The Chinese State

Figures current as of October 2026

How the People's Republic is actually run, as of October 18, 2026: the Party and its organs, Xi and the center, the state, the provinces and the local bargain, the security apparatus, the Party's army, the management of the economy, law and the periphery, society, the foreign-policy machinery, and the questions of 2027. The Fifth Plenum of October 26-29 and the other dates ahead are in Module 14.

MODULE 1 — Foundations: The Party-State

Goal: Define the system and set its vocabulary.

The principle that the Party leads everything; the Party, the state, the army, and the people's organizations as one system with four faces; the Party's membership; the rules by which it rules; the terms, from the core to the campaign.

MODULE 2 — A Brief History

Goal: Trace the system from 1921 to Xi's third term.

The founding and the revolution, Mao's state and its catastrophes, Deng's reform and the settlement of 1989, the Jiang and Hu decades, and Xi's recentralization; how the Party writes its own history.

MODULE 3 — The Party

Goal: Map the organization that rules.

The Congress, the Central Committee, the Politburo and its Standing Committee; the departments that run the Party; the plenums, from the Fourth to the Fifth; the 21st Congress of 2027 and the age norm.

MODULE 4 — Xi and the Center

Goal: Understand the leader and the apparatus around him.

The core leader and his circle; the commissions; Xi Jinping Thought and the line; whether centralization is a remedy or a risk; reading a plenum communiqué, worked.

MODULE 5 — The State

Goal: Follow the government the Party directs.

The National People's Congress and its Standing Committee; the State Council and the ministries; the Consultative Conference; the courts and the Supervisory Commission; the Two Sessions and how a law is made; whether the Congress is a rubber stamp.

MODULE 6 — The Provinces and the Local State

Goal: Understand the bargain between the center and the localities.

The levels from province to village; the promotion tournament and the matrix of lines and blocks; local finance after the land-sales collapse; the financing vehicles and the debt swap; whether local debt is a crisis; a county's budget, worked.

MODULE 7 — The Security State

Goal: Map the apparatus of control.

The Political-Legal Commission, the police, the intelligence service, and the armed police; surveillance and whether its strength is technology or people; the national-security laws; the anti-corruption campaign and its record.

MODULE 8 — The Party's Army

Goal: Read the relationship the purges revealed.

The principle that the Party commands the gun; the reforms of 2015-16 and 2024; the purges from the Rocket Force to Zhang Youxia; whether they weaken the army or tighten the Party's hold; the 2027 goal.

MODULE 9 — Managing the Economy

Goal: See how the Party-state steers the world's second-largest economy.

The Five-Year Plan, the annual target, and the instruments; the economy they face; whether the supply-led model is sustainable; the campaign against 'involution', worked.

MODULE 10 — Law, Rights, and the Periphery

Goal: Understand rule by law and the places where it is hardest.

The constitution, the courts, and the lawyers; Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet, ethnic policy, religion, and the press; Xinjiang and Hong Kong, each argued both ways.

MODULE 11 — Society and the Social Contract

Goal: Read the population the state governs.

Population, births, aging, migrants, pensions, youth unemployment, and inequality; the social contract and whether it is fraying; censorship and what people can say.

MODULE 12 — The Foreign-Policy Machinery

Goal: Follow how China decides abroad.

The commission, the ministry, and the departments; the Belt and Road and the mineral controls; the summits of 2025-26; Taiwan policy; whether China seeks to displace the American-led order.

MODULE 13 — How the System Performs

Goal: Score the Party-state honestly.

The record of execution and of correction; the ratings; the case for and against the system's performance.

MODULE 14 — Where Things Stand, and What to Watch

Goal: Assemble the picture and name the dates.

The argument in one page; five contradictions; the watch list, from the Fifth Plenum and the mineral dates to the 21st Congress of 2027; the last word.

Officeholders, as of October 18, 2026

The Party, state, and military leaders the course names, with their ages on October 18, 2026 and their years in office

The Politburo Standing Committee, in rank order

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
General Secretary of the Communist Party, President, and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC)	Xi Jinping	73	Nov 15, 2012 (13); president since Mar 14, 2013	The Central Committee; as president, the National People's Congress (NPC), unanimously in 2023
Premier	Li Qiang	67	Mar 11, 2023 (3)	The NPC, on Xi's nomination
Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee	Zhao Leji	69	Mar 10, 2023 (3); on the Standing Committee since 2017	The NPC
Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	Wang Huning	71	Mar 10, 2023 (3); on the Standing Committee since 2017	The Conference's national committee
First Secretary of the Secretariat and Director of the General Office	Cai Qi	70	Oct 23, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee
First Vice Premier	Ding Xuexiang	64-65	Mar 12, 2023 (3)	The NPC, on the premier's nomination
Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection	Li Xi	70	Oct 23, 2022 (3)	The commission's plenary session, approved by the Central Committee

The Rest of the Politburo

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
Foreign Minister and Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission	Wang Yi	72 (73 on Oct 19)	Jul 25, 2023 (3) as minister, after Qin Gang's removal; also minister 2013-22	The NPC Standing Committee; the Central Committee
Vice Premier	He Lifeng	71	Mar 12, 2023 (3)	The NPC, on the premier's nomination
First Vice Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee	Li Hongzhong	70	Mar 10, 2023 (3)	The NPC
Head of the Organization Department	Shi Taifeng	70	Apr 2, 2025 (1)	The Central Committee
Party Secretary of Guangdong	Huang Kunming	69	Oct 28, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee
Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission	Chen Wenqing	66	Oct 28, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee
Party Secretary of Tianjin	Chen Min'er	66	Dec 8, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
Party Secretary of Beijing	Yin Li	64	Nov 13, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee
Vice Premier	Liu Guozhong	64	Mar 12, 2023 (3)	The NPC, on the premier's nomination
Party Secretary of Chongqing	Yuan Jiajun	64	Dec 8, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee
Head of the Propaganda Department	Li Shulei	62	Oct 26, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee
Vice Premier	Zhang Guoqing	62	Mar 12, 2023 (3)	The NPC, on the premier's nomination
Party Secretary of Shanghai	Chen Jining	62	Oct 28, 2022 (3)	The Central Committee
Head of the United Front Work Department	Li Ganjie	61	Apr 2, 2025 (1)	The Central Committee

Module 3 lists the seats left empty by expulsions.

The State

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
State Councillor and Minister of Public Security	Wang Xiaohong	69	Jun 24, 2022 (4) as minister; state councillor since Mar 12, 2023	The NPC Standing Committee; the NPC
State Councillor and Secretary-General of the State Council	Wu Zhenglong	61	Mar 12, 2023 (3)	The NPC
State Councillor	Shen Yiqin	66	Mar 12, 2023 (3)	The NPC
Minister of Finance	Lan Fo'an	64	Oct 24, 2023 (2)	The NPC Standing Committee
Governor of the People's Bank of China	Pan Gongsheng	63	Jul 25, 2023 (3)	The NPC Standing Committee
Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission	Zheng Shanjie	64	Mar 12, 2023 (3)	The NPC
Minister of Commerce	Wang Wentao	62	Dec 26, 2020 (5)	The NPC Standing Committee
International Trade Representative	Li Chenggang	59	Apr 16, 2025 (1)	The State Council
Minister of Industry and Information Technology	Li Lecheng	61	Apr 30, 2025 (1)	The NPC Standing Committee
Minister of State Security	Chen Yixin	67	Oct 30, 2022 (3)	The NPC Standing Committee
Minister of National Defense	Adm. Dong Jun	64-65	Dec 29, 2023 (2)	The NPC Standing Committee
Party Secretary of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC)	Cheng Fubo	56	Jun 30, 2026 (3 mo)	The Central Committee
Director of the Cyberspace Administration of China	Zhuang Rongwen	65	Jul 31, 2018 (8)	The Central Committee

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
President of the Supreme People's Court	Zhang Jun	69-70	Mar 11, 2023 (3)	The NPC
Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate	Ying Yong	68	Mar 11, 2023 (3)	The NPC
Director of the National Supervisory Commission	Liu Jinguo	71	Mar 11, 2023 (3)	The NPC

The Party's Departments, the Army, and the Periphery

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
Head of the International Department	Liu Haixing	63	Sep 30, 2025 (1)	The Central Committee
Director of the Central Policy Research Office	Tang Fangyu	63	Jan 2026 (9 mo)	The Central Committee
Head of the Central Social Work Department	Wu Hansheng	63	Jul 8, 2023 (3)	The Central Committee
Vice Chairman of the CMC	Gen. Zhang Shengmin	68	Oct 23, 2025 (11 mo)	The Fourth Plenum (Module 4)
Party Secretary of Xinjiang	Chen Xiaojiang	64	Jul 1, 2025 (1)	The Central Committee
Chief Executive of Hong Kong	John Lee	68	Jul 1, 2022 (4)	Elected unopposed by the Election Committee; appointed by the State Council
Chair of the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's main opposition party	Cheng Li-wun	56	Nov 1, 2025 (11 mo)	Elected by party members

Ages are from published birth dates; where only a birth year or month is published, the age is computed from it or given as a range. Ding Xuexiang's birth year is given as both 1961 and 1962. Years in office are whole years completed.

Who's Who, as of October 18, 2026

The Party and state bodies, places, organizations, and people the course names; the officeholders are in the table before this page

The Party

Name	What it is
The Chinese Communist Party	The ruling party, called 'the Party' in this course
The National Party Congress; the Central Committee	The Party's congress and the body of full and alternate members it elects, which meets in plenums (Module 3)
The Politburo and its Standing Committee	The Party's leadership and its inner circle (Module 3)
The Secretariat; the General Office	The bodies that run the Party's daily business and serve the General Secretary
The Organization, Propaganda, United Front Work, International, and Central Social Work departments	The departments that run the Party (Module 3)
The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection	The Party's discipline and anti-corruption body (Modules 3 and 7)
The Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission	The committee that directs the police, prosecutors, courts, and state security (Module 7)
The central commissions	The Party bodies for the economy, reform, national security, foreign affairs, cyberspace, science, and finance (Module 4)
The Communist Youth League; the women's federation; the trade unions	Among the 'people's organizations' that carry the Party's line to society (Module 1)

The State and the Army

Name	What it is
The National People's Congress and its Standing Committee	The legislature (Module 5)
The State Council	The government, led by the premier (Module 5)
The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	The advisory assembly of the united front (Module 5)
The Supreme People's Court; the Supreme People's Procuratorate	The highest court and the national prosecution service (Modules 5 and 10)
The National Supervisory Commission	The state anti-corruption body (Module 5)
The Ministry of Public Security; the Ministry of State Security; the People's Armed Police	The police, the intelligence service, and the paramilitary force for internal security (Module 7)
The Cyberspace Administration of China	The internet regulator (Modules 4 and 11)
The National Development and Reform Commission; the People's Bank of China; SASAC	The planning ministry, the central bank, and the state's shareholder in the central state enterprises (Module 9)
The National Bureau of Statistics	The official statistics agency
Xinhua	The state news agency
The People's Liberation Army (PLA)	The Party's army, including the Rocket Force, which holds the missiles (Module 8)

Name	What it is
The PLA Daily	The army's newspaper

Places, Peoples, and Taiwan

Name	What it is
Hong Kong; Macau	The special administrative regions governed under 'one country, two systems' (Module 10)
Xinjiang; the Uyghurs	The northwestern autonomous region and its largest people, Turkic-speaking Muslims (Module 10)
The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps	A paramilitary organization that runs farms, towns, and companies in Xinjiang
Tibet; the Dalai Lama	The Tibet Autonomous Region and the Tibetan areas of neighboring provinces; Tenzin Gyatso, the Tibetan Buddhist leader in exile in India (Module 10)
Inner Mongolia	The northern autonomous region (Module 10)
Taiwan	The island Beijing claims, governed as the Republic of China (Module 12)
Jimmy Lai; Apple Daily	The Hong Kong publisher and his newspaper (Module 10)
Zion Church	An unregistered Protestant church in Beijing (Module 10)

International Bodies

Name	What it is
BRICS, a group named for its five members before 2024	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, since joined by others (Module 12)
The Shanghai Cooperation Organization	A security and economic group founded in 2001 by China, Russia, and four Central Asian states (Module 12)
The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; the New Development Bank	Development lenders, the first founded on China's initiative and the second by the BRICS states
The Belt and Road Initiative	China's program of overseas infrastructure finance (Module 12)
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); the Group of 20 (G20)	The Pacific Rim's economic forum and the forum of the largest economies (Module 14)
The World Trade Organization (WTO)	The body that sets the rules of world trade (Module 2)
The International Monetary Fund (IMF); the World Bank	The global lenders whose reviews of China are cited in Modules 6, 9, and 13
The UN human rights office	The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose assessment of Xinjiang is in Module 10

Research Groups, Ratings, and Sources

Name	What it is
The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS); the Heritage Foundation; the Carnegie Endowment	Washington research groups
CNA, an American research group; the Jamestown Foundation; the Asia Society Policy Institute	Research groups that study China's politics and military
MERICS, the Mercator Institute for China Studies	A research institute in Berlin
The Lowy Institute; the Griffith Asia Institute	Australian research groups
NPC Observer; China Law Translate; China Digital Times; the China Media Project	Specialist sites that track China's legislature, laws, and censorship
Freedom House; the V-Dem Institute; Transparency International; Reporters Without Borders (RSF)	The publishers of the ratings in Modules 10 and 13
Human Rights Watch; the Committee to Protect Journalists	Human-rights and press-freedom groups (Module 10)

Analysts and Writers Quoted

Name	Who they are
Kevin Rudd	A former Australian prime minister and author of *On Xi Jinping* (2024)
Minxin Pei	A political scientist at Claremont McKenna College and author of *The Sentinel State* (Module 7)
Christopher Nye; Willy Wo-Lap Lam	Analysts of Chinese politics at the Jamestown Foundation
Neil Thomas	An analyst of Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute
Kerry Brown; Zhuang Deshui	Scholars of Chinese politics at King's College London and Peking University
Richard McGregor; Sebastian Heilmann; Pierre Landry	Authors of studies of the Party, the political system, and the local state
Li Hongbin and Zhou Li-An	Economists who documented the promotion tournament (Module 6)
Michael Pettis; Stephen Roach	Economists at the Carnegie Endowment and Yale (Modules 6 and 9)
Justin Yifu Lin; Yu Yongding; Liu Shijin; Liu Shangxi	Chinese economists at Peking University and in the government's research institutes (Modules 6 and 9)
Tony Saich; Edward Cunningham; Jesse Turiel; Rory Truex; Jerome Cohen	Scholars of the Chinese state at Harvard, Princeton, and New York University (Modules 5 and 11)
Alfred Wu	A scholar of Chinese governance at the National University of Singapore
Joel Wuthnow; Bonny Lin; John Culver	Analysts of the PLA at the National Defense University and CSIS, and a former American intelligence officer
Adrian Zenz	A researcher on Xinjiang whose estimates of detention shaped the debate
Elaine Pearson; Jodie Ginsberg	The Asia director of Human Rights Watch and the head of the Committee to Protect Journalists
David Bandurski; Katja Drinhausen; Ja Ian Chong; Li Fengliang	Observers of Chinese society at the China Media Project, MERICS, the National University of Singapore, and Tsinghua University
Martin Beraja, Andrew Kao, David Yang, and Noam Yuchtman	Economists who studied the effect of facial-recognition AI on unrest
Wendy Chang; Altynay Junusova	Analysts of China's digital controls at MERICS (Module 7)

Name	Who they are
Tian Shichen	A former Chinese defense-ministry official quoted by Reuters (Module 8)
Daniel A. Bell; Dan Wang; Susan Shirk; Yuen Yuen Ang	Authors of the competing assessments in Module 13
Rush Doshi; Jessica Chen Weiss	Former American officials and scholars of China's foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations and Johns Hopkins University
Christoph Nedopil	The economist at the Griffith Asia Institute who tracks Belt and Road deals
Yang Jisheng; Frank Dikötter	Historians of the Great Leap famine (Module 2)

Module 1 — Foundations

The Party-State

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (2010)

Reference: The Party Constitution (amended October 2022) and the State Constitution (amended March 2018)

1a. The Party Leads Everything

The People's Republic of China is governed by the Chinese Communist Party, and the rest of this course describes how. The Party's own formula is 'Party, government, military, civilian, and academic; east, west, south, north, and center: the Party leads everything.' Mao used it, the Deng era set it aside in favor of separating Party and state, and in 2017 it was written into the Party Constitution under Xi Jinping.

