006, p. 824). In this period, no meetings of the Standing Committee were held, and thus it no longer played a core governing role. It is notable that the Second Plenary Session of the Ninth CPC Central Committee removed Chen Boda from his former position; there were thus only four members of the Standing Committee. Mao Zedong and Lin Biao disagreed with each other on some significant matters, and they rarely communicated. They became suspicious of one another and began to compete against each other. It was inevitable therefore that the two of them fell out, leading to a serious political divide (Angang Hu 2010, p. 515).

September 1971 to August 1973: Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. After the event of September 13, the number of Standing Committee members was reduced from four to three. Kang Sheng was no longer able to be active as a member of the Central Committee owing to poor health. Another five members of the Standing Committee also left (Huang Yongsheng, Wu Faxian, Li Zuopeng, Qiu Huizuo, and Ye Qun). The running of the country during this period was thus in the hands of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and the Political Bureau. Zhou Enlai chaired the Political Bureau meetings and reported directly to Mao; Zhou implemented recommendations after receiving Mao's approval.

affirmatively. Lin Biao is the close comrade in arms and the successor of Mao Zedong.” See China Revolution Museum (1979).

¹⁰Wu Faxian introduced this after the Ninth National Party Congress; the Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC replaced the Briefing Meeting of the Cultural Revolution chaired by Zhou Enlai. Generally, Mao Zedong and Lin Biao were absent from these meetings. All topics and documents brought by the Political Bureau or topics introduced by Mao Zedong for discussion would be discussed at the meeting of the Political Bureau first, signed by Zhou Enlai, and then submitted to Mao Zedong and Lin Biao before implementation upon the approval of Mao and Lin. Wu Faxian (2006, p. 748).

August 1973 to July 1975: Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Wang Hongwen, and the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. The First Plenary Session of the Tenth Central Committee of the CPC elected nine members to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau: Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Wang Hongwen, Kang Sheng, Ye Jianying, Li Desheng, Zhu De, Zhang Chunqiao, and Dong Biwu. It was Mao's intention to cultivate three successors: Wang Hongwen (aged 38), Li Desheng (57), and Zhang Chunqiao (56). In January 1975, at the Second Plenary Session of the Tenth Central Committee of the CPC, Deng Xiaoping was elected to the Standing Committee. At the First Meeting of the Fourth NPC held later on, Zhu De remained as acting Chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC; Dong Biwu and Kang Sheng were elected vice chairmen; Zhou Enlai remained as premier of the State Council; Deng Xiaoping and Zhang Chunqiao were nominated vice premiers of the State Council. Mao Zedong acted as chairman of the Central Military Committee, and Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping acted as vice chairmen of that committee. The nine members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau represented the four major institutions. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, Zhu De, and Dong Biwu had all been in poor health for quite some time: they were therefore constantly absent from the Political Bureau Standing. No meetings of this Standing Committee were held, and thus these meetings no longer played a core governing role. Decision making was essentially carried out by Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Wang Hongwen together with the Political Bureau. Either Zhou Enlai chaired the Political Bureau meetings and reported to Mao Zedong, or Wang Hongwen chaired the meetings and reported to Mao when Zhou was absent. By September 1976, the five members—Dong Biwu (died 1975), Kang Sheng (died 1975), Zhou Enlai (died 1976), Zhu De (died 1976), and Mao Zedong (died 1976)—had all passed away in turn; only three members—Wang Hongwen, Ye Jianying, and Zhang Chunqiao—remained among the former nine members of the Standing Committee.

July 1975 to February 1976: Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and the Political Bureau. On the basis of instructions from Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping had handled the daily business of the Central Committee of the CPC since early July 1975.¹¹ After 4 months, on November 15, Deng had to write to Mao to apply to be relieved of his daily activities for the Central Committee because of an event involving “beating back the trend of reversing the verdict of rightists.”¹² Mao Zedong did not agree, however, until February 1976.¹³

February 1976 to September 1976: Mao Zedong, Hua Guofeng, and the Political Bureau. By February 1976, four members of the Standing Committee of the Political

¹¹Compiled by Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji (2003, p. 1739).

¹²“Reports of Deng Xiaoping to Mao Zedong”, November 15, 1975, quoted from *Biography of Mao Zedong (1949–1976)* compiled by Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji (2003, p. 1739).

¹³Wang Hongwen had returned to Beijing from Shanghai. On November 15, Deng Xiaoping had to write a report to Mao Zedong to officially note that the daily activities of the Central Committee should be directed by Wang Hongwen. Therefore, Mao Zedong gave instructions by letter to Deng Xiaoping that night: “(Daily works of the central committee) should be led by Deng Xiaoping temporarily. This matter is to be determined later”. Mao Zedong (1998b).

