

Incrementalism, Normalisation, Partnership and Reassurance: PRC's Quest for Success in the 1990s

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Abstract

The People's Republic of China's effort to rehabilitate its post-6/4 image and overcome international isolation was not without challenges. Internal problems, regime insecurity, failing socialism, and the fear of anarchy dominated the context in which leadership of the Communist Party of China took decisions. Lack of consensus on the policy towards major powers and institutional rifts complicated the decision-making process. Against this backdrop, Jiang Zemin's astute approach enabled the Republic to recover from the 1989 and 1996 setbacks, assuage vulnerabilities, and overcome challenges to its ascent. Its external policy — encompassing incrementalism, normalisation, partnership and reassurance — helped the leadership defend itself and maintain regional stability. Beijing resolved frontier disputes with neighbours, improved relations with the developed world, opened up its economy, and maintained peaceful, working relations with the United States. The country became part of multilateral regional and global institutions that reflected its interest in working within the global order in the years to come. The decade of prudent, low-profile approach prepared the PRC for a greater, effective role in the Twenty-first Century.

Keywords: Regime Insecurity, Leadership, Communist Party, External Policy.

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