In practice the formula means four things. The state's institutions, from the National People's Congress and the State Council to the courts and the provinces, are the Party's instruments, staffed by its members and directed by its committees. The army belongs to the Party (Module 8), and every company, university, and neighborhood of any size has a Party committee inside it. The Party's own organs sit above the state's and answer to the Party's rules rather than to the courts.

The system therefore has four faces: the Party that decides, the state that administers, the army that guarantees, and the 'people's organizations' that transmit, among them the trade unions, the Communist Youth League, the women's federation, and the bodies of the united front. The first commands the other three, and a reader who keeps that in mind can follow what happens in Beijing.

1b. The Party in Numbers

The Party had 101.3 million members at the end of 2025, about 7% of the population, organized in 5.43 million grassroots organizations, 1.69 million of them inside companies. It admitted 2.09 million new members in 2025, about one for every ten applicants on its books. Workers and farmers make up a third of the membership and women just under a third, while 59% of members have a college education. The pyramid that rules them is the subject of Module 3.

1c. How the Party Rules

- **Democratic centralism.** The Leninist rule that decisions are debated and then binding: the minority obeys the majority, the lower level the higher, the whole Party the Central Committee, and, in the formula of the Xi era, the Central Committee its core.
- **The nomenklatura.** The Organization Department controls appointments: it names every official of consequence, from county bureau chiefs to bank chairmen, directly at the top and through its provincial departments below, and the Party's rules for choosing cadres put 'political standards' first.
- **Parallel structures.** The Party committee or 'leading Party members' group' inside each body (1a) has a secretary who outranks its head: a provincial governor answers to the provincial Party secretary, and a university president to the university's.

• **The campaign.** The Party's way of moving the whole system at once: a slogan from the center, such as 'common prosperity' or 'anti-involution', becomes documents, meetings, targets, inspections, and punishments within months. Module 9's worked example follows one.

• **Discipline.** The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection investigates members outside the courts, through a detention system called liuzhi; its numbers are in Module 7.

• **The line.** The Party's stated position on each question, set by the center and enforced by propaganda and discipline. Departing from it is treated as an error rather than a disagreement, so policy debate happens inside the system or not at all.

1d. The Vocabulary

Term	Meaning	Where it appears
The core (hexin)	The leader to whom the Party's obedience is owed: Mao, Deng, Jiang, and, since October 2016, Xi	Every communiqué's 'the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core'
The Two Establishes and the Two Safeguards	Establishing Xi as the core and his Thought as the guide, and safeguarding his core status and the Central Committee's authority	The loyalty formulas since 2018 and 2021; a test of every cadre's speech
Xi Jinping Thought	'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era', the Party's guiding ideology, beside Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory	The Party and state constitutions; every school and office
Cadre (ganbu)	An official of the Party or the state, appointed through the nomenklatura	Modules 3 and 6
Plenum	A full meeting of the Central Committee that sets the line on a subject	Module 3, and Module 4's worked example
The Two Sessions (lianghui)	The annual meetings of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	Module 5
Tiao and kuai	The vertical lines of the ministries against the horizontal blocks of the localities, the matrix every official sits in	Module 6
Common prosperity; new quality productive forces; high-quality development; involution	The economic slogans of 2017-26, each a campaign	Modules 4, 9, and 11
Wolf warrior; community of common destiny; the Global South	The vocabulary of foreign policy	Module 12

Module 1 Key Points

Foundations

• The Party leads everything: it decides, the state administers, the army guarantees, and the people's organizations transmit.

• The Party had 101.3 million members at the end of 2025, about 7% of the population, in 5.43 million grassroots organizations.

• Democratic centralism, the nomenklatura, and a Party committee inside every state body are the rules by which the Party rules.

• The campaign moves the whole system on a slogan; the line makes departing from policy an error rather than a disagreement.

• The vocabulary, from 'the core' to 'involution', is the code the rest of the course reads.

Module 1 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What does 'the Party leads everything' mean in practice?

A) The Party and the state are separate, as Deng's reforms intended
B) The army answers to the state constitution rather than to the Party
C) Companies and universities stand outside the Party's committees and control
D) The state's institutions are the Party's instruments, staffed by its members and directed by its committees

2. Roughly how many members does the Party have?

A) About 100 million, 7% of the population
B) About 10 million
C) About 1 million, a closed elite
D) About 500 million, a third of the population

3. Who outranks whom in a province?

A) The governor outranks the Party secretary, who advises
B) The Party secretary outranks the governor
C) They are equals who vote together on decisions
D) The provincial court president outranks both of them

4. What is a campaign, in the Party's method?

A) A national election held every five years
B) A military exercise around Taiwan announced each spring by the Rocket Force command
C) A central slogan turned into documents, targets, inspections, and punishments
D) A televised trial of a corrupt official, broadcast nationwide as a warning to the public

5. What is the nomenklatura?

A) The list of banned books and websites
B) The system of elections for provincial governors and county heads
C) The Party's control of every appointment of consequence
D) The Party's foreign-language propaganda and its media outlets abroad

Module 2 — A Brief History

From 1921 to the Third Term

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine* (2010); Ezra Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (2011)

Reference: The Party's three historical resolutions (1945, 1981, and November 2021), the last its official account of its first century

Period	What happened	What it left the system
1921-49: the revolution	Founded in Shanghai in July 1921 by 13 delegates representing about 50 members; the Long March of 1934-35; victory in the civil war in 1949	Leninist organization, an army that belonged to the Party, and a founding story of struggle
1949-57: the new state	Land reform, with killings commonly estimated at one to two million, and by some at far more; the Soviet model and the first Five-Year Plan (1953); the Hundred Flowers and the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957	The planned economy, the work unit, and the lesson that criticism, once invited, is punished
1958-62: the Great Leap Forward	Mao's communes and backyard furnaces; a famine whose dead are estimated at about 30 million by demographers and up to 45 million by Frank Dikötter	A catastrophe that discredited Mao's economics but not his rule; the household registration (hukou) of 1958, which tied peasants to the land
1966-76: the Cultural Revolution	Mao's assault on his own Party through the Red Guards; the army's restoration of order; Mao's death in September 1976 and the arrest of the Gang of Four	A generation's trauma, and a Party that resolved never again to give one man that power
1978-89: reform and opening	Deng Xiaoping's return; the household responsibility system; the special economic zones and the one-child policy (both 1980); the crackdown in and around Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989	Markets under Party rule, and the settlement of 1989 (2a)
1992-2002: Jiang Zemin	Deng's Southern Tour (1992); entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001; the state enterprises restructured, with tens of millions laid off; private entrepreneurs admitted to the Party	The growth machine, collective leadership, and term limits observed
2002-12: Hu Jintao	Growth averaging about 10% a year; a stimulus of 4 trillion yuan in 2008; the Beijing Olympics; corruption and factions, and what some critics called a lost decade for reform	Wealth, and the case for Xi's revision (2a)
2012-17: Xi's first term	The anti-corruption campaign that brought down Zhou Yongkang, the former security chief; the military reform (Module 8); the artificial islands in the South China Sea; the Belt and Road (Module 12)	Recentralization: Xi named the Party's 'core' (Modules 1 and 4)
2017-22: the second term	Xi's Thought written into the Party Constitution (October 2017); the presidential term limit abolished (March 2018); the camps in Xinjiang; Hong Kong's national-security law (Module 10); zero-COVID and its sudden abandonment (Module 11)	Power concentrated in the General Secretary (Module 4), security laws in the periphery (Module 10), and a Standing Committee of Xi's associates (Module 3)
2022-26: the third term	The property collapse; the purges of the Rocket Force and the Central Military Commission (Module 8); the expulsions of He Weidong, Ma Xingrui, and Zhang Youxia from the Politburo (Module 3); the export surge and the trade war; the Fourth Plenum and the 15th Five-Year Plan (Modules 4 and 9)	A leader without rivals or a designated successor (Module 4), and a slowing economy (Module 9)

2a. Three Settlements

The Party's history can be read as three settlements, each a bargain between the Party and the society it rules. Mao's settlement (1949-76) was revolution: the Party remade society by force, through land reform, collectivization, and the campaigns, at the price of the famine, the Cultural Revolution, tens of millions dead, and a Party that nearly destroyed itself.

Deng's settlement (1978-2012) is the one the Party still lives on: the Party would deliver growth and order, and the people would accept its rule and stay out of politics. Deng added rules meant to make one-man rule unlikely: collective leadership, retirement ages, term limits, and a partial separation of Party and state. Tiananmen fixed the terms, growth without political reform, and the next two decades brought one of the fastest sustained expansions on record.

Xi's settlement, since 2012, revises Deng's. In the Party's own account, the Deng-era system had let corruption hollow the Party, factions divide it, the state escape it, and Western ideas infect it. The revision put the Party back over the state, the core over the collective, and security beside growth, and it removed the presidential term limit that had made Deng's settlement safe. Whether the result is a new settlement or one man's reign is the question Module 4 takes up.

2b. How the Party Tells Its History

The Party writes its own history in resolutions, each marking a leader's authority, and the first, in 1945, confirmed Mao's leadership. The second, in 1981, judged Mao's errors, above all the Cultural Revolution, while keeping his thought as the Party's guide, a verdict popularly summed up as seventy percent right and thirty percent wrong. The third, adopted in November 2021, credits Xi with solving problems that had long gone unresolved and places him beside Mao and Deng.

The official account treats the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution as errors the Party corrected itself, and the Tiananmen protests as a disturbance it was right to suppress. Historians working from the archives, Chinese among them, tell those years at greater length: Yang Jisheng's *Tombstone* (2008), an account of the famine by a former Xinhua reporter, was published in Hong Kong and is banned on the mainland. The gap between the two histories is itself a feature of the system, which treats its past as a matter of the line.

Module 2 Key Points

A Brief History

• The Party has ruled since 1949 through three settlements: Mao's revolution, Deng's growth for order, and Xi's recentralization.

• The famine of 1958-62 killed an estimated 30-45 million; the Cultural Revolution taught the Party to fear one man's rule.

• Deng's settlement, sealed at Tiananmen in 1989, traded growth and order for acceptance of Party rule, with collective leadership and term limits.

• Xi's revision put the Party back over the state and, in March 2018, abolished the presidential term limit.

• The Party's third historical resolution, of November 2021, placed Xi beside Mao and Deng in its official account.

Module 2 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What was Deng's settlement, as sealed in 1989?

A) A one-party state run by a single leader for life, with a named successor
B) Free elections for county congresses in exchange for an end to protest
C) A return to the planned economy under the State Council
D) Growth and order in exchange for acceptance of Party rule, with collective leadership and term limits

2. How many died in the famine of 1958-62, on the range of estimates the module gives?

A) About 3-4 million, mostly in Sichuan
B) About 30-45 million
C) About 300,000, in the worst-hit provinces
D) About 100 million, a sixth of the population

3. What did the March 2018 constitutional amendment do?

A) Abolished the two-term limit on the state presidency
B) Created a Party chairman's post
C) Set a retirement age of 68 for state leaders
D) Limited the General Secretary to two five-year terms in the Party

4. What does the Party's third historical resolution, of November 2021, do?

A) Rehabilitates the students of 1989 and opens the archives
B) Condemns Mao's rule as a mistake from 1949 onward
C) Places Xi beside Mao and Deng and credits him with solving long-unresolved problems
D) Confirms Mao's leadership after the Long March

5. What did the 1981 resolution conclude about Mao?

A) That his errors were real but his thought remained the guide
B) That he was a criminal
C) That the Cultural Revolution was a success betrayed by his successors
D) That his rule should be judged only after the Party's centenary in 2021

Module 3 — The Party

The Organization That Rules

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Richard McGregor, *The Party* (2010), chapters 1-3, on the Organization Department

Reference: The Party Constitution (amended October 2022); the Organization Department's statistical communiqué (June 30, 2026)

3a. The Pyramid

Body	Size	Meets	What it does	Who is in it (October 2026)
The National Party Congress	About 2,300 delegates	Every five years; the 21st is expected in October or November 2027, on a date not yet announced	Approves the line, amends the Party Constitution, and elects the Central Committee, all decided in advance	Delegates chosen by provincial, central, and military Party organizations
The Central Committee	205 full members and 171 alternates elected in October 2022	In plenums, at least once a year (3c)	Elects the Politburo and the General Secretary and approves the major documents, from the Five-Year Plan's proposals to the reform decisions	Provincial secretaries, ministers, generals, and the heads of state enterprises. At least 21 of the 376 elected in 2022 have been expelled or removed, and alternates fill full members' seats at the plenums
The Politburo	24 elected in 2022; 21 sitting after three expulsions	About monthly, often with a 'collective study session' on a theme	The leadership; each member holds a portfolio, such as a province, a commission, or a department	The Standing Committee; the secretaries of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Chongqing, and Tianjin; the heads of the Organization, Propaganda, and United Front departments and the Political-Legal Commission; Wang Yi; three vice premiers; and the first vice chairman of the legislature. No serving officer has sat on it since Zhang Youxia's expulsion
The Politburo Standing Committee	7	Weekly, by custom	The apex: in principle the collective that decides, and since 2017, in the account of critics such as Minxin Pei (Module 4), the body that carries out what Xi decides	Xi Jinping, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, and Li Xi, unchanged in this term
The General Secretary	1	—	Chairs the Politburo and the Standing Committee, and holds the chairmanships of the Central Military Commission and most of the Party's commissions (Module 4)	Xi Jinping

The Party Constitution; the communiqués of the plenums; the Central Committee's 2022 election results; Caixin (July 14, 2026) and the South China Morning Post (September 21, 2026) on the expulsions.

The empty Politburo seats belonged to He Weidong and Zhang Youxia, a vice chairman and the first vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (Module 8), and to Ma Xingrui, the former Xinjiang secretary whose expulsion was announced on July 14, 2026. Only a plenum can replace them.