Bureau had died,¹⁴ and Deng Xiaoping was coming under criticism. Based on Mao's proposal and backed up by the consensus of the Political Bureau, Hua Guofeng was appointed acting premier of the State Council to lead the work of the Political Bureau. On April 7 of the same year, at a meeting of the Political Bureau on the instructions of Mao, Hua Guofeng was elected first vice chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC and premier of the State Council. By September 9, 1976, Zhu De and Mao Zedong had died, and just three members (Wang Hongwen, Ye Jianying, and Zhang Chunqiao) and Hua Guofeng were left among the members of the Standing Committee.

October 1976 to August 1977: Hua Guofeng and the Political Bureau. On the evening of October 6, 1976, Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, and Wang Dongxing enforced the exclusion of Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Jiang Qiang, and Yao Wenyan in the name of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC. Later, Hua Guofeng convened and hosted an Emergency Meeting of the Political Bureau.¹⁵ On October 7, the CPC Central Committee officially passed the "Resolution Concerning Hua Guofeng Acting as Chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC and Chairman of the Military Committee of the Central Committee of the CPC." By that time, only one member of the Standing Committee remained—Ye Jianying. In July 1977, the Third Plenary Session of the Tenth CPC Central Committee officially admitted Hua Guofeng as chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC and Chairman of the Military Committee of the Central Committee of the CPC; however, he was not a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau. Deng Xiaoping was reinstated in office and was once again appointed a member of the Standing Committee and vice chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC.

After the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC, the Standing Committee lost its central leading role. First, it was replaced by the Briefing Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPC on the Cultural Revolution and then by the "two-line" system (Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and the Political Bureau; Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and the Political Bureau; Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Wang Hongwen, and the Political Bureau; Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and the Political Bureau; and Mao Zedong, Hua Guofeng, and the Political Bureau). By October 7 1976, Only Ye Jianying survived as a member of the Standing Committee. This phase marked a period of failure, when the central collective leadership system was seriously damaged; during this period arbitrary changes were made to the membership of the collective leadership, high political risks were taken and irreversible mistakes were made by China's government. Later, Hua Guofeng and, especially, Deng Xiaoping began to recover the collective leadership system, revert to the core role of collective leadership, and restore the

¹⁴Refers to Dong Biwu (died April 1975), Kang Sheng (died December 1975), and Zhou Enlai (died January 1976).

¹⁵The eight members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC attending the meeting: Hua Guofeng et al. (1998).

mechanism of democratic, collective decision making. In this way, the Chinese government got national politics back on the right track.

The formation of the collective leadership of the Standing Committee was politically creative, and an important institutional innovation by Mao Zedong. However, during the period from 1958 to 1976, Mao Zedong, chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC, centralized too much personal power, and his behavior produced a shift from collective leadership toward individual leadership.¹⁶ In this way, the established system became dysfunctional, and the result was failure. This should serve as a sobering lesson for the whole party; it leaves indelible memories and a considerable historical wealth for future leaders to draw upon in their efforts to construct a successful collective presidency with Chinese characteristics. Just as Deng Xiaoping once said, overly-centralized power obstructs the implementation of socialist democracy and democratic centralization of the party; it also creates needless bureaucracy (Xiaoping Deng 1994). However Deng Xiaoping did not abolish the system of collective presidency because of the mistakes that had been made. On the contrary, he kept its best features while abolishing the more harmful aspects, and he promoted its legacy, its recovery, reconstruction, reform, and optimization.¹⁷

2.4 Phase of Recovery and Reconstruction (1977–1991)

On August 18, 1977, the First Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC elected five members to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau: Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, and Wang Dongxing.

¹⁶Deng Xiaoping pointed out that over-centralization of power can appear under the guise of enhancing unified leadership of the party, which leads to inappropriate and arbitrary centralization of all power in the party committee; in this way, the power of the party committee becomes centred on a small number of officials, especially the first secretary, and all matters are determined by this secretary. In this way, unified leadership of the party sometimes can result in overly individualistic leadership. This issue exists in organizations at all levels around the country. Too much power is centralized in certain individuals or a small number of people; by contrast, the majority—those who carry out the work—do not take part in the decision making. This leads to excessive bureaucracy, mistakes, damage to the democratic life of party committees and governments at all levels, damage to the collective leadership, damage to democratic centralization, and damage to the division of work. This phenomenon calls to mind feudalism absolutism in Chinese history and the tradition of dictatorial party leadership in some countries during international communism. Deng Xiaoping (1994).

