

ABSTRACT
THE REFORMS OF 1978:
REVOLUTION OR CONTINUITY

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In February of 1978, the Central Committee of the CCP published the "Decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Reform of the Economic Structure." In the twelve years since that time, many observers, Chinese and foreign have begun to call this document the start of a revolution in China. This essay rejects that interpretation of the "Decisions."

To accept the idea that a revolution occurred in China in 1978 would require a major reevaluation of modern Chinese history. In that process, one would have to determine whether the PRC government from 1949 to 1978 was part of the post Qing interregnum that includes the warlords and the unsuccessful Nationalist government or not. This essay rejects the need for such a readjustment. This is so because the events in China since 1978 in no way meet even the basic requirements for a revolution.

Revolutions require drastic changes in ideology, personnel, policies, and political systems. There was no significant change in any of these areas since 1978 in China. In fact, this essay documents the continuity of these areas with the era from 1949 to 1978. For example, it notes Deng Xiaoping's refusal to create new ideology to justify his reforms. It dates the existence and influence of the marketeer faction in China that Deng has been associated with to the early 1950s, and also traces the continuity of their policies from then until now. Finally, this essay notes the continued allegiance of all parties concerned to the socialist political system that began in 1949 in the PRC. So, in summary, this essay says that there was no revolution in the PRC in 1978; it maintains that there was only a more successful attempt to carry out the goals of 1949.