3b. The Departments That Run the Party

Organ	Head (October 2026)	Function	Why it matters
The General Office	Cai Qi (Standing Committee)	Xi's secretariat: documents, schedules, security, and the flow of information to the leader	The leader's chief of staff; by custom it also runs the office of the National Security Commission
The Organization Department	Shi Taifeng	Appoints, evaluates, and promotes every cadre of consequence and keeps the personnel files	The nomenklatura's engine and the referee of Module 6's tournament. Shi and Li Ganjie swapped posts in 2025, a first for two Politburo members
The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection	Li Xi (Standing Committee)	Investigates and punishes members (Module 1), and shares its offices with the state's Supervisory Commission (Module 5)	The Party's police; Module 7 has its record
The Propaganda Department	Li Shulei	Directs the media, publishing, film, the internet's content, and the teaching of the line	Module 11's censorship
The United Front Work Department	Li Ganjie	Manages the world outside the Party: the eight minor parties, private business, religion, ethnic minorities, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and the Chinese abroad	The Party's reach beyond its members, at home and abroad (Modules 10 and 12)
The International Department	Liu Haixing	Relations with foreign political parties	The Party's own foreign ministry (Module 12). His predecessor, Liu Jianchao, was reportedly detained
The Political-Legal Commission	Chen Wenqing	Directs the security and legal organs	The security state's committee (Module 7)
The Policy Research Office	Tang Fangyu	Drafts the leader's speeches and the major documents	Where the slogans are written
The Social Work Department	Wu Hansheng	Created in 2023 for petitions, neighborhoods, nonprofits, and Party branches in private firms and among gig workers	The Party's newest reach into society

Xinhua; Caixin (January 15, 2026); Radio France Internationale (September 30, 2025); the South China Morning Post (April 2, 2025).

3c. The Plenums and the Congress

A Central Committee's term, from one Congress to the next, runs through seven plenums, each with its customary subject. The first elected the leadership in October 2022, the second proposed the state's officers for the National People's Congress in February 2023, and the third adopted a reform decision in July 2024, with more than 300 measures to be completed by 2029. The fourth adopted the proposals for the 15th Five-Year Plan, and its communiqué is Module 4's worked example.

The fifth meets in Beijing on October 26-29, 2026, to consider a draft decision on 'strengthening full and rigorous Party self-governance'. It is expected to ratify the expulsions of Ma Xingrui, Zhang Youxia, and Liu Zhenli, and it could fill the empty seats on the Politburo and the Central Military Commission, though nothing has been announced. Further plenums are expected in 2027, the last of them customarily preparing the Congress.

At the 21st Congress a new Central Committee will elect the Politburo, the Standing Committee, the General Secretary, and the Central Military Commission. By the convention known as 'seven up, eight down', leaders aged 67 at a Congress may stay or rise, and those aged 68 retire. Xi broke it for himself in 2022 at 69, and Willy Wo-Lap Lam of the Jamestown Foundation notes that it has not bound the wider Politburo, where Wang Yi stayed on at 69. Applied in 2027, it would retire ten of the twenty sitting members other than Xi, among them every Standing Committee member except Ding Xuexiang.

The 2022 Congress filled the Standing Committee with Xi's associates (Module 4). In its closing session Hu Jintao, Xi's predecessor, was led from the hall in front of the cameras, an exit that Xinhua, the state news agency, attributed to ill health.

Module 3 Key Points

The Party

• The Party is a pyramid: a Congress every five years, a 205-member Central Committee, a Politburo of 21 sitting members, and a seven-member Standing Committee.

• Three Politburo members chosen in 2022 have been expelled, and no serving military officer now sits on it.

• The departments run the Party: the General Office serves Xi, the Organization Department appoints cadres, and the Discipline Commission polices them.

• The Fifth Plenum meets on October 26-29, 2026, on Party self-governance; only a plenum can fill the Politburo's empty seats.

• Under the 'seven up, eight down' age norm, ten of the twenty members other than Xi would retire at the 2027 Congress.

Module 3 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. How many members sit on the Politburo in October 2026?

A) 24, the number elected in 2022
B) 21, after three expulsions
C) 25, the size of the previous Politburo
D) 24, because alternates of the Central Committee fill any vacancy at once

2. Who runs the Organization Department, which appoints the Party's cadres?

A) Li Ganjie, who has run it since 2023
B) Cai Qi, as director of the General Office
C) Chen Wenqing, whose Political-Legal Commission also directs the courts and police
D) Shi Taifeng, a Politburo member, since April 2025

3. What is the Fifth Plenum of October 26-29, 2026, to consider?

A) Party self-governance
B) A new state constitution
C) The 16th Five-Year Plan
D) Xi's successor as General Secretary

4. What does the convention known as 'seven up, eight down' mean?

A) The Standing Committee has seven members and the Secretariat eight
B) Members may serve seven years before a review
C) No more than eight provincial secretaries sit on the Politburo
D) Leaders aged 67 at a Congress may stay or rise, and those aged 68 retire

5. Why does a plenum matter for the Politburo's empty seats?

A) Xi appoints new members by decree.
B) Only a plenum can add Politburo members.
C) The National People's Congress fills them each March.
D) The seats pass automatically to the alternates with the most votes.

Module 4 — Xi and the Center

The Leader and the Apparatus Around Him

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Kevin Rudd, *On Xi Jinping: How Xi's Marxist Nationalism Is Shaping China and the World* (2024)

Reference: The communiqué of the Fourth Plenum of the 20th Central Committee (October 23, 2025), the text of the worked example

4a. The Core

Xi Jinping holds the Party's, the state's, and the army's top posts, listed in the officeholders table, with no fixed end: the Party sets no term limit for its General Secretary, the presidency's limit was removed in 2018 (Module 5), and the military post never had one. His authority rests on four things: the anti-corruption campaign (Modules 2 and 7); the commissions he chairs (4b); the ideology that bears his name (4c); and the loyalty formulas of Module 1.

A fifth is his biography. He is the son of Xi Zhongxun, a revolutionary purged by Mao, and he was sent to the countryside at 15 during the Cultural Revolution, then spent a quarter century in county and provincial posts in Hebei, Fujian, Zhejiang, and Shanghai before reaching the Standing Committee in 2007. He works through a small circle of men who served with him on the way up: Cai Qi in the General Office, Ding Xuexiang, his former chief of staff, Li Qiang from Zhejiang, and He Lifeng from Fujian, with Wang Yi on the world and Chen Wenqing on security.

4b. The Commissions

The commissions are the means by which decisions moved from the State Council into the Party center after 2013. Most are chaired by Xi, their offices draft the policies that the ministries then carry out, and their membership is rarely published in full.

Commission (Party)	Head	Deputies or office director	What it decides
Financial and Economic Affairs	Xi	Li Qiang, deputy; He Lifeng, office director since October 2023	Economic policy: the plan, the targets, the campaigns, and the response to the property collapse. Module 9's worked example passes through here
Comprehensively Deepening Reform	Xi	Li Qiang, Wang Huning, and Cai Qi, deputies	The reform agenda, including the Third Plenum's measures
National Security	Xi	Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, and Cai Qi, deputies	'Comprehensive national security' (Module 7)
Foreign Affairs	Xi	Li Qiang, deputy; Wang Yi, office director since January 2023	Foreign policy (Module 12); the Foreign Ministry carries out what it decides
Cyberspace Affairs	Xi from 2014; reportedly Cai Qi since 2023, though Beijing has not announced it	The Cyberspace Administration of China is its office	The internet, data, and online content (Module 11)

Commission (Party)	Head	Deputies or office director	What it decides
Central Military Commission	Xi	Zhang Shengmin, vice chairman	Everything military (Module 8)
Science and Technology	Ding Xuexiang, reported as its head in June 2024	The Ministry of Science and Technology is its office	The technology drive in chips, AI, and 'new quality productive forces'
Financial	Li Qiang, since 2023	He Lifeng, office director	Financial regulation and risk, including the banks and the local debt of Module 6

Xinhua (May 30, 2023); Reuters (October 30 and November 6, 2023); the South China Morning Post (November 22, 2023, and March 28, 2024); Bloomberg (June 2024); the Fourth Plenum's communiqué (October 23, 2025).

4c. Xi Jinping Thought and the Line

The Thought, read plainly, is a program. It sets the Party's leadership over everything, national rejuvenation by 2049, and 'comprehensive national security', and in economics 'high-quality development' and, since 2023, 'new quality productive forces', meaning technology-led growth that can escape both the middle-income trap and American export controls. It adds 'common prosperity' (Module 11), a 'community of common destiny' abroad, and self-reliance in food, energy, and technology.

Kevin Rudd, a former Australian prime minister who wrote his doctorate on Xi's ideology, reads it as a move to the left in politics, putting the Party over the state and society, and to the left in economics, putting the state over the market and security over growth. It is also a move to the right in nationalism, toward assertion abroad and a Han-centered order at home, which together make a Marxist nationalism that is neither Mao's nor Deng's. In practice the Thought is enforced as the line (Module 1).

4d. Is Xi's Centralization a Remedy or a Risk?

Those who call it a remedy start from the system Xi inherited, in which collective leadership had let factions form, corruption reach the Politburo, and policy drift. The Fourth Plenum's communiqué called 'full and rigorous Party self-governance' 'the fundamental underpinning for all our efforts', and the discipline commission promised in January 2026 to 'eradicate the breeding ground and conditions for corruption'. Zhuang Deshui of Peking University said in January 2026 that the investigation of major cases showed that 'anti-corruption is advancing in depth', and Kerry Brown of King's College London, quoted in July 2026, reads the purges as 'an attempt to rebuild the Communist Party as a pure and coherent ideological instrument'.

Those who call it a risk argue that it has removed the checks that let the system correct itself and survive its leaders. Minxin Pei of Claremont McKenna College, quoted in July 2026, says that 'Xi dismantled the system of collective leadership that protected China for three decades'. Christopher Nye of the Jamestown Foundation wrote in the *Journal of Democracy* in March 2026 that 'by systematically purging all capable and prestigious potential heirs, Xi is engineering a monumental succession crisis', and that officials now 'prioritize self-preservation over sound policy'. Neil Thomas of the Asia Society Policy Institute noted in October 2025 that 'it's incredibly difficult to signal a successor without undermining his own power'.

The evidence is common ground in its facts and divided in its meaning. Both sides accept that Xi is unchallenged, that the purges reach the top, and that no successor exists. For the first case, the discipline figures of Module 7 are at record levels, the 15th Plan was adopted on schedule, and no faction has challenged the center in public. For the second, the Politburo members expelled in this term (Module 3)

were all Xi's own appointees, the army's high command has been purged (Module 8), and the reversals of policy on COVID and on property came late (Modules 9 and 11). Xi will be 74 at the 2027 Congress and 79 at the one after it. **The course's reading:** centralization has delivered the control its defenders claim, and paid for it with the weaknesses its critics name, slower correction and a succession that cannot be discussed, because the remedy and the risk are the same act.

Worked example — Reading a Plenum Communiqué

The Fourth Plenum of the 20th Central Committee met from October 20 to 23, 2025, and its communiqué can be read the way the system's insiders read it. The opening asks the Party to grasp 'the decisive significance of establishing Comrade Xi Jinping's core position' and 'the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought', and the close calls on it to 'rally more closely around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core'. Those are loyalty checks: their presence is routine, and their absence would be a political earthquake. The attendance line counts 168 full members and 147 alternates, so 37 full members and 24 alternates were missing. The four plenums of this Central Committee had 5, 3, 12, and then 61 absences, the lowest attendance at any plenum since Xi took power, by the count of CNA, an American research group. A later sentence explains much of the gap: the plenum confirmed the Politburo's expulsion of 14 members, among them He Weidong, Miao Hua, and other senior officers (Module 8), and promoted 11 alternates, which Reuters called the largest turnover at one meeting since 2017. It also made Zhang Shengmin a vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, and it said that 'the Party exercises absolute leadership over the people's armed forces', a formula that, beside the generals' expulsions, reads as a statement about the army's loyalty. The plan's objectives open with 'high-quality development' and 'scientific and technological self-reliance', which tells a reader that technology and supply come first. What is absent matters as much: no change on the Standing Committee, no growth number, and no sign of a successor. The Fifth Plenum's communiqué (Module 3) can be read the same way.

Module 4 Key Points

Xi and the Center

• Xi holds the Party, state, and military posts with no fixed end, and governs through a small circle and the Party's commissions.

• The commissions, most chaired by Xi, moved economic, security, foreign, and reform decisions from the State Council into the Party center.

• Kevin Rudd reads Xi Thought as Marxist nationalism: left in politics and economics, right in nationalism.

• Defenders call centralization a cure for corruption and drift; critics such as Pei and Nye see a succession crisis in the making.

• Read by its formulas, the Fourth Plenum's communiqué showed an unchallenged leader, a technology-first plan, a purged army, and no successor.

Module 4 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. Why does no term limit constrain Xi?

A) The National People's Congress extended his terms to 2032.
B) He holds the posts in an acting capacity only.
C) The Party sets none, the state's limit was abolished in 2018, and the military post never had one.
D) The Party Constitution limits the General Secretary to two terms, but a plenum waived the limit for him in 2022.

2. Who heads the Central Financial Commission created in 2023?

A) Xi, as he heads most commissions.
B) He Lifeng, the vice premier who directs its office.
C) Ding Xuexiang, who also leads the Central Science and Technology Commission.
D) Li Qiang, the premier.

3. Which Party commission does Ding Xuexiang lead?

A) Science and Technology
B) Cyberspace
C) Financial and Economic Affairs
D) Comprehensively Deepening Reform

4. What did the Fourth Plenum's attendance line reveal?

A) Full attendance, as at every plenum
B) That Xi himself was absent
C) The lowest attendance at any plenum since 2012, with 61 absent
D) That the alternates had been dissolved and their seats left vacant until the 21st Congress in 2027

5. What is the course's reading of Xi's centralization?

A) It has restored collective leadership at the top.
B) It has delivered the control its defenders claim, at the price of slower correction and a succession that cannot be discussed.
C) It has weakened Xi, who now shares power with the premier.
D) It is temporary, and the 2027 Congress is expected to reverse it.

Module 5 — The State

The Government the Party Directs

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Sebastian Heilmann, ed., *China's Political System* (2017), part II, on the state apparatus

Reference: The State Constitution (amended 2018); the Legislation Law (amended 2023); the Organic Law of the State Council (revised 2024)

5a. The Bodies

Body	Size and calendar	What it does	What it is in practice
The National People's Congress	2,977 deputies elected in 2023, 2,878 on the roll in March 2026 after removals; meets for a week to ten days (5c)	The constitution's 'highest organ of state power': amends the constitution, passes basic laws, approves the plan and the budget, elects the president, the head of the Supreme People's Court, and the procurator-general, and appoints the premier on the president's nomination	It has never voted down an item on its agenda since it first met in 1954
Its Standing Committee	175 members at the start of the term; meets for a few days near the end of every even-numbered month	Passes most laws, interprets the constitution and the laws, including Hong Kong's Basic Law, and appoints ministers between sessions	Its role is weighed in 5d. One bill, a Highway Law amendment of 1999 or 2000, has failed there, and four others were shelved
The President	One, elected for five years; the two-term limit was removed by 2,958 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions (Module 2)	Head of state: promulgates laws, receives envoys, and nominates the premier	The office that gives the General Secretary a state title for the world
The State Council	The premier, four vice premiers, three state councillors, and 26 ministries and commissions	The government: the budget, the ministries, the provinces' administration, and the day-to-day running of the economy	Bound since 2024 by its Organic Law to 'resolutely implement the Party Central Committee's decisions and plans'. Alfred Wu of the National University of Singapore called its 2023 work rules 'a clear pyramid with the party on top'
The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	About 2,170 members; meets alongside the Congress (5c)	'Consultation': the united front's assembly of the minor parties, business, religion, minorities, Hong Kong, and Macau	Advisory; the body through which the non-Party elite is included
The courts and the procuratorate	The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, each heading a national hierarchy	Adjudication and prosecution	Directed by the Party's Political-Legal Commission (Module 7); acquittals are rare (Module 10)
The National Supervisory Commission	Shares its offices with the Party's discipline commission, but has its own director, Liu Jinguo, one of that commission's deputy secretaries	Investigates everyone on the public payroll, Party members or not, and holds suspects in liuzhi	The state face of the discipline commission, created in 2018 to bring the whole public payroll under Party discipline

NPC Observer (FAQ, July 2025, and March 16, 2026); Xinhua (March 12, 2026); the Organic Law of the State Council (March 11, 2024); the South China Morning Post (March 2023).