¹⁷Deng Xiaoping pointed out that to meet the demands of construction along modern socialist lines and the requirements of democratic political life in the party and the state, it was necessary to promote what was beneficial and abolish what was harmful. He noted that there were many areas that required reform with respect to the leadership and other systems of the party and the state. He declared that it was important to reflect on the lessons of history, conduct in-depth investigations and research, centralize opinions as appropriate, and positively push for reform in a step-by-step process from central to local levels. Deng Xiaoping (1994).

Hua Guofeng was appointed chairman of the Central Committee and of the Central Military Committee. Among the other members, Ye Jianying acted as vice chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC, and Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping also took office concurrently as vice chairmen of the Central Military Committee. Thereafter, the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau began to operate as the core institution of leadership, and the four of them acted as leaders of the major organs of state.

In February 1978, at the First Meeting of the Fifth NPC, Hua Guofeng was elected premier of the State Council. Ye Jianying was nominated chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC, and Deng Xiaoping and Li Xiannian were appointed vice premiers of the State Council. At the First Meeting of the Fifth CPPCC, Deng Xiaoping was designated chairman of the CPPCC.

Five Standing Committee members represented the five major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC (Hua Guofeng); the NPC (Ye Jianying); the State Council (Hua Guofeng, Deng Xiaoping, and Li Xiannian); the Central Military Committee (Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, and Deng Xiaoping); and the CPPCC (Deng Xiaoping). In this way, they formed a collective presidency with Chinese characteristics. Except for Wang Dongxing, who had no leading position in any other institution, and Li Xiannian, who just took one office, each member simultaneously held two or more offices.

In December 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC elected Chen Yun as a new member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, vice chairman of the Central Committee of the CPC, and first secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. In addition to these positions, he was subsequently appointed vice premier of the State Council. This plenary session and the central work meeting that served as preparation for it promoted democracy within the party through the will of the majority being reflected at the level of leadership¹⁸; it also corrected the mistakes made by the supreme leader on behalf of the majority at central meetings (Gong Yuzhi et al. 2004). That was a first since the founding of the new China (Hu Angang 2011). This meeting further restored and consolidated the mechanism of collective leadership and collective democratic decision making among members of the Standing Committee; here, Hua Guofeng took the lead in respecting the decision of the collective leadership. At a central work meeting, Hua Guofeng announced on behalf of the members of the Standing Committee that the priority of the whole party would become social (economic) construction from January of the following year (1979) (Mingwei Yang 2005). This decision received the official approval of the Third Plenary Session, and marked the beginning of reform and opening-up

¹⁸At the Central Work Meeting (36 days) and Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC (4 days), there were over 500 speeches and briefing meetings, which amounted to almost 1.5 million written characters. Ye Yonglie (2008). This meeting was a major event in the history of the CPC in terms of the open expression of thoughts and dialogue, and real democracy.

in China. Chen Yun delivered a speech at the closing meeting of the plenary session. He fully affirmed the findings of the Third Plenary Session and the previous central work meeting that had been chaired by Deng Xiaoping and members of the Standing Committee. Chen Yun declared that he believed the meetings had achieved a “situation that features centralism and democracy, discipline and freedom, unified will, and personal choice.” These principles had been advocated by Mao Zedong, but Chen Yun believed they had not been followed consistently since 1957. The Constitution of the CPC released at the Ninth (1969) and Tenth (1979) National Party Congresses also stated these principles, though they had not in fact been met. Chen Yun made an appraisal of the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC. He stated that this time, the Central Committee of the CPC had shown good leadership. He believed that the ideals represented in that plenary session might begin to take hold all over the country if everyone made efforts in that direction.¹⁹ This episode showed that if the Central Committee of the CPC was able to reconstruct the core collective leadership and recover the process of collective democratic decision making, it would be able to make the correct strategic decisions and lead China in the right direction.

In February 1980, the Fifth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC resumed the eight-leader system. It also established the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPC to build a leadership system at three levels: the Secretariat, the Political Bureau, and the Standing Committee. Among these, the Secretariat was in the front line; the Political Bureau and the Standing Committee were in the back line. The former was led by the latter two.²⁰ However, the features of the dual-power structure appeared once again: there was a growing information asymmetry between the front line and the back line as there had been before. The problem this time was that the Standing Committee failed to hold regular meetings.

The Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the CPC designated Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang as members of the Standing Committee, appointed Hu Yaobang as secretary-general, and increased the number of members of the Standing Committee from six to eight. Later, Zhao Ziyang acted as premier of the State Council, Hua Guofeng ceased acting concurrently as premier of the State Council, and Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun also no longer acted concurrently as vice premiers of the State Council.

The eight Standing Committee members represented the six major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC (Hua Guofeng); the NPC (Ye Jianying); the State Council (Zhao Ziyang); the Central Military Committee (Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, and Deng Xiaoping); the CPPCC (Deng Xiaoping); and the Central Commission

¹⁹Chen Yun: Recording of Speech at the Closing Ceremony of the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CPC Central Committee (December 22, 1978). See the work compiled by Jin Chongzhi and Chen Qun (2005).

²⁰Ye Jianying: Speech on the First Meeting of the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC (February 24, 1980), compiled by the Party Literature Research Centre (1982a).

for Discipline Inspection (Chen Yun). Among these individuals, except for Wang Dongxing, who did not have a chairman's or premier's position, and Li Xiannian, who held only one office, each member assumed two or more posts concurrently.

In June 1981, the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC made adjustments to the Standing Committee. As a result, Wang Dongxing ceased acting as a member of the Standing Committee. The Plenary Session elected Hu Yaobang chairman of the Central Committee; Hua Guofeng no longer acted as chairman of the Central Committee; the number of members of the Standing Committee was reduced from eight to seven.

How should the collective leadership of the Central Committee of the CPC be established? Hu Qiaomu made some important institutional suggestions in this respect. On November 6, 1980, Hu Qiaomu took some suggestions to Deng Xiaoping and the Political Bureau. According to the "Resolutions Concerning Several Historic Issues of the Party since the Founding of New China" (draft for discussion), there should be "provisions for the leadership of the party to be a collective leadership. The leadership of the party must follow a definite political structure. The leaders of the party and the whole party itself must be under the effective supervision of all people." (Qiaomu Hu (2002)) In June 1981, the Central Committee clearly declared in a resolution that it was essential to establish the Marxist ideal that a party had to be under collective leadership, with the leaders being individuals possessing virtue and competence who had emerged through mass struggle, and individual worship of a leader in any form was forbidden. The Central Committee stated that it was necessary to maintain the prestige of the party leaders while ensuring that their activities came under the supervision of the party and the people.²¹

Thereafter, the Twelfth National Party Congress in 1982 approved the Constitution of the CPC with the express provision that only the secretary-general, not the chairman and vice chairman, should sit on the Central Committee. Hu Qiaomu stated that the secretary-general was one of the members of the Standing Committee; as such, the secretary-general was responsible for convening meetings of the Political Bureau and the Standing Committee and presiding over the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Clearly, "convening" and "presiding over" are very different in meaning, and the effect of this was to prevent the reoccurrence of over-centralization and arbitrary personal decisions that were formerly made by a single individual (secretary-general). It should be noted that this institutional design took into account the arbitrary personal decision making by Mao Zedong in his later years; it also ensured against the possibility of the over-centralization of power in the hands of such individuals as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. In this way, the core role of collective leadership was secured. In another move introduced by Hu Qiaomu, in the event of the posts of chairman and secretary-general being held

²¹"Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPC on Several Historic Issues in New China" (unanimously approved by the Sixth Plenary Session at the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC on June 27, 1981), Compiled by the Party Literature Research Centre (1982b).

simultaneously by the same individual, one of these posts would be simply nominal. Therefore, it was unnecessary to nominate the same individual concurrently to the two posts. Following the new Constitution of the CPC, Hu Qiaomu also particularly stressed that the core leadership of the CPC in daily business matters was to be constituted by the Standing Committee.²² Through the Constitution of the CPC, the Twelfth National Party Congress thus officially established the core role of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau in terms of decision making and leadership capacity.

In September 1982, the First Plenary Session of the Twelfth CPC Central Committee elected six members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau: Hu Yaobang, Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, Li Xiannian, and Chen Yun. The following nominations were made: Hu Yaobang as secretary-general of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; Deng Xiaoping as chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Central Committee of the CPC and chairman of the Central Military Committee; Ye Jianying as vice chairman of the Central Military Committee; and Chen Yun as the first secretary of the Central Commission for the Discipline Inspection.

In March 1983, at the First Meeting of the Sixth NPC, the following appointments were made: Li Xiannian as president of the State; Ye Jianying as chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC; Zhao Ziyang as premier of the State Council; and Deng Xiaoping as the chairman of the Central Military Committee.

The six Standing Committee members represented the six major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC; the NPC; the State Council; the Central Military Committee; the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; and the Central Advisory Committee of the CPC. The result of these moves was further progress toward collective presidency with Chinese characteristics. In global terms, this system signifies a major breakthrough, and it is superior to the systems of individual presidency, bicameralism, and separation of powers that exist in other countries. This system reflects a more highly developed, more practical form of socialist democracy, one that is able to achieve better and more democratic decision making, consensus in the decision-making process, and more efficient decision-making. Thus, the decisive contribution made by Deng Xiaoping was a significant moment in Chinese political institutional reform and innovation.

In November 1987 the First Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the CPC elected five members to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau: Zhao Ziyang, Li Peng, Qiao Shi, Hu Qili, and Yao Yilin. At the meeting, the following nominations were made: Zhao Ziyang as secretary-general of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and first vice chairman of the Central Military Committee; Deng Xiaoping as chairman of the Central Military Committee; Qiao Shi as secretary of the Central Commission for the Discipline Inspection; and Chen Yun as director of the Central Advisory Committee of the CPC.

²²Hu Qiaomu answered questions made by a reporter of the Xinhua News Agency about modifying the Constitution of the CPC. See report of the Xinhua News Agency from Beijing on January 13, 1982.

In March 1988, at the First Meeting of the Seventh NPC, the following nominations were made: Yang Shangkun (member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC and executive vice chairman of the Central Military Committee) as president of State; Wan Li (member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC) as chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC; Li Peng as premier of the State Council; Yao Yilin as (executive) vice premier of the State Council; and Deng Xiaoping as chairman of the Central Military Committee of the state. At the First Meeting of the Seventh CPPCC, Li Xiannian was elected chairman of the CPPCC. Except for Hu Qili, who was responsible for the Propaganda Department of the CPC, the other four Standing Committee members represented just three major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC; the State Council; and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. Collective presidency was not a prominent feature at this meeting, and the meeting also underlined the problem of how the Standing Committee should coordinate with the other major organs.

The political storm of 1989 led to major divisions within the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau. The committee at that time comprised five members, and a dangerous situation of three-versus-two emerged regarding the crucial decision of whether or not to impose martial law in the area of the capital. This event shocked Deng Xiaoping deeply. On June 16 of that year, Deng Xiaoping held discussions with other leaders, including Jiang Zemin. During those talks, Deng said that he had been aware of this potential problem many years ago. Deng stated that it was both unhealthy and dangerous if the fate of a country revolved around one or two individuals. Only if no major events occurred could everything go smoothly. Thereupon, Deng stressed the importance of having an effective Political Bureau, and in particular an effective Standing Committee. He believed that if they all united, worked hard, and could be taken as a model—especially regarding arduous pioneering and anticorruption—China would be able to weather any storm (Xiaoping Deng 1993, pp. 310–311).

Also in June that year, the Fourth Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the CPC made the following moves. Jiang Zemin, Song Ping, and Li Ruihuan were appointed members of the Standing Committee; Hu Qili was dismissed from the Standing Committee and Zhao Ziyang was relieved of some of his positions, including those of secretary-general of the Central Committee and membership of the Standing Committee. Jiang Zemin was elected secretary-general of the Central Committee. Li Ruihuan became responsible for the Propaganda Department of the CPC. The number of members of the Standing Committee was increased from five to six.

In November of the same year, the Fifth Plenary Session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the CPC agreed to the resignation of Deng Xiaoping as chairman of the Central Military Committee, and Jiang Zemin was designated chairman of that committee. The six members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau therefore represented the five major institutions: the Central Committee; the State Council; the Central Military Committee; the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; and the Propaganda Department.

Thus, Deng Xiaoping officially exited the collective leadership of the Central Committee. Just as he said he would, he was able to complete the collective succession of China's leaders within a period of 10 years.²³ The process had not gone perfectly as it had involved the removal of two secretaries-general.²⁴ However, by advancing cautiously, Deng Xiaoping had in the end been able to successfully rebuild the Standing Committee as an institution. Thus, he achieved collective presidency with Chinese characteristics, and this laid a strong foundation for future development by ensuring China's long-term success in the face of complex situations and challenges at home and overseas.