5b. The Ministries That Matter

Ministry or body	Role	Note (October 2026)
National Defense	Represents the army to foreign governments and the public	Its minister, unlike his recent predecessors, does not sit on the Central Military Commission, and he is not on the Politburo
Finance	The budget, the bonds, and the debt swap (Module 6)	—
The People's Bank of China	Monetary policy and the currency (Module 9)	Not independent: a ministry-level body under the State Council and the Party's Financial Commission; a revision of its law was pending in 2026
The National Development and Reform Commission	The planning ministry: the Five-Year Plan, project approvals, and prices	A National Development Planning Law, passed at the Two Sessions (5c), put the planning system into statute
Commerce	Trade, investment, and export controls on minerals and technology	Its negotiators work under He Lifeng (Module 12)
Industry and Information Technology	Industrial policy: chips, electric vehicles, and the anti-involution campaign (Module 9)	—
Public Security and State Security	The police and the intelligence service (Module 7)	—

NPC Observer; Xinhua; Reuters (September 23, 2026).

5c. The Two Sessions and How a Law Is Made

Each March the Congress and the Consultative Conference meet in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, the 'Two Sessions'. In 2026 the Conference opened on March 4 and the Congress sat from March 5 to 12, when it approved the premier's Government Work Report, whose targets are in Module 9, the budget, the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan, and three laws, among them the Ethnic Unity Law (Module 10). The votes were near-unanimous: 2,759 to 1 for the work report and 2,758 to 1 for the plan, with 2 abstentions on each.

A law takes a longer path. An idea from the center, such as a commission decision or a leader's instruction, becomes a drafting task for a ministry, the State Council, or the Congress's own committees, and the draft circulates among the ministries and provinces. The Legislation Law now requires each draft to be published for at least 30 days of public comment unless the Standing Committee's leaders decide otherwise, and the committee received 364,000 comments in 2025. It normally reads a bill three times and amends it between readings: NPC Observer, a specialist tracker of the legislature, notes that the 2016 law on foreign nonprofits was 'markedly toned down compared to earlier drafts'. In 2025 the committee adopted 6 new laws and 14 revisions, among them a law promoting the private economy and a tougher Cybersecurity Law.

5d. Is the Congress a Rubber Stamp or a Working Legislature?

Those who call it a rubber stamp include Tony Saich of the Harvard Kennedy School, who wrote in 2015 that major decisions are made by the Party and that 'to a large extent it remains a rubber stamp organization'. NPC Observer judges it 'fair to characterize the full NPC as a rubber stamp, because it has

never voted down any item on its agenda'. Jerome Cohen of New York University wrote in 2017 that under Xi 'the Party has brought the Legislature to heel'. The Standing Committee's own report of March 2026 lists 'upholding the Party Central Committee's centralized, unified leadership over legislative work' among its principles.

Those who see a working legislature include Rory Truex of Princeton, who called the label 'overly simplistic' in 2015 because 'any law that goes to the NPC has actually gone through several rounds of internal debate', and NPC Observer itself, which finds the Standing Committee 'less of a rubber stamp'. Saich adds that the Standing Committee is 'actively engaged in law-making', and Beijing, in the Standing Committee's March 2026 report, says the system 'practiced whole-process people's democracy'. Song Rui, a deputy secretary-general of the Standing Committee, cited in 2025 the 54 local legislative outreach offices and 1.19 million suggestions received since 2021.

The evidence divides along the institution's two halves. In the full Congress, dissent has shrunk, from more than 600 votes against the Supreme People's Court's report in 2013 to 44 in 2026, and its membership is policed by Party discipline: the Standing Committee removed deputies at sessions in February and August 2026. The Standing Committee, by contrast, publishes drafts, reads them in stages, and changes them. **The course's reading:** the Congress ratifies, while its Standing Committee is a careful technocracy that drafts, consults, and amends within limits the Party sets, without the possibility of failure or an opposition.

Module 5 Key Points

The State

• The National People's Congress has never voted down an item on its agenda; its Standing Committee does most of the legislating.

• Since 2024 the State Council's Organic Law binds it to 'resolutely implement' the Party Central Committee's decisions.

• In March 2026 the Congress approved the work report by 2,759 votes to 1 and the 15th Five-Year Plan by 2,758 to 1.

• The Supervisory Commission, created in 2018, brings everyone on the public payroll under the Party's discipline system.

• Critics call the Congress a rubber stamp; defenders point to amended drafts, three readings, and 364,000 public comments in 2025.

Module 5 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. How often has the full National People's Congress voted down an item on its agenda?

A) About once a decade
B) Twice, both times on budgets
C) Several times, most recently over the 2018 term limits
D) Never

2. What binds the State Council to carry out the Party's decisions?

A) A court ruling of 2019
B) Its Organic Law, revised in 2024
C) The Party Constitution alone
D) A 1982 constitutional clause that makes the premier the General Secretary's deputy

3. Who heads the National Supervisory Commission?

A) Li Xi himself
B) Chen Wenqing, the political-legal secretary
C) Liu Jinguo, a deputy of Li Xi
D) Zhang Jun, president of the Supreme People's Court and head of the judiciary

4. What did the Congress adopt on March 12, 2026, besides the plan and the budget?

A) Three laws, including one on ethnic unity
B) A new constitution
C) Term limits
D) A Hong Kong security law

5. What is the course's reading of the National People's Congress?

A) It is a competitive legislature that often defeats the government's bills.
B) It is purely ceremonial and plays no part in drafting laws.
C) It elects the General Secretary and can remove him by a two-thirds vote.
D) The full Congress ratifies, while its Standing Committee drafts, consults, and amends within limits the Party sets.

Module 6 — The Provinces and the Local State

The Bargain Between the Center and the Localities

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Pierre Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China* (2008)

Reference: The IMF's 2025 Article IV report on China (February 2026); the Ministry of Finance's budget report to the National People's Congress (March 2026)

6a. The Levels

Level	Number	Head (Party; state)	Note
Provincial units	31 that Beijing governs: 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, and 4 municipalities, plus Hong Kong and Macau; Beijing's own count, 34, includes Taiwan	Provincial Party secretary; governor, mayor, or chairman	The secretaries of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Chongqing, and Tianjin sit on the Politburo. Guangdong alone had 128.6 million people and a 2025 economy of about $2 trillion, roughly twelfth in the world if it were a country
Prefecture-level divisions	About 333	Municipal Party secretary; mayor	The cities, where most infrastructure and land finance happen
County-level divisions	About 2,850 counties, county-level cities, and urban districts	County Party secretary; county head	The level that delivers schools, hospitals, police, and pensions, and that holds much of the debt
Township-level divisions	About 39,000: about 30,000 towns and townships and 9,158 urban subdistricts	Township Party secretary; township head	The lowest level of government
Villages and urban communities	484,000 villages and 124,000 urban communities	Village Party secretary; elected village committee	Self-governing in law and Party-led in practice; the base of the security state's grid (Module 7)

The Organization Department's statistical bulletin (counts at December 31, 2025, published June 30, 2026); Guangdong's 2025 statistical communiqué; the World Bank. The prefecture and county counts are approximate.

6b. The Tournament

For three decades the system's engine was what economists call a promotion tournament. The Organization Department graded local leaders on targets, growth first and then investment, revenue, and stability, and promoted the winners from county to prefecture to province to Beijing, a link that Li Hongbin and Zhou Li-An documented in 2005. The tournament produced the growth, because each secretary built the roads, zones, and factories that would win the next post. It also produced the pathologies: the debt that paid for them, falsified statistics, empty new districts, pollution, and officials who grew rich on their control of land and licenses.

A notice of December 2013 ended ranking by growth alone and added debt, the environment, and other measures to the targets, and the tournament changed character. A local leader is now judged as much on what does not happen, no protest, no default, no scandal, and no deviation from the line, as on what does. Officials who avoid every risk, 'lying flat' in the popular phrase, are the result, and the Party has issued rules since 2018 that promise to tolerate honest mistakes in an effort to make them act.

Every official also sits in a matrix, tiao and kuai: the vertical line of the ministry that sets the rules for his function, against the horizontal block of the locality that pays and evaluates him, with the Party secretary above both deciding his career. Central policy reaches the ground through this matrix. That is why campaigns work, aligning every level on one slogan, and why ordinary policy is diluted, delayed, or faked on its way down.

6c. Local Finance After the Land

Measure	Earlier	2025-26	Note
Land-sale revenue	8.7 trillion yuan (2021, the peak)	4.15 trillion (2025, down 14.7%); 1.38 trillion in January-August 2026, down 28.6% on a year earlier	The property collapse (Module 9) took away the localities' largest source of funds
Official local-government debt	40.7 trillion yuan (end-2023)	54.8 trillion (end-2025); a limit of 63.2 trillion for 2026	Includes the bonds issued to replace hidden debt
Debt of the local government financing vehicles (LGFVs)	64.4 trillion yuan (end-2023, IMF)	71.4 trillion (end-2025), 51% of GDP, by the IMF's estimate; Beijing counted 10.5 trillion of 'hidden debt' at end-2024	The companies localities used to borrow off budget for infrastructure; the official list of them shrank by 71% from March 2023 to September 2025
The debt swap (November 2024)	—	10 trillion yuan over five years: 6 trillion of new bond quota in 2024-26, about 5.8 trillion of it issued by August 2026, and 800 billion a year of special bonds in 2024-28	Cuts the interest on swapped debt by more than 2.5 points, about 600 billion yuan over 2024-28 by the Finance Ministry's estimate
Special-purpose bonds	—	4.4 trillion yuan in 2025 and again in 2026	For projects, for replacing hidden debt, and for clearing arrears to firms
The fiscal split	—	In 2025 Beijing collected 43.5% of budget revenue and itself spent 15% of budget spending; transfers to the localities are budgeted at 10.4 trillion yuan in 2026	The localities do the rest of the spending, on transfers, land, and debt
Arrears and fines	—	Unpaid teachers in Shandong, protests over contractor arrears, new village fees in Zhejiang, and wage protests from Hebei to Guangxi in 2025; a campaign since March 2025 against profit-driven law enforcement had returned 30.7 billion yuan to firms by June 2026	The fiscal squeeze reaching the street

The Ministry of Finance (January 30 and March 5, 2026, and its monthly data); the IMF's 2025 Article IV (February 2026); Caixin (May 29, 2026); the Ministry of Justice (June 5, 2026); Radio Free Asia (May 2025).

6d. Is Local Debt a Crisis or a Problem to Be Managed?

Those who call it manageable include the finance minister, Lan Fo'an, who said in September 2025 that local debt risks were 'manageable and under control'. Liu Shangxi, a former head of the Chinese Academy of Fiscal Sciences, argued in September 2025 that the center has room to take on more, citing China's government debt ratio, 68.7% at end-2024, against a G20 average of 118.2%. **Those who see unrecognized losses** include Michael Pettis of the Carnegie Endowment, who wrote in August 2025 that moving local debt onto Beijing's books 'preserves the fiction that the underlying assets remain sound', and the IMF's board, which urged in February 2026 that 'unsustainable LGFV debt' be restructured through insolvency frameworks.

The evidence supports parts of both cases. The swap has cut interest costs, the list of financing vehicles has shrunk, and the center's own debt was only about 29% of GDP at end-2025. Against that, land revenue is still falling, about 14.8 trillion yuan of the vehicles' operating debt lay outside the swap at end-2024 by the central bank governor's count, and the IMF projects its broad measure of government debt rising from 127% of GDP in 2025 to 154% in 2030. **The course's reading:** the swap has turned a cash crisis into a slow transfer of debt to the center, and whether the localities recover depends less on refinancing than on whether Beijing replaces the land revenue they have lost.

Worked example — A County's Budget

A county in the interior, with 600,000 people, a small city, and forty townships, spent about 4 billion yuan a year at the peak of land sales. Its revenue was 800 million yuan of local taxes, 1.5 billion of transfers from the province and Beijing, and 1.2 billion from selling land to developers, and it borrowed the rest through its financing vehicle for a new industrial park and the plaza of a high-speed rail station. By 2025 its land sales have fallen to 400 million, the vehicle owes 6 billion yuan at 6%, or 360 million a year of interest, nearly half of the county's own taxes, and the park is a third occupied. The county cuts spending (bonuses first, then maintenance, then the buses), raises fees and fines, delays payments to contractors, and waits for the swap. Its share of the provincial quota refinances 2 billion yuan of the vehicle's debt at 2.5%, saving 70 million a year, and the province takes over the plaza's 1.2-billion-yuan loan at 6%, saving 72 million more. After the swap, interest is about 220 million, revenue is 3.0 billion with transfers up to 1.8 billion, and spending is cut to 3.4 billion; the gap of about 400 million is closed the old way, with delayed payments, fees, and rolled-over debt. The county survives, its schools and pensions are paid, and its park is unfinished, while its secretary, judged on stability and debt rather than growth, does nothing that could be noticed. Multiply this across the country's counties and the result is a national dilemma: the localities that built China's growth cannot build much more.

Module 6 Key Points

The Provinces and the Local State

• China's local state runs from 31 provinces through about 2,850 county-level units to 484,000 villages, each with a Party secretary on top.

• The promotion tournament built roads and growth, and the debt and falsified statistics that came with them.

• Land-sale revenue fell from 8.7 trillion yuan in 2021 to 4.15 trillion in 2025, and fell another 28.6% in 2026's first eight months.

• The November 2024 swap refinances hidden debt over five years; the IMF puts financing-vehicle debt at 71.4 trillion yuan.

• Beijing calls local debt 'manageable'; the IMF and Michael Pettis argue the swap postpones losses rather than resolving them.

Module 6 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. How many villages did China have at the end of 2025?