2.5 Phase of Consolidation and Optimization (1992–2012)

The setting-up of China's central collective leadership helped in establishing the overall framework of China's political institutions. The collective presidency with Chinese characteristics developed further over a period of two decades, starting with the First Plenary Session of the Fourteenth Central Committee. This process of development basically involved two stages. In the first stage, seven members were appointed to the Standing Committee of the Fourteenth and the Fifteenth Political Bureaus. In the second stage, nine members were appointed to the Standing Committee of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Political Bureaus. Through these two stages, the collective presidency with Chinese characteristics became more mature, stable, and effective, reflecting the significant innovations made by the collective leadership. The position of the CPC as the leading ruling party is realized through the party's leadership over the authorities of state (Zemin Jiang 2006). In practice, this also reflects the fact that members of the Standing Committee act as the authorities of the state.

In October 1992, the First Plenary Session of the Fourteenth Central Committee elected seven members to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau: Jiang Zemin, Li Peng, Qiao Shi, Li Ruihuan, Zhu Rongji, Liu Huaqing, and Hu Jintao. Jiang Zemin and Liu Huaqing were appointed, respectively, chairman and vice

²³In July 1990, Deng Xiaoping said to Pierre Trudeau, the former Canadian Prime Minister on a visit to China, that he had considered the problem about succession 10 years earlier but that he had been unable to finalize the succession issue until the previous year (1989). See: *Chronicles of Deng Xiaoping (1975–1997) (part II)* compiled by the Party Literature Research Centre (2004).

²⁴Deng Xiaoping pointed out that the reason the two former secretaries-general were removed is not that they were incompetent when they were appointed. Their appointment was correct. However, they subsequently made mistakes with regard to insisting on the four basic principles. The most basic principle involves leadership of the party and socialism. Opposition to those four principles amounts to capitalistic liberalization. Deng said that he had often stressed those four basic principles and combated capitalistic liberation, but he had failed in the attempt. Zhao Ziyang had been exposed to the turbulence related to this issue of capitalistic liberalization. He had in fact been on the side of such liberalization. Deng Xiaoping (1993).

chairman of the Central Military Committee; Wei Jianxing (member of Political Bureau) was designated secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

The First Plenary Session of the Fourteenth Central Committee carried out vital reforms with respect to the leadership of the party and state. First, it officially established the united power structure by taking the Standing Committee as its core. It was decreed that the Standing Committee should hold regular meetings and become the real decision-making core of the collective leadership; it was also determined that the dual-power structure should be extended over the long term. Second, according to a resolution made by the Central Committee and by Deng Xiaoping, the leadership system should involve the secretary-general of the CPC also being the president of state and chairman of the Central Military Committee. As Jiang Zemin commented: "This is both necessary and appropriate for such a large party and large country." (Zemin Jiang 2006) In addition, at this stage, significantly younger members began to appear on the Standing Committee. At that time, Hu Jintao was 50 years old—16 years younger than Jiang Zemin—and in the prime of life. Hu Jintao had previously served successively as secretary of the Party Committee and first secretary of the Party Committee of the Military Area in Guizhou Province and Tibet Autonomous Region. The reforms noted above became the basic means by which the National Party Congress achieved continuous improvement, adaptation, and optimization.

In March 1993, the First Meeting of the Eighth NPC and the First Meeting of the Eighth CPPCC made separate elections and resolutions. The following appointments were made: Jiang Zemin as president of state and chairman of the Central Military Committee; Li Peng as premier of the State Council; Zhu Rongji as (executive) vice chairman of the State Council; Qiao Shi as chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC; Liu Huaqing as vice chairman of the Central Military Committee; and Li Ruihuan as chairman of the CPPCC.

The seven members of the Standing Committee represented the six major institutions: the CPC Central Committee; the NPC; the State Council; the CPPCC; the Central Military Committee; and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. Among these positions, the secretary-general of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection also acted concurrently as president of state and chairman of the Central Military Committee, thereby assuring collective presidency with Chinese characteristics.

In September 1997, the First Plenary Session of the Fifteenth Central Committee elected seven members to the Standing Committee: Jiang Zemin, Li Peng, Zhu Rongji, Li Ruihuan, Hu Jintao, Wei Jianxing, and Li Lanqing. Jiang Zemin was appointed chairman of the Central Military Committee and Wei Jianxing as secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection.

In March 1998, the First Meeting of the Ninth NPC and the First Meeting of the Ninth CPPCC made separate elections and resolutions. The following appointments were made: Jiang Zemin as president of state and chairman of the Central Military Committee; Li Peng as chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC; Zhu Rongji as premier of the State Council; Li Lanqing as (executive) vice premier of the

State Council; and Li Ruihuan as chairman of the CPPCC. The seven members of the Political Bureau Standing Committee represented the seven major institutions.

In November 2002, the First Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee elected nine members to the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau: Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, Wen Jiabao, Jia Qinglin, Zeng Qinghong, Huang Ju, Wu Guanzheng, Li Changchun, and Luo Gan. The following appointments were made: Hu Jintao as chairman of the Central Military Committee; Wu Guanzheng as secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; Luo Gan as secretary of the Committee of Political and Legislative Affairs of the Central Committee of the CPC; and Li Changchun was given responsibility for the Propaganda Department of the CPC.

In March 2003, the First Meeting of the Tenth NPC and the First Meeting of the Tenth CPPCC held separate elections and made respective resolutions. The following appointments were made: Hu Jintao as president of state; Wu Bangguo as chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC; Wen Jiabao as premier of the State Council; Huang Ju as (executive) vice premier of the State Council; and Jia Qinglin as chairman of the CPPCC.

In September 2004, the Fourth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CPC agreed that Jiang Zemin should resign as chairman of the Central Military Committee and instead Hu Jintao was appointed to this position. Jiang Zemin thus initiated the whole succession process at the Meeting of the Central Military Committee on September 20. By the time of the Plenary Session to the Sixteenth National Party Congress, the peaceful transition of new top leaders of the party, state, and army had been successfully completed. Jiang Zemin believed that Hu Jintao would be entirely competent as chairman of the Central Military Committee. Hu Jintao was the secretary-general of the party and president of state. It was thus natural for him to also take the office of chairman of the Central Military Committee (Zemin Jiang 2006).

The Standing Committee of the Political Bureau consisted of nine members, who officially represented the eight major institutions: the Central Committee of the CPC; the NPC; the State Council; the CPPCC; the Central Military Committee; the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; the Committee of Political and Legislative Affairs of the Central Committee of the CPC; and the Propaganda Department of the CPC. The only concurrently held posts were those of secretary-general of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, president of state, and chairman of the Central Military Committee. As a result, a complete collective presidency with Chinese characteristics had formed in terms of division of work and synergy.

In October 2007, the First Plenary Session of the Seventeenth Central Committee elected nine members to the Standing Committee: Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, Wen Jiabao, Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun, Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, He Guoqiang, and Zhou Yongkang. Among these individuals, Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang were aged 54 and 52, respectively. Among the members of the Standing Committee, two echelons developed, with the younger members, Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang, acting as the main assistants to Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, respectively. This arrangement was

similar to that with the “young Turks” in the Eighth National Congress of CPC in 1956. The following appointments were made: Hu Jintao as chairman of the Central Military Committee; He Guoqiang as secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection; Zhou Yongkang as secretary of the Committee of Political and Legislative Affairs of the Central Committee of the CPC; and Li Changchun assumed responsibility for the Propaganda Department of the CPC.

In March 2008, the First Meeting of the Eleventh NPC and the First Meeting of the Eleventh CPPCC held separate elections and made respective resolutions. The following appointments were made: Hu Jintao as president of state and chairman of the Central Military Committee; Wu Bangguo as chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC; Wen Jiabao as premier of the State Council; Li Keqiang as (executive) vice premier of the State Council; and Jia Qinglin as chairman of the CPPCC. Nine members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau represented the eight major institutions.

The report on the Sixteenth National Party Congress made the following conclusion about the above system: “The party committee plays the core leading role among the various organizations at the top level. This committee is devoted to significant matters and supports all parties in executing their tasks independently throughout all phases. The party committee also regulates relations among the party committee and the NPC, the government, the CPPCC, and people’s groups under the principle of the party committee assuming overall responsibility and coordinating all parties” (Zemin Jiang 2006).

In this phase (1992–2012), the collective leadership of the party has been fully maintained; the principles of collective leadership have been strictly implemented and consolidated in an ongoing manner. During this period, there have been no errors like those committed by Mao Zedong in his later years, neither have there been any political events like those that occurred during the terms of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. During this period, the collective leadership of the party has been at its most united and most collaborative. It has had the best composition of forces, and accomplished its greatest achievements. The CPC is the most mature and successful political governing body, and it has the most unified level of thought. China is currently enjoying a high point in its history, with a prosperous economy, a stable society, a revitalized culture, and as a major world power.

The key to China is the CPC; the key to the CPC is the Central Committee of the CPC; the key to the Central Committee of the CPC is the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau; the key to the Political Bureau is collective leadership.