A) About 4,800
B) About 484,000
C) About 4.8 million
D) About 48,000, after mergers

2. What was the promotion tournament?

A) Ranking local leaders on targets, growth first, and promoting the winners
B) An annual civil-service examination
C) A contest among provinces for foreign investors
D) The selection of Politburo members by a vote of the full Central Committee at each Party Congress

3. How far did land-sale revenue fall from 2021 to 2025?

A) By about a tenth
B) It rose by a third
C) By about half
D) It fell to zero after the swap was announced in November 2024

4. What does the November 2024 debt swap do?

A) Refinances hidden local debt at lower interest over five years, with 10 trillion yuan of bond quota
B) Cancels all local debt
C) Transfers local debt to the state banks
D) Taxes land sales to repay debt

5. What did the IMF estimate financing-vehicle debt to be at the end of 2025?

A) About 10.5 trillion yuan
B) About 71.4 trillion yuan, 51% of GDP
C) About 4.4 trillion yuan
D) About 200 trillion yuan, more than the whole economy's annual output twice over

Module 7 — The Security State

The Apparatus of Control

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Minxin Pei, *The Sentinel State: Surveillance and the Survival of Dictatorship in China* (2024)

Reference: The National Security Law (2015); the Counter-Espionage Law (amended 2023); the revised Supervision Law (in force June 1, 2025)

7a. The Organs

Organ	What it does	Size	Note (October 2026)
The Central Political-Legal Commission	Directs the police, the prosecutors, the courts, and state security on the Party's behalf	—	Every province, city, and county has one
The Ministry of Public Security	Policing, household registration, the internet police, 'stability maintenance', and the domestic security bureaus that watch dissidents	About 1.9 million officers with law-enforcement qualifications (2022), plus auxiliary police in unpublished numbers	Took over border control from the armed police in 2018
The Ministry of State Security	Intelligence and counterintelligence at home and abroad	Not published	Has run a public WeChat account since 2023. American and allied agencies tied the Salt Typhoon intrusions into telecom networks to contractors serving it and the army (August 2025)
The People's Armed Police	Internal security, riot control, and, since 2018, the coast guard	Not published; outside estimates vary widely	Under the Party's Central Committee and Central Military Commission since 2018. Its commander was replaced in July 2025 and expelled that October
The discipline commission and the Supervisory Commission	Discipline Party members and the public payroll (Modules 3 and 5)	—	Module 3; their record is in 7d
The Central National Security Commission	Sets 'comprehensive national security' policy across a growing list of domains	—	Chaired by Xi (Module 4)

The Ministry of Public Security (January 2022); the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and allied agencies (August 27, 2025); Caixin (July 24, 2025); the Ministry of National Defense (October 17, 2025).

7b. Surveillance: Technology or People?

China has built the largest surveillance system in history. It includes several hundred million cameras, about 416 million at the end of 2019 by one industry estimate, along with facial recognition, the phone as a tracking device, and 'grid management', which assigns every neighborhood a monitor. Since July 15, 2025, a national online identity (ID) issued by the police has let users log in to websites with a state-verified number; enrollment is voluntary for now. What the system is not is a single 'social credit' score for every citizen: what exists is a set of blacklists, such as the courts' list of defaulting debtors barred from flights and

trains, and compliance ratings for companies. Opinions issued by the Party and the State Council in March 2025 require its penalties to rest on laws or central documents.

Those who stress the people follow Minxin Pei of Claremont McKenna College, who argues in *The Sentinel State* (2024) that the system rests on human networks of informers and state workers, and who warned in a 2024 interview that 'we should not overplay the technology'. From local yearbooks and police gazetteers he estimates up to about 15 million informants, about 1% of the population on police blacklists, and grid cells of about 1,000 people, with about 85% of domestic-security spending paid by local governments. On this view the system watches known threats well and is surprised by new ones.

Those who stress the technology include the economists Martin Beraja, Andrew Kao, David Yang, and Noam Yuchtman, who found in a 2021 paper that local unrest led governments to buy more facial-recognition AI and that more AI was followed by less unrest, concluding that 'AI innovation entrenches the regime'. Wendy Chang and Altynay Junusova of MERICS, a German research institute, wrote in December 2025 that the national online ID will make 'anonymous access all but impossible'.

The evidence shows the cameras and the informers working together, and leaves open which matters more. Pei's point that data is scattered across ministries and localities was made before the online ID began to gather identity in one state system. The zero-COVID protests (Module 11) showed the system's limit, since it detained participants afterward but did not foresee the protests. **The course's reading:** the technology extends the human sentinels rather than replacing them, as Pei argues, but the centralizing of identity through the online ID is closing the gaps that once limited what the state could see.

7c. The Laws

- **The National Security Law (2015).** The frame: 'comprehensive national security' across political, territorial, military, economic, cultural, social, technological, and other domains, under which almost any field can be treated as a security matter.
- **The Counter-Espionage Law (amended 2023).** In force since July 1, 2023, it broadened espionage to cover documents, data, materials, or items related to national security and allows exit bans on Chinese and foreigners under investigation. Raids on the consultancies Mintz, Bain, and Capvision came in the spring of 2023, around the amendment's adoption in April and before it took effect, and five Mintz staff were held for two years; an Astellas employee was sentenced to three and a half years for espionage in July 2025.
- **The data laws.** The Data Security Law and the Personal Information Protection Law (both 2021) treat data as a security asset, so Chinese firms need approval to send it abroad. The Cybersecurity Law of 2016 was amended in October 2025, with higher penalties and rules on AI, in force since January 1, 2026.
- **The Hong Kong laws.** The National Security Law and the local Article 23 ordinance carried the model to the city (Module 10).

7d. The Anti-Corruption Campaign

Measure	Figure	Source
Cases filed, November 2012 to October 2022	4.648 million	The discipline commission (October 2022)
Cases filed in 2025	1.012 million, 115 of them at provincial or ministerial level	The discipline commission (January 17, 2026)
People disciplined in 2025	983,000, 69 of them at provincial or ministerial level; 4,306 sent to prosecutors	The discipline commission (January 17, 2026)
People disciplined, first half of 2026	412,000; 538,000 cases filed	The discipline commission (July 25, 2026)
Former provincial or ministerial officials prosecuted in 2025	44	The Supreme People's Procuratorate (March 9, 2026)
Liuzhi detention	Up to eight months since June 1, 2025: three months, extendable by three and then by two for suspects facing ten years or more, with the clock restartable once if new offenses emerge. No lawyer is allowed	The revised Supervision Law; China Law Translate (2025)

The campaign is in its fourteenth year and shows no sign of ending, and its targets have run from the 'tigers', such as the former security chief Zhou Yongkang and the former Chongqing secretary Sun Zhengcai, to the generals of Module 8 and Ma Xingrui. It is anti-corruption in fact, because the officials it convicts took bribes on a vast scale, and political in fact, because it chooses its targets, operates outside the courts, and has removed rivals to the center along the way.

Module 7 Key Points

The Security State

• The Political-Legal Commission directs the police, the prosecutors, the courts, and state security on the Party's behalf.

• Minxin Pei finds the system's strength in informants and local networks; the 'AI-tocracy' economists stress facial recognition and data.

• No single social-credit score exists; there are court blacklists and compliance ratings for companies.

• The 2023 Counter-Espionage Law broadened espionage to any material related to national security and allows exit bans.

• The discipline system punished 983,000 people in 2025 and can hold a suspect in liuzhi for eight months before any restart of the clock.

Module 7 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What does Minxin Pei identify as the surveillance system's main strength?

A) Facial-recognition cameras
B) A single social-credit score assigned to every adult
C) The national online ID, which makes anonymous internet access impossible
D) Human networks of informers and state workers

2. Does a single social-credit score govern every citizen?

A) Only in Beijing and Shanghai, as a pilot
B) Yes, for every adult since 2020, through the phone
C) No; there are blacklists and ratings
D) Yes, run by the Ministry of State Security from one central database since the 2025 opinions

3. What is the longest liuzhi detention allowed since June 2025, before any restart of the clock?

A) Eight months
B) 48 hours
C) Six months, with a lawyer present
D) Two years, renewable by the provincial commission

4. What did the 2023 Counter-Espionage Law add?

A) A ban on foreign consultancies
B) A broader definition of espionage, and exit bans
C) Jury trials for spies
D) A requirement that foreign firms register every employee with the Ministry of State Security

5. What is the course's reading of surveillance in China?

A) Technology has replaced the informers
B) The system is mostly for show
C) Surveillance runs from one national database that every ministry shares
D) Technology extends the human sentinels rather than replacing them, and the online ID is closing the gaps

Module 8 — The Party's Army

The Relationship the Purges Revealed

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Joel Wuthnow and others, eds., *Crossing the Strait: China's Military Prepares for War with Taiwan* (2022)

Reference: The Pentagon's annual report on China's military (December 2025); the CSIS database of PLA purges (2026)

8a. The Principle and the Commission

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the Party's army rather than the state's. Mao's maxims, that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' and that 'the Party commands the gun', are written into its institutions: the army swears loyalty to the Party, and the Central Military Commission that commands it is a Party body with a state twin of the same members. Political officers serve beside commanders throughout the force, and the defense minister commands nothing (Module 5).

Xi's reform of 2015-16 remade the force. The seven military regions became five joint theater commands, the army was cut by 300,000, the Second Artillery became the Rocket Force, a full service, and the commission's departments were reorganized under a 'chairman responsibility system' that gives Xi the final word. In April 2024 the Strategic Support Force created in 2015 was dissolved and replaced by an Information Support Force, an Aerospace Force, and a Cyberspace Force.

The purges then remade the commission. Elected in October 2022, it had seven members: Xi as chairman, Zhang Youxia and He Weidong as vice chairmen, and Li Shangfu, Liu Zhenli, Miao Hua, and Zhang Shengmin. By October 2026 only Xi and Zhang Shengmin remained, five seats stood empty, and Zhang, now the only vice chairman, had no seat on the Politburo.

Date	Who	What was announced	What it meant
July 2023	Li Yuchao and Xu Zhongbo, commander and political commissar of the Rocket Force	Replaced without explanation; Li's expulsion was confirmed in July 2024	Bloomberg, citing American intelligence, reported missiles filled with water instead of fuel and silo lids that would not let the missiles launch effectively; the Pentagon later confirmed the faulty lids
October 2023 - June 2024	Li Shangfu, defense minister; Wei Fenghe, his predecessor	Li removed in October 2023; both expelled on June 27, 2024 and sentenced on May 7, 2026 to death with a two-year reprieve, for bribery	Corruption in procurement, Li's at the Equipment Development Department and Wei's at the Rocket Force he had commanded
November 2024 - June 2025	Miao Hua, director of political work	Suspended on November 28, 2024; removed from the commission on June 27, 2025	The officer who vetted the generals' loyalty was himself removed
October 17, 2025	He Weidong, vice chairman; Miao Hua; seven other senior officers, among them former Eastern Theater and Rocket Force commanders	Expelled for 'severe duty-related crimes'; confirmed by the Fourth Plenum (Module 4)	The first serving vice chairman removed since the Cultural Revolution, in Reuters' account

Date	Who	What was announced	What it meant
January 24, 2026	Zhang Youxia, first vice chairman; Liu Zhenli, chief of the Joint Staff	Placed under investigation	The purge reached the commission's most senior general; Zhang Youxia's father had served with Xi's
August 28 and September 21, 2026	Zhang Youxia and Liu Zhenli	Removed from the state commission (August 28); expelled from the Party and the army (September 21)	Confirmation awaits the Fifth Plenum (Module 3)

China's Ministry of National Defense and Xinhua (2023-26); Bloomberg (January 6, 2024); the Pentagon (December 2025); Reuters (October 23, 2025); Caixin (August 29, 2026); China Daily (September 22, 2026).

8b. What the Purges Say

• **Corruption was real.** Equipment took 42.4% of China's official defense budget in 2024, by its report to the UN, or roughly $100 billion on the course's arithmetic, and two defense ministers have now been sentenced for bribery.

• **Loyalty was the question.** The officers removed included the political-work chief and his deputy, whose job was loyalty, and the notice expelling Zhang Youxia called him 'disloyal and dishonest to the Party'.

• **The army has no other check.** No civilian ministry stands over it, no legislature funds it independently, and no independent press reports on it, so it is audited only by the discipline commission and by the leader.

• **The ranks are being refilled below the top.** New commanders for the Eastern and Central theaters were promoted in December 2025, and two more generals in July 2026, one of them as the commission's new discipline chief, but its empty seats remain.

8c. Do the Purges Weaken the Army or Tighten the Party's Hold?

Those who see damage to readiness include the Pentagon, whose December 2025 report judged that the investigations 'very likely risk short term disruptions in the operational effectiveness of the PLA', and Joel Wuthnow of the National Defense University, who wrote in February 2026 that the scale of the purges 'has probably set that agenda back'. Bonny Lin of CSIS judged in February 2026 that large campaigns against Taiwan would be 'incredibly difficult' in the near term.

Those who see control or strength include Beijing, whose army newspaper said in January 2026 that the actions 'promote the rejuvenation' of the PLA, and Tian Shichen, a former defense-ministry official, who told Reuters in September 2026 that 'eradicating corrupt elements strengthens, rather than weakens, the political foundation'. John Culver, a former American intelligence officer, argued in February 2026 that Xi is making the force 'more politically reliable', at a cost to readiness for a few years.

The evidence points both ways. The commission's seats are mostly empty (8a), and 101 senior officers had been purged or possibly purged by February 2026, by CSIS's count, before the September expulsions. Against that, the largest exercise around Taiwan by area, Justice Mission 2025, was held in December 2025 in the middle of the purge, and the Pentagon still saw 'steady progress toward its 2027 goals'. **The course's reading:** the purges have bought political control at the price of near-term readiness, and whether the price is temporary depends on how the empty seats are filled.

8d. The 2027 Goal

The army's nearest deadline was set by the Party in October 2020: to achieve the PLA's 'centennial military building goal' by 2027, the hundredth anniversary of its founding on August 1, 1927. The Pentagon reads it as a plan to be able to fight and win a war over Taiwan by the end of 2027, while others, among them American intelligence (Module 12), read it as a goal for capability rather than a date for war. What the purges have cost either reading is weighed in 8c, and the next commission is due with the 21st Congress in 2027.

Module 8 Key Points

The Party's Army

• The PLA is the Party's army: the Central Military Commission is a Party body, and the defense minister commands nothing.

• Of the seven commission members chosen in 2022, only Xi and Zhang Shengmin remained in October 2026.

• Zhang Youxia, the senior vice chairman, was investigated in January 2026 and expelled on September 21 as 'disloyal'.

• The Pentagon judged in December 2025 that the purges 'very likely risk short term disruptions' to the PLA.

• Beijing says the purges strengthen the army; the Pentagon and analysts such as Culver see short-term damage and tighter political control.

Module 8 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. To whom does the PLA swear loyalty?

A) The state constitution
B) The National People's Congress
C) The Party
D) The defense minister

2. How many of the seven seats on the Central Military Commission were filled in October 2026?

A) All seven
B) Two, Xi's and Zhang Shengmin's
C) Five, after the July 2026 promotions
D) Four, including the defense minister, Dong Jun

3. What happened to Zhang Youxia in 2026?

A) He was investigated in January and expelled from the Party in September
B) He retired with honors in March
C) He became defense minister
D) He was promoted to vice chairman of the state commission and joined the Standing Committee

4. Where did the purges begin in 2023?

A) In the navy's shipyards
B) In the Eastern Theater
C) In the Rocket Force, the nuclear and conventional missile arm
D) In the People's Armed Police

5. What did the Pentagon's December 2025 report say about the purges?

A) They had no effect on the PLA's readiness
B) They ended the PLA's ability to fight a war
C) They were ordered by the National People's Congress to reduce the defense budget in 2026
D) They risk short-term disruptions

Module 9 — Managing the Economy

How the Party-State Steers the World's Second-Largest Economy

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Barry Naughton, *The Rise of China's Industrial Policy, 1978 to 2020* (2021)

Reference: The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (March 2026); the IMF's 2025 Article IV report on China (February 2026)

9a. The Instruments

Instrument	Who holds it	2026 setting
The Five-Year Plan	The Fourth Plenum's proposals (Module 4), the planning commission's draft, and the National People's Congress, which adopted it at the Two Sessions (Module 5)	The 15th Plan (2026-30) puts 'new quality productive forces', technological self-reliance, and security first; growth is to stay 'within a reasonable range', and research spending is to grow more than 7% a year. Raising household consumption is an objective but not one of the main indicators
The annual target	The Politburo and the December work conference, then the Government Work Report	Growth of 4.5-5% for 2026, the lowest target since 1991 and below the 'around 5%' of 2023-25; a deficit of about 4% of GDP (5.89 trillion yuan); consumer prices up about 2%
Fiscal policy	The Ministry of Finance, under the Party's commissions	1.3 trillion yuan of ultra-long special bonds, 250 billion of them for consumer trade-ins; local special bonds (Module 6); 300 billion for the banks' capital
Monetary policy	The People's Bank of China (Module 5)	The seven-day rate at 1.40% since May 2025; loan prime rates unchanged for a sixteenth month in September 2026; the yuan at 6.72 to the dollar on October 16, 2026, about 6% stronger than its 2025 average
Industrial policy	The planning commission, the industry ministry, the Central Science and Technology Commission, the state chip fund, and the provinces' funds	Chooses and subsidizes sectors: electric vehicles (EVs), batteries, solar, chips, AI, and robotics. The IMF urged in February 2026 that 'unwarranted industrial policy' be scaled back; Beijing's reply is in 9c
The state enterprises	SASAC and its provincial counterparts	About 100 central enterprises, which made 2.5 trillion yuan of profit in 2025. State firms produce about a quarter of GDP, on the World Bank's estimate, and took 83% of corporate bank loans in 2016, on the Peterson Institute's
The campaign	The center	Moves the whole system on a slogan (Module 1); 'anti-involution' (2025-26) is the worked example below

The State Council and Xinhua (March 2026); the Ministry of Finance; the People's Bank of China; the IMF (February 18, 2026); SASAC (January 2026); the World Bank (2019); the Peterson Institute for International Economics (2019).

9b. The Economy the Instruments Face

Measure	2025	2026 (latest)	Note
GDP growth	5.0% (140.2 trillion yuan, about $19.6 trillion)	4.7% in the first half; 4.3% in the second quarter, the weakest since late 2022	The IMF forecasts 4.5% for 2026 and 4.0% for 2027
Consumer prices	0.0% (core 0.7%)	Up 0.9% in January-September; September 0.9%, core 1.0%	Food prices still falling
Producer prices	Down 2.6%	Positive since March 2026 after 41 months of decline; up 5.0% in September	Lifted mostly by imported energy and commodity costs, with oil raised by the Iran war, which began on February 28, 2026
Property investment	8.28 trillion yuan, down 17.2%, and 44% below 2021	Down 19.9% in January-August	New-home prices still falling in most of the 70 cities surveyed
Trade surplus	$1.19 trillion, a record	$938 billion in January-September, with exports up 21.3%, and up 36.3% in September	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the largest market, then the EU and the United States; chips and cars lead
Household consumption	About 40% of GDP (39.9% in 2024)	—	Compared with about 52% in the EU and 68% in the United States
Household saving	32% of disposable income (survey basis)	—	About 36% on the national accounts

The National Bureau of Statistics (January 19, February 28, September 16, and October 15, 2026); the customs administration (October 14, 2026); the IMF (October 2026); Stephen Roach (July 2026). Official figures; some independent estimates of growth, such as the Rhodium Group's, run lower.

9c. Is the Supply-Led Model Sustainable?

Those who defend it include Beijing, whose 15th Plan puts technology and self-reliance first and whose officials told the IMF in February 2026 that support to priority sectors 'would continue to be provided' and that the Fund's estimate of how far China's current-account surplus exceeds its norm was 'excessively large'. Justin Yifu Lin of Peking University said in March 2026 that 'it is not overly optimistic to say China could grow at around 8%' a year through 2035, on a model that 'combines market forces with active government support'. Yu Yongding and other Chinese economists argued in July 2025 that official figures understate consumption.

Those who urge rebalancing include the IMF, whose board named 'transitioning to a consumption-led growth model' its overarching priority for China in February 2026. Michael Pettis of the Carnegie Endowment argues that an economy built on suppressed household demand must export its surplus until its trading partners refuse it. Stephen Roach wrote in July 2026 that household consumption's share of GDP (9b) was back at its 2005 level, and Liu Shijin, a former deputy director of the State Council's research center, said in July 2025 that China's consumption lags the rich economies' by a 'structural deviation of roughly 20 percentage points'.

The evidence favors each side on its own ground. On supply, China made about three-quarters of the world's electric vehicles in 2025 and more than 80% of its battery cells and solar components, its leading chipmaker, Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation, improved its 7-nanometer-class

process without the most advanced Western tools, and exports are still rising fast (9b). On demand, retail sales fell in May 2026 for the first time in three and a half years, property investment is still falling, and the end of producer-price deflation came from imported costs rather than from spending. **The course's reading:** the model has proved more durable on supply than its critics expected, but its demand problem is unresolved, and the surplus it produces now depends on other countries' willingness to absorb it.

Worked example — How a Slogan Becomes a Campaign: 'Anti-Involution'

The word was in the Party's economic vocabulary by December 2024, when the Central Economic Work Conference called for a comprehensive rectification of involution-style competition. Neijuan, involution, is the popular word for a race that exhausts everyone and advances no one, and the targets were the price wars in electric vehicles, solar panels, steel, and online retail that had kept producer prices falling for years. In June 2025, 17 carmakers pledged to pay their suppliers within 60 days. On July 1 the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission, chaired by Xi, ordered that 'low-price and disorderly competition' be governed by law and that backward capacity leave the market in an orderly way, and two days later the industry minister summoned 14 solar makers. In late July regulators published a draft amendment to the Pricing Law extending its ban on below-cost pricing to services and platforms, in August the polysilicon producers reached a preliminary agreement to cut output, and the Fourth Plenum then wrote the curbing of 'involutionary competition' into the proposals for the 15th Plan. The results show the method's reach and its limit. Polysilicon rose from about 30 yuan a kilogram in mid-2025 to about 53 in January 2026, then fell back to 44.6 by March, after the market regulator halted the producers' coordinated output curbs over monopoly concerns. Producer prices did turn positive (9b), but mostly because the Iran war raised the cost of imported oil and commodities. Within months a phrase at the center had become the behavior of whole industries, ministries, and regulators, without waiting for a new law. The campaign could tell companies to stop cutting prices; it could not tell households to spend.

Module 9 Key Points

Managing the Economy

• The 15th Five-Year Plan, adopted in March 2026, puts technology and self-reliance first; consumption is an objective, not a main indicator.

• The 2026 growth target is 4.5-5%; growth was 4.7% in the first half and 4.3% in the second quarter.

• Producer prices turned positive in March 2026 after 41 months of decline, lifted mostly by imported energy costs.

• Exports rose 21.3% in January-September 2026, while household consumption stays near 40% of GDP.

• The IMF urges a consumption-led model; Beijing says support for priority industries will continue.

Module 9 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What growth target did China set for 2026?

A) Around 8%, as in the 2010s
B) No target, as in 2020
C) Around 3%, the lowest on record
D) 4.5-5%, below the 'around 5%' of the three previous years

2. When did China's producer prices turn positive after 41 months of decline?

A) In July 2024
B) In May 2025
C) In March 2026
D) In October 2025, after the Fourth Plenum

3. What lifted producer prices in 2026, by the statistics bureau's and the IMF's accounts?

A) Mainly imported energy and commodity costs
B) A consumer boom
C) The anti-involution campaign's output cuts alone
D) A devaluation of the yuan that raised the price of every imported good and service

4. What share of GDP is household consumption?

A) About 55%, as in Europe
B) About 40%
C) About 68%, as in America
D) About 25%, the lowest of any large economy in the world since records began

5. What does the IMF name as the overarching priority for China?

A) A transition to a consumption-led growth model
B) More industrial policy
C) A weaker yuan
D) Faster credit growth

Module 10 — Law, Rights, and the Periphery

Rule by Law and the Places Where It Is Hardest

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Carl Minzner, *End of an Era: How China's Authoritarian Revival Is Undermining Its Rise* (2018)

Reference: The work reports of the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate (March 9, 2026); the UN human rights office's assessment of Xinjiang (August 31, 2022)

10a. Rule by Law

China has a constitution with a chapter of rights, 306 national laws in force in September 2025, more than 800,000 lawyers, and courts that accepted 37.5 million cases in 2025. None of it binds the Party, and that is the difference between rule by law and the rule of law: law is the Party's instrument for governing rather than a check on it. Since 2018 the constitution's first article has named the Party's leadership as the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. No court may review a law's constitutionality; that power belongs to the National People's Congress Standing Committee, whose filing-and-review system has prompted the revision or repeal of more than 27,000 lower-level documents since 2012.

The criminal courts convict almost everyone they try. In 2025 the procuratorate prosecuted 1.404 million people and the courts acquitted 294 people, about 0.02% of that number, because the filtering happens earlier: prosecutors declined to charge 347,000 suspects. The courts answer to the Political-Legal Commission (Module 7), and the discipline commission's detention system sits outside them entirely.

Within that frame the law is real and has grown. Contract and commercial law, the Civil Code in force since 2021, and the personal-information law give ordinary disputes predictable outcomes, and a company suing another in Shanghai will get a hearing and a judgment. The exceptions are the cases the Party cares about: political speech, organizing, religion, the periphery, and anything the security laws reach. The lawyers who take such cases were the target of the '709' crackdown of July 2015, in which police seized more than 300 lawyers and activists and at least 20 lawyers lost their licenses; in 2023 the activists Ding Jiaxi and Xu Zhiyong were sentenced to 12 and 14 years for subversion. An amended Lawyers Law, in force since September 1, 2026, adds Party-building to the profession's rules.

10b. The Periphery

Place	What happened	Status (October 2026)	The state's instrument
Hong Kong	The 2019 protests; the National Security Law imposed by Beijing (June 30, 2020); the closure of Apple Daily and Stand News and the 'patriots only' electoral overhaul (2021); the local Article 23 security ordinance (March 2024)	Jimmy Lai, 78, sentenced to 20 years on February 9, 2026, and not appealing; the appeals of the '47 democrats' dismissed on February 23, 2026; 394 national-security arrests, 208 prosecutions, and 180 convictions by April 2026	The security law, the Committee for Safeguarding National Security, and the power of the National People's Congress Standing Committee to interpret the Basic Law

Place	What happened	Status (October 2026)	The state's instrument
Xinjiang (26 million; 11.6 million Uyghurs in the 2020 census)	The camps of 2017-19, called vocational training centers by Beijing (10c); estimates of those held run from 1 million (Chinese Human Rights Defenders) to 1.8 million (Adrian Zenz); reports of demolished mosques, cuts to Uyghur-language schooling, and forced labor	Whether detention continues is disputed (10c); an American ban on imports presumed made with forced labor since June 2022, with aluminum, seafood, and polyvinyl chloride added to its enforcement priorities in 2024	The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the police, and ethnic policy (below)
Tibet (3.6 million in the region; 7.06 million Tibetans in China)	The 1959 uprising and the Dalai Lama's exile; boarding schools holding 'almost one million children', in the words of UN experts (2023); construction of the 60-gigawatt Medog dam since July 19, 2025	The Dalai Lama, 91, said in July 2025 that his institution will continue and that only his own trust may recognize his successor, and in a 2025 book that the successor will be born in the 'free world'. Beijing says the choice 'must be approved by the central government', so two rival Dalai Lamas are in prospect	The United Front's control of religion, the boarding schools, and the dams
Ethnic policy	The 2020 protests in Inner Mongolia when Mongolian-medium teaching was cut	The Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress (adopted March 12, 2026; in force July 1) and a revised standard-language law (January 1, 2026) write a single Chinese national identity into statute	The United Front and the education ministry
Religion	Christianity, from about 20 million who call themselves Christian to about 81 million adults who say they believe in Christ (Pew, 2023), Islam, Buddhism, Daoism, and folk religion; the Vatican's 2018 bishops deal, renewed in 2024 for four years	'Sinicization': crosses removed, domes replaced, sermons vetted. Pastor Jin Mingri of Beijing's unregistered Zion Church was detained with more than 20 members in October 2025	The religious-affairs administration inside the United Front
Civil society and the press	Foreign nonprofits registered under a law in force since 2017; the domestic press under the Propaganda Department	China ranks 178th of 180 on the 2026 press-freedom index of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which counts 108 journalists detained and calls China the world's largest jailer of journalists	The Propaganda Department, the police, and the courts

Hong Kong's Census and Statistics Department (August 18, 2026); The Standard (June 30, 2026); the UN human rights office (August 31, 2022); the 2020 census; UN special rapporteurs (February 6, 2023); Pew Research Center (August 30, 2023); NPC Observer; RSF (2026).

10c. Xinjiang: Counterterrorism or Crimes Against Humanity?

Beijing's case is that the facilities were 'vocational education and training centers', set up after a wave of violent attacks to prevent terrorism, and that they have closed: the government told the UN human rights office that the centers were closed and that all 'trainees have graduated'. Its 2020 white paper says an average of 1.29 million workers a year went through vocational training in 2014-19, as part of a drive against poverty. It called the UN's assessment 'based on the disinformation and lies fabricated by anti-China forces', and a foreign ministry spokesman said in 2025 that 'China's Xinjiang has never forced anyone to transfer employment'.

The critics' case rests first on the UN human rights office, which found in August 2022 that the detentions 'may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity'. The American government called the policies genocide in January 2021, and Adrian Zenz, a researcher on Xinjiang, called it in 2020 'the

largest incarceration of an ethnoreligious minority since the Holocaust'. Human Rights Watch said the draft of the ethnic-unity law would provide 'a broad legal framework to justify repression and forced assimilation'.

The evidence includes the UN's own analysis of sentencing: prison terms of five years or more rose from about 11% of sentences to 87% in 2017, and the data 'strongly suggests there has been a shift towards formal incarcerations'. Against the genocide label, Lin Fangfei of Xinjiang University disputes Zenz's figures on birth control and notes that Uyghur population growth outpaced Han growth. Both sides now agree that the camps have shrunk. **The course's reading:** the camps have largely closed, as Beijing says, but the detention they began continues in prisons, labor programs, and law. The UN's finding of possible crimes against humanity is the most authoritative judgment available, while the genocide label is the American government's and remains disputed.

10d. Hong Kong: Stability Restored or Autonomy Ended?

Beijing's case is that the security law ended the violence of the protests. The Ministry of State Security said in June 2026 that the law 'provided a strong legal shield for Hong Kong and restored its position as one of the world's safest cities', and the city's government said that 'both the business environment and the daily lives of residents have steadily improved'. John Lee, the chief executive, said the Article 23 ordinance gave the city a 'stronger door and effective lock', and officials said Lai's case 'has nothing to do with freedom of speech and of the press'.

The critics' case is that the law broke the promise of 1984. Britain called it in 2020 'a breach of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration', and the UN Human Rights Committee called in 2022 for its 'complete repeal'. Of Lai's sentence, Elaine Pearson of Human Rights Watch said it was 'effectively a death sentence', and Jodie Ginsberg of the Committee to Protect Journalists called it 'the final nail in the coffin for freedom of the press in Hong Kong'.

The evidence cuts both ways. Hong Kong's population reached 7.52 million in mid-2026, after net inflows of residents in each of the two previous years. Freedom House found in 2026 that abductions to the mainland and mass assaults on protesters 'have generally not recurred because authorities now rely on other means of control'. Yet the convictions have put the opposition in prison or abroad, journalists were arrested for sedition in June, July, and September 2026, and turnout in the December 2025 legislative election, under the 'patriots only' rules, was 31.9%. **The course's reading:** the law restored order and ended the political autonomy promised in the Joint Declaration, and 'one country, two systems' survives as a commercial and financial arrangement.

Module 10 Key Points

Law, Rights, and the Periphery

• China has 306 laws and over 800,000 lawyers, but no court can review a law, and the courts acquitted 294 people in 2025.

• Commercial disputes get predictable rulings; political speech, religion, the periphery, and security cases are the exceptions.

• Jimmy Lai was sentenced to 20 years in February 2026; Hong Kong has made 394 national-security arrests since 2020.

• The UN found in 2022 that Xinjiang's detentions 'may constitute' crimes against humanity; Beijing calls them counterterrorism and training.

• The Ethnic Unity Law, in force since July 2026, writes a single Chinese national identity into law.

Module 10 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. How many people did China's courts acquit in 2025?

A) Under 100
B) 294, about 0.02%
C) About 2,900
D) About 29,000, roughly 2%

2. What sentence did Jimmy Lai receive in February 2026?

A) Life imprisonment
B) Five years, suspended
C) Ten years
D) 20 years

3. Which body may interpret Hong Kong's Basic Law?

A) Hong Kong's courts alone
B) The Legislative Council of Hong Kong
C) The NPC Standing Committee
D) The Supreme People's Court in Beijing

4. What did the UN human rights office find about Xinjiang in August 2022?

A) That the camps had all closed
B) That the detentions 'may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity'
C) That there was no evidence of detention
D) That China had committed genocide

5. What does the Ethnic Unity Law, in force since July 2026, do?

A) Restores minority autonomy
B) Bans religious schools
C) Writes a single Chinese national identity into law
D) Grants Tibet and Xinjiang referendums on autonomy within ten years under UN supervision

Module 11 — Society and the Social Contract

The Population the State Governs

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Scott Rozelle and Natalie Hell, *Invisible China: How the Urban-Rural Divide Threatens China's Rise* (2020)

Reference: The National Bureau of Statistics' population release (January 19, 2026) and migrant-worker survey (April 30, 2026); the UN's World Population Prospects 2024

11a. The Numbers

Measure	Latest figure	Note
Population	1.405 billion at the end of 2025, down 3.39 million, the fourth annual fall; India has been larger since 2023	The UN projects 1.26 billion in 2050 and 633 million in 2100 (medium variant)
Births and deaths	7.92 million births in 2025, a modern-era low, down from 9.54 million in 2024; 11.31 million deaths	Fertility about 1.0 (UN, 2023), and about 0.96 in 2025 on a private estimate. A three-child policy since 2021 and a national subsidy of 3,600 yuan a year per child under three, introduced in 2025, have not reversed the fall
Aging	323 million aged 60 or over (23.0%) and 224 million aged 65 or over (15.9%) at the end of 2025; median age about 40	The retirement age began rising in January 2025, for men from 60 to 63 and for women from 50 or 55 to 55 or 58, in phases through 2040
Urbanization	67.9% of the population, 954 million people, in towns and cities at the end of 2025	Up 0.9 points in a year
Rural migrant workers	301 million in 2025, 180 million of them working outside their home areas; average age 43	Nearly all their children of compulsory-school age are in school; the gaps under the household registration (hukou) are high-school entrance exams, social insurance, and housing
Pensions	The minimum basic pension for rural and non-working residents was 143 yuan a month in 2025, raised by 20 yuan in 2026; the average paid was 246 yuan in 2024	Urban retirees receive almost 16 times the rural average, by a New York Times calculation
Youth unemployment	18.9% in August 2026 (ages 16-24, students excluded), up from 14.9% in June	A record 12.7 million graduates in 2026; the 2027 national civil-service exam, announced on October 13, plans to hire 35,700 people
Inequality	A Gini coefficient of 0.468 (2020), down from a peak of 0.491 in 2008; the top 10% own nearly 70% of personal wealth and the bottom half 6% (2021)	'Common prosperity', proclaimed in 2021, was the Party's answer, and the crackdown on the platform companies in 2020-22 its sharpest form
Internet	1.125 billion users at the end of 2025 (80% of the population); 602 million users of generative AI; WeChat had 1.439 billion monthly users in June 2026	The largest online population on earth, on a network the state monitors and censors (11d)

The National Bureau of Statistics (January 19 and April 30, 2026); the UN World Population Prospects 2024; Caixin (January 19, 2026); China Daily (December 26, 2025); the World Inequality Lab (2022); the China Internet Network Information Center (February 5, 2026); Tencent (August 12, 2026); Beijing Daily (October 13, 2026).

11b. The Contract

Deng's settlement (Module 2) held for thirty years because its terms were kept: incomes multiplied, poverty fell on a historic scale (Module 13), the cities were built, and a family that worked could expect its children to live better. In the 2020s growth has slowed, home prices have been falling since 2021 (Module 9), and graduates queue for civil-service posts.

The young have answered with a vocabulary, 'lying flat' (tangping), 'let it rot' (bailan), and the 'full-time children' who live with their parents for a stipend. The state has answered with campaigns, subsidies for children and consumer trade-ins, and a tighter grip on what people may say (11d). It has not built the social protection that the IMF urged in February 2026 'to lower precautionary savings', and Xi wrote in 2021 that China must not fall into the trap of 'welfarism', which in his account breeds idleness. The State Council's guidelines of May 22, 2026 let migrants join social insurance where they work, a step toward services that follow people rather than their registration.

11c. Is the Social Contract Fraying or Holding?

Those who see it fraying include David Bandurski of the China Media Project, who traced online pessimism in October 2025 to 'deteriorating economic and social prospects' and said Beijing fears the mood 'might be infectious'. Katja Drinhausen of MERICS told the New York Times in October 2025 that 'it will not be enough to keep online negative emotions in check'. Ja Ian Chong of the National University of Singapore saw in September 2025 a 'significant lack of motivation, even pessimism', about personal prospects. Their evidence is the birth rate, youth unemployment, the gap in pensions, and the rise in local civic and labor protests in 2025 that Freedom House recorded.

Those who see it holding start from the surveys by Tony Saich, Edward Cunningham, and Jesse Turiel of the Harvard Kennedy School, which found from 2003 to 2016 that 'Chinese citizen satisfaction with government has increased virtually across the board', though they warned that the Party 'cannot take the support of its people for granted'. Li Fengliang of Tsinghua University called lying flat in 2021 'an extremely irresponsible attitude', arguing that 'people can still achieve upward social mobility through competition'. Their evidence is the absence of any organized alternative and a state that adjusts at the margin: pensions raised in 2025 and 2026, migrant incomes up 2.3% in 2025, and at least nine deputies pressing for higher farmers' pensions at the March 2026 Congress.

The evidence has a gap at its center: the surveys behind the case for contentment end before the property collapse and the youth jobless rates of the 2020s. **The course's reading:** the contract holds in the sense that nothing organized opposes it and the security state of Module 7 prevents anything from organizing, but the expectation that tomorrow will be better has frayed, and it shows in births and saving rather than in protest.

11d. Censorship and What People Can Say

- **The system.** The Cyberspace Administration sets the rules, the platforms enforce them with human censors and automated filters, the police prosecute the persistent, and the Great Firewall blocks the foreign internet. A leaked ByteDance list published in September 2026 ran to 5,241 sensitive terms.
- **The campaigns against mood.** In September 2025 the administration began a two-month drive against the 'malicious incitement of negative sentiments', including posts saying that hard work is useless, and Weibo suspended more than 1,200 accounts over economic rumors. In February 2026 a

second drive targeted anti-marriage and anti-childbearing views.

• **The directives.** Leaked orders show censorship that is reactive, daily, and specific: in September 2026 platforms were told to 'find, delete, and block' a video by the journalist Chai Jing about a Cultural Revolution leader, using text and speech recognition.

• **The space that exists.** Consumer complaints, local corruption exposed until it reaches a certain rank, nationalism that is often sharper than the state's, and satire that stays oblique: the Chinese internet is loud, and the loudness is bounded.

• **The lesson of 2022.** A fire in an Ürümqi apartment block on November 24, 2022, which killed 10 by the official count, set off at least 43 protests in 22 cities within four days. The strictest COVID rules were lifted on December 7, though easing had begun on November 11, and whether the protests caused the reopening or sped one already under way is still argued.

• **The propaganda.** Xi Thought is taught from primary school up, the 'Study Xi' app had more than 100 million users by 2019, and the Patriotic Education Law has been in force since January 2024. The state cultivates nationalism and then has to manage it when it turns on the state's own compromises.

Module 11 Key Points

Society and the Social Contract

• China's population fell for a fourth year in 2025, to 1.405 billion, with 7.92 million births, a modern-era low.

• About 300 million rural migrant workers live under the hukou; high-school exams, social insurance, and housing remain the gaps.

• Youth unemployment reached 18.9% in August 2026, with a record 12.7 million graduates.

• Critics see the social contract fraying; others cite satisfaction surveys, marginal reforms, and the absence of any organized alternative.

• Censorship campaigns since 2025 target pessimism itself, including 'hard work is useless' posts and anti-childbearing views.

Module 11 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. How many births did China record in 2025?

A) About 7.9 million
B) 12 million
C) About 11.3 million
D) About 17.9 million, as in 2016

2. What share of China's population was 60 or over at the end of 2025?

A) About one-third
B) Roughly 12 percent
C) Nearly half, as in Japan
D) About 23%

3. What did the State Council's guidelines of May 22, 2026, let migrants do?

A) Abolish their hukou
B) Buy homes tax-free
C) Vote in the local elections of the cities where they live, after five years of residence
D) Join social insurance where they work

4. What did the Cyberspace Administration target from September 2025?

A) Online pessimism
B) Foreign news sites
C) Video games for adults
D) All private messaging apps, which were ordered to store every conversation for police review

5. What does the course conclude about the social contract?

A) It has collapsed.
B) It holds, but the expectation of a better tomorrow has frayed.
C) It has been renegotiated through elections to local people's congresses.
D) It is stronger than ever, with satisfaction rising every year since 2020 in national polls.

Module 12 — The Foreign-Policy Machinery

How China Decides Abroad

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (2021)

Reference: The readouts of the May and September 2026 summits (Xinhua and the White House); the White House fact sheet on the Busan meeting (November 1, 2025)

12a. The Machinery

Organ	Function	Note (October 2026)
The Central Foreign Affairs Commission	Decides foreign policy (Module 4)	Wang Yi is at once foreign minister, director of its office, and a Politburo member
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Diplomacy, the embassies, and the daily briefings, whose podium states the line	The world's largest diplomatic network, 274 posts against the United States' 271 (Lowy Institute, 2024).
The International Department	The Party's ties with foreign parties, from Communist parties to Europe's populists (Module 3)	The channel to countries where the ruling party matters more than the government
The United Front Work Department	The Chinese abroad, Taiwan's opposition, and Hong Kong (Module 3)	—
Commerce and the trade negotiators	Trade talks, the tariff response, and export controls	The talks are led by He Lifeng with Li Chenggang, retitled 'International Trade Representative of the People's Republic of China', at a minister's rank, on September 20, 2026
The Ministry of State Security	Intelligence abroad (Module 7)	—
The institutions China built	The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the BRICS bank, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (ten members), and the Global Development, Security, and Civilization Initiatives, gathered since September 2025 under a Global Governance Initiative	BRICS has eleven members on India's 2026 list, though Saudi Arabia has not confirmed its membership, and China chairs it in 2027

The Lowy Institute's Global Diplomacy Index (2024); the South China Morning Post (September 16, 2025, and September 20, 2026); Reuters (September 2026).

12b. The Policy and Its Instruments

China's foreign policy under Xi pairs a 'community of common destiny' abroad with 'national rejuvenation' at home, and its instruments are economic weight, pressure on the periphery, and the parallel institutions above. The Belt and Road drew about $1.4 trillion of construction contracts and investment from 2013 to 2025 in some 150 signatory countries, by the count of Christoph Nedopil of the Griffith Asia Institute, with a record $213.5 billion in 2025. Its loans also figured in the debt restructurings of the 2020s, in Zambia, Sri Lanka, and Ghana, and since 2021 it has turned to the 'small and beautiful' projects Xi then called for.

China's export controls on gallium, germanium, graphite, antimony, and the rare earths, imposed in stages from 2023 onward, showed that the supply chains China dominates can be used the way America uses its chip controls. The periphery is managed by pressure short of war: the coast guard's efforts to block

Philippine resupply missions in the South China Sea, the exercises around Taiwan (Module 8), and a partnership with Russia. With India there is a wary opening: Xi met Narendra Modi in New Delhi on September 12, 2026, on his first visit in seven years.

12c. The Summits of 2025-26

Date	Event	Outcome	What it shows
October 30, 2025 (Busan)	The Trump-Xi meeting after China's rare-earth controls of October 9 and Trump's threat of a 100% tariff	A one-year truce: China suspended those controls, licensed mineral exports to American users, and agreed to buy 12 million tonnes of soybeans in late 2025 and 25 million a year in 2026-28; America cut its fentanyl tariff by 10 points and paused other measures	The mineral controls served as a bargaining chip
May 13-15, 2026 (Beijing)	Trump's state visit, postponed from April by the Iran war, with Tim Cook, Elon Musk, and Jensen Huang in the delegation	A 'constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability'; 200 Boeing aircraft; sales of an advanced Nvidia chip cleared for 10 Chinese firms; Xi called Taiwan 'the most important issue in China-US relations' and warned of 'clashes and even conflicts' if it were mishandled	Afterward Trump held back a Taiwan arms package of about $14 billion, calling arms sales a 'very good negotiating chip'
September 23-25, 2026 (Washington)	Xi's first visit to Washington since 2015	Better tariff treatment for $30 billion of non-sensitive goods each way; at least 10 million tonnes of American coal a year in 2027-28; a dialogue on AI with an incident channel; the truce extended to January 10, 2027; no deal on chips, and no mention of Taiwan in the White House's fact sheet	Xi called the rivalry 'a race of catching up with one another, not a wrestle in which one either wins or loses'

The White House (November 1, 2025); Reuters (May 14, 2026); Al Jazeera (September 24, 2026); the Heritage Foundation (October 16, 2026).

12d. Taiwan Policy

Taiwan is the foreign-policy question that Beijing does not treat as foreign policy: the 'core of core interests' and the unfinished civil war. The policy has three layers. The political one rests on the 'one China' principle, the 1992 consensus that Taiwan's ruling party rejects, and the isolation of Taipei's twelve remaining diplomatic partners. It also cultivates the opposition Kuomintang (KMT), whose chair, Cheng Li-wun, met Xi in Beijing in April 2026, and in October 2025 Beijing created a day to commemorate 'Taiwan's Restoration' in 1945. The coercive layer is the exercises, the coast guard, and gray-zone pressure short of war.

The American layer is the arms sales Beijing protests and the ambiguity Washington keeps. American intelligence judged in March 2026 that 'Chinese leaders do not currently plan to execute an invasion of Taiwan in 2027' and have no 'fixed timeline for achieving unification', and in October 2026 American officials told Reuters that the risk was shifting toward Taiwan's 2028 election. Beijing's posture, as far as it can be read, is patience with pressure: it builds the capability, is purging the army that holds it (Module 8), needs the trade, and has watched America fight in Iran.

12e. Does China Seek to Displace the American-Led Order?

Those who say it does follow Rush Doshi, a former China director on the National Security Council, whose *The Long Game* (2021) argues that Beijing has pursued a grand strategy first to blunt American power in Asia and then to build an order of its own. They point to the Global Governance Initiative, China's turn to chair BRICS (12a), record Belt and Road deals, and the leverage of the mineral controls: before the September summit, the Heritage Foundation reported, Washington believed China was meeting only two-thirds of its rare-earth commitments.

Those who say it does not include Jessica Chen Weiss of Johns Hopkins University, a former State Department policy planner, who argued in *Foreign Affairs* in August 2022 against an 'overly confrontational' American approach that treats every Chinese gain as an American loss. Xi said at the White House that both sides should avoid the 'Thucydides Trap', and the BRICS declaration of September 2026 called for a 'WTO-centred' trading system and created no common currency.

The evidence is the same institutions read two ways, as replacements in waiting or as leverage within the order. **The course's reading:** China is building the institutions and the leverage to stand outside the American order when it chooses, and so far it uses them to bargain within it; the summits of 2025-26 were that bargaining.

Module 12 Key Points

The Foreign-Policy Machinery

• Foreign policy is decided in the Party's Foreign Affairs Commission; Wang Yi is foreign minister, its office director, and a Politburo member.

• The Belt and Road drew about $1.4 trillion of contracts and investment from 2013 to 2025, a record $213.5 billion in 2025.

• The Busan truce of October 2025, extended in September 2026, now runs to January 10, 2027.

• American intelligence judged in March 2026 that Beijing does not currently plan to invade Taiwan in 2027.

• Doshi sees a long game to displace the American order; Weiss sees a China seeking security and voice within it.

Module 12 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. To what date was the Busan truce extended in September 2026?

A) July 4, 2026
B) May 1, 2027
C) January 10, 2027
D) June 30, 2027

2. How many diplomatic posts does China have on the Lowy Institute's 2024 index?

A) 198
B) 274, the most of any country
C) About 150
D) About 120, fewer than Japan, France, or the United States, which lead the index

3. What did Xi call Taiwan at the May 2026 summit?

A) A settled question
B) An American protectorate
C) A matter for the trade talks
D) The most important issue in China-US relations

4. What did American intelligence judge in March 2026 about Taiwan?

A) No invasion is currently planned for 2027.
B) An invasion has been ordered for August 2027, the army's centenary.
C) Beijing has dropped its claim to Taiwan in return for trade concessions.
D) A blockade will begin before Taiwan's 2028 presidential election.

5. What does Rush Doshi argue in *The Long Game*?

A) China has no grand strategy.
B) China seeks only a larger voice within the institutions America built.
C) China has a grand strategy to displace the American order.
D) China's foreign policy is driven mainly by its provinces and state companies.

Module 13 — How the System Performs

The Record, Argued Both Ways

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Dan Wang, *Breakneck: China's Quest to Engineer the Future* (2025); Susan Shirk, *Overreach: How China Derailed Its Peaceful Rise* (2022)

Reference: The World Bank and the State Council's Development Research Center, *Four Decades of Poverty Reduction in China* (2022)

13a. The Record

Test	The record	Where the course covers it
Building	The world's largest high-speed rail network, more than 48,000 km at the end of 2024, and its largest power grid	—
Raising incomes	Close to 800 million people lifted out of extreme poverty since 1980, by the World Bank's count; extreme rural poverty declared ended in February 2021	—
Industry	World-leading shares of electric vehicles, batteries, and solar components	Module 9
Order	No organized opposition, and the zero-COVID protests subsided within days	Modules 7 and 11
Correcting errors	Zero-COVID's abrupt end; a late response to the property collapse, whose costs still fall on the localities	Modules 6, 9, and 11
Demand	Household consumption still low after a decade of pledges to raise it	Module 9
Succession	None designated	Module 4
The army	A command purged at the top	Module 8
The periphery	Order in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet kept by security laws and ethnic policy	Module 10

China Daily (2025); the World Bank and the State Council's Development Research Center (2022).

13b. The Ratings

Rating	China	Note
Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2026* (covering 2025)	9 of 100, Not Free: political rights −2 of 40, civil liberties 11 of 60	Hong Kong 41, Partly Free; Tibet 0
V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Report 2026* (data for 2025)	A closed autocracy; Liberal Democracy Index 0.039 on a scale of 0 to 1	—
Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2025	43 of 100, 76th of 182	Unchanged from 2024

Freedom House (March 19, 2026); V-Dem (March 2026); Transparency International (February 10, 2026). Press freedom is in Module 10.

13c. How Well Does the Party-State Perform?

Those who credit the system include Daniel A. Bell, who argues in *The China Model* (2015) that choosing leaders by their records in lower posts can select better rulers than elections do, and Dan Wang, who calls China in *Breakneck* (2025) an 'engineering state' that builds at a speed no democracy matches. Beijing's own case rests on results, above all the end of extreme rural poverty and a society that has stayed orderly through a property collapse and a pandemic.

Those who doubt it include Susan Shirk, who argues in *Overreach* (2022) that personalist rule removed the checks that once kept China's leaders from overreaching at home and abroad, and Minxin Pei, who argues in *The Sentinel State* (Module 7) that the system's controls buy survival at the price of efficiency. Yuen Yuen Ang, whose work explained the reform era's success by the room it gave local officials to improvise, argues that Xi's recentralization has taken much of that room away.

The evidence supports both cases, because they measure different things. The first measures execution, the building, mobilizing, and industrial results in the table's first rows. The second measures correction, the subject of its last rows, and of the ratings, which score the freedoms that let a society tell its rulers they are wrong. **The course's reading:** the Party-state is among the most capable states in the world at carrying out a goal its center has chosen, and among the least able to learn quickly that a goal is wrong. Under Xi the second trait has grown (Module 4).

Module 13 Key Points

How the System Performs

• The system's record of execution is strong: high-speed rail, close to 800 million lifted from extreme poverty, and world-leading clean-tech industries.

• Its record of correction is weaker: zero-COVID's abrupt end, the property bubble, flat consumption, and no succession plan.

• Bell and Wang credit the system's capacity to choose and build; Shirk, Pei, and Ang stress what centralization has cost.

• The course reads the Party-state as strongest at execution and weakest at correction, a gap that has widened under Xi.

Module 13 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. How many people lifted out of extreme poverty since 1980 does the World Bank count?

A) About 80 million
B) About 8 million
C) Close to 800 million
D) About 1.4 billion, the whole population

2. What does Dan Wang call China in *Breakneck*?

A) A lawyerly society
B) An engineering state
C) A sentinel state of informers
D) A failing developmental state whose growth has ended

3. Which author argues that personalist rule removed the checks that once restrained China's leaders?

A) Susan Shirk
B) Daniel A. Bell
C) Justin Yifu Lin
D) The authors of the World Bank's poverty report

4. Why do the two cases about the system's performance both find support in the evidence?

A) Because the data are secret
B) Because both rely only on official figures
C) Because each side uses a different decade's growth
D) Because one measures execution and the other measures correction

5. What does the course's reading say has widened under Xi?

A) Its lead in military power
B) The gap between the system's skill at execution and its ability to correct its errors
C) Collective leadership
D) The role of elections in choosing local leaders

Module 14 — Where Things Stand, and What to Watch

The Argument, the Contradictions, and the Dates

14a. The Argument in One Page

The Chinese state in October 2026 is the most centralized it has been since Mao, governing the most complex society China has had. One man holds the Party, the state, and the army, and the bodies that once shared power with him now carry out his decisions: the Standing Committee, the State Council, and a military commission emptied by purges. The conventions with which Deng's settlement guarded against one-man rule have gone, a cure in the Party's account and a risk in its critics' (Modules 2 and 4).

The state beneath the leader is capable, as Modules 5, 6, 7, and 9 show, but capacities that serve a chosen goal do not tell the center when the goal is wrong. Its strains are the ones Modules 6 and 8 to 11 trace: localities short of money, households that save rather than spend, an army purged before its centenary, and a periphery governed by security law and the police.

Abroad, the machinery's instruments are economic, and the summits of 2025-26 steadied the relationship without settling it (Module 12). At home, everything waits on the 21st Congress (14c). The system's greatest strength is that it can decide quickly and carry out what it decides. Its greatest weakness is the same fact, because a system built to execute cannot easily hear that it is wrong (Modules 4 and 13).

14b. Five Contradictions

- **Centralized and dependent.** The center decides everything, and it depends on localities it has left short of money and an army it has purged to carry its decisions out (Modules 4, 6, and 8).
- **Capable and slow to learn.** The state that built the rail network and the industries in a generation acted late on the failure of zero-COVID, the turn in property, and its generals' corruption (Modules 8, 9, 11, and 13).
- **Supply and demand.** Industries that lead the world sit beside weak household spending; the surplus that results draws objections abroad, and the weak prices at home are China's (Module 9).
- **Legal and above the law.** China has more law and more lawyers than at any time in its history, and a Party beyond the reach of either (Modules 7 and 10).
- **Permanent and mortal.** The leader has no term, rival, or successor, in a system whose own history shows what followed the death of a leader-for-life (Modules 2 and 4).

14c. The Watch List

Date	Event	Why it matters
October 19, 2026	Third-quarter GDP and the September data	A weak quarter would strengthen the case for stimulus at the plenum and the economic work conference; a strong one carried by exports would show the supply-led model still bearing the load
October 26-29, 2026	The Fifth Plenum, on Party self-governance (Module 3)	Whether the empty Politburo and commission seats are filled now or every senior choice waits for the 2027 Congress; its communiqué can be read as in Module 4
November 10, 2026	The date analysts treat as the end of China's suspension of its October 2025 rare-earth controls	Beijing's statement extending the truce did not name rare earths. A quiet renewal would show the lever held in reserve, and a lapse would show it in use
November 15, 2026	Consultation closes on a proposed ban on exporting perovskite and tandem solar-cell technology, with curbs on advanced polysilicon, wafer, and cell processes	Whether export controls spread from minerals to the know-how of the industries China leads
November 18-19, 2026	APEC leaders' meeting in Shenzhen, with Trump attending	The year's third Trump-Xi meeting, and a test of whether the Washington agreements on tariffs, coal, and AI are being carried out
November 27, 2026	China's suspension of its ban on exports of gallium, germanium, and antimony to the United States ends	The second mineral date inside the truce
November 28, 2026	Taiwan's local elections	The first national test of the Kuomintang under Cheng Li-wun, the party Beijing courts; a strong result would support the case for patience that 12d reads in Beijing's posture
December 14-15, 2026	The G20 summit in Miami, with Xi attending	Xi on American soil for the second time in three months, before the truce expires
December 2026 (date not announced)	The Central Economic Work Conference	The 2027 growth target and the campaign of the year, and whether consumption gets money or a slogan
January 10, 2027	The extended Busan truce expires	Whether the truce becomes a framework or a series of extensions
March 2027 (date not announced)	The National People's Congress	The 2027 targets and deficit, the last budget before the Congress
June 2027	Beijing's deadline for removing the local financing vehicles from its official list	Whether local debt is resolved or only reclassified (Module 6)
August 1, 2027	The PLA's centenary, the date of the 2027 goal (Module 8)	Whether the goal is met, moved, or quietly redefined, and whom Xi has trusted with the command
October or November 2027 (date not announced)	The 21st Party Congress	A new Central Committee and Standing Committee, a fourth term for Xi if he stays (Module 4), and the presence or absence of a successor: the system's next decision point
January 2028 (expected)	Taiwan's presidential election	The point toward which American officials see the risk shifting (Module 12)
March 2028 (date not announced)	The new National People's Congress elects the state's leaders	Whether Xi keeps the presidency for a fourth term

Dates from Xinhua, the Politburo's announcement of September 21, 2026, the White House (November 1, 2025), China's commerce ministry, pv magazine, Caixin (May 29, 2026), and the Jamestown Foundation (August 20, 2026), the Heritage Foundation (October 16, 2026), the statistics bureau's release calendar, and Taiwan's Central Election Commission. The plenum, truce, and summit dates are as announced on October 18, 2026.

14d. The Last Word

The throughline of fourteen modules is that the Party leads everything, so everything depends on how the Party is led. Deng's answer and Xi's are the settlements of Module 2, and Xi's has produced a state that is capable at execution and slow to correct (Module 13). The course ends with that state at its most concentrated, and with the question at the center of the watch list (14c): whether anyone has been chosen to follow Xi.

Module 14 Key Points

Where Things Stand, and What to Watch

• The Chinese state in October 2026 is the most centralized since Mao, governing the most complex society China has had.

• Its strength and weakness are one fact: built to carry out decisions quickly, it struggles to hear that a decision is wrong.

• Five contradictions: centralized and dependent, capable and slow to learn, supply and demand, legal and above the law, permanent and mortal.

• The Fifth Plenum (October 26-29) and the 21st Congress (2027) will show whether the empty seats are filled and a successor named.

• The Busan truce runs to January 10, 2027; the mineral dates of November 10 and 27 test whether Beijing keeps its lever in reserve.

Module 14 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. According to the course, what weakness comes from the same fact as the system's greatest strength?

A) It cannot easily hear that it is wrong
B) It holds elections
C) It tolerates dissent
D) It depends on foreign investment for most of its growth and technology

2. Which contradiction describes the economy?

A) Legal and above the law.
B) Permanent and mortal: a leader without a term, rival, or successor.
C) Centralized and dependent: a center that decides and localities short of money.
D) Supply and demand: strong industry, weak household spending.

3. Which event does the watch list call the system's next decision point?

A) The APEC meeting in Shenzhen
B) Taiwan's local elections of November 28
C) The 21st Party Congress
D) The National People's Congress session of March 2028, which elects the state's leaders

4. What does the watch list say the November 10 date will show?

A) The end of the truce
B) Whether Xi will attend the Group of 20 summit in Miami in December
C) Whether Beijing keeps its mineral lever in reserve
D) The first results of the anti-involution campaign in the solar industry

5. What does the last word say Xi's answer to how the Party is led has produced?

A) A return to collective leadership at the top
B) A state run by its legislature and courts
C) A market economy with the state at arm's length, as under Deng
D) A capable but slow-to-correct state

Answer Sheet

Answers to every module's Check Your Understanding quiz.

Module	Answers
Module 1 Quiz	1. D 2. A 3. B 4. C 5. C
Module 2 Quiz	1. D 2. B 3. A 4. C 5. A
Module 3 Quiz	1. B 2. D 3. A 4. D 5. B
Module 4 Quiz	1. C 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. B
Module 5 Quiz	1. D 2. B 3. C 4. A 5. D
Module 6 Quiz	1. B 2. A 3. C 4. A 5. B
Module 7 Quiz	1. D 2. C 3. A 4. B 5. D
Module 8 Quiz	1. C 2. B 3. A 4. C 5. D
Module 9 Quiz	1. D 2. C 3. A 4. B 5. A
Module 10 Quiz	1. B 2. D 3. C 4