Historically, collective presidency with Chinese characteristics is an important innovation with respect to the institutions and mechanisms of the CPC as the ruling party. This unique, perfect ruling party governance structure is also the governance structure of the country, the army, and society. It has been developed over a period of 60 years—especially through the making and correcting of various mistakes that have occurred in over 30 years since China’s reform and opening-up. The number of members of the Standing Committee has increased from an initial five to seven and then to nine. This system is characterized by both collective leadership and division of work duties. The number of areas over which members exercise power has

increased from four to six and then to eight. Finally, the organization of leadership is distinguished by a combination of division of work and cooperation. Integration is achieved through effective supervision and a spirit of mutual collaboration exists among all authorities. This system originated under Mao Zedong (having been his own political creation); it was recovered and underwent reconstruction under Deng Xiaoping; it gradually developed during the term of Jiang Zemin, and it underwent continuous optimization in the time of Hu Jintao. This system is one of the most important political and historical assets that the present generation can pass on to coming generations.

In terms of international comparison, the collective presidency with Chinese characteristics is far superior to the presidency and separation of powers that exists in the United States. The American president is head of state while also acting as the head of government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This represents centralization of power and the president's key role in decision making. The American government is responsible to the president alone instead of being responsible to Congress (the House and the Senate) or the electorate. The American government is therefore under the leadership of the president and is typical of individual presidency. China's collective leadership is different: it does not rest on one individual but on a collective of leaders. In terms of election procedures, this collective leadership depends on two direct and indirect elections at the national level. (1) The National Congress of the CPC first elects the Central Committee, and then the Plenary Session of the Central Committee elects the members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau. (2) The national collective leadership is elected by the NPC according to the terms of the Constitution. The American presidential election simply elects one person who directly organizes the government and directly leads that government. The duties of the American president are performed by two people in China—the president of state and premier of the State Council. In China two separate collective democratic decision-making procedures take place: one is performed by the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau; the other takes place in such forums as the Meeting of the Standing Committee of the NPC, the Standing Meeting of the State Council, and the Meeting of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC.

China's collective leadership also represents a number of different institutions. It is different from the separation of powers that operates in the United States. There, the state is divided into three parts—legislative, executive, and judicial; these parts are instituted by different government branches, and checks and balances are implemented. An arrangement with just three branches of government would be too simple and centralized in the case of such a large country as China. In China, it is necessary for there to be some appropriate centralization of power; however, it is also necessary that some of this power be transferred to lower levels. Thus, the system in China is both highly centralized and also highly democratic, which reflects the enthusiastic character and creative political advantages that this large modern country possesses. In the United States, the president is independent of Congress. The president does not report to Congress, and so Congress is a handicap to the president. Factionalism and interest groups are very active, and they are able to

cause disputes over trifling details, leading to great delays. In some cases, presidents have attempted to introduce certain changes but have not been able to accomplish anything; some decisions have even been delayed for a period of 20 years.²⁵ The situation is very different in China. As the head of government, the premier of the State Council is approved through a poll of all members of the NPC after having been nominated by the president of state; the premier of the State Council is then appointed or removed by the president of state in accordance with the resolution of the NPC. The premier of the State Council represents the State Council and reports to the NPC and its Standing Committee. All resolutions, orders, administrative laws, and regulations issued by the State Council, all proposals to the NPC and its Standing Committee, and the appointment or removal of administrative persons have no legal effect without the signature of the premier of the State Council. Therefore, the relationship that exists between the State Council and the NPC and its Standing Committee is characterized by mutual review and supervision. However, the United States has a system based on the separation of powers and checks and balances. The separation that exists in the U.S. government means that it is impossible for information to be properly shared among different departments, and the checks and balances also hinder political agreement. In such a situation, the decision-making process becomes very protracted; it achieves mediocre results and it is inefficient. China is a socialist country, and so all authorities supervise each other and act as mutual checks; they also cooperate with each other to form a combined force that offers the institutional advantage of socialism—teamwork.

In the next chapter, I make further comparisons between the different decision-making processes in China and the United States. I conclude that the former is superior to the latter.

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²⁵Washington March 23 2012 (China News Service). A legal challenge to U.S. president Barack Obama's health-care reform policy by 13 states, where the Republicans are in the majority, began. The states made the accusation that the health-care reform legislation went against the Constitution and violated the rights of the states. This occurred just seven minutes after the second step in the health-care reform legislation was taken after the House had narrowly voted (219 vs. 212) for the Budget Coordination Act and Barack Obama had officially signed the law in the White House. The Republican-controlled Senate voted to repeal the 2010 Healthcare Law shortly after it was passed in the House and the Senate. President Obama began his health-care reform in 2008 when he was elected president of the United States. Former president Bill Clinton also attempted to introduce health-care reform in 1992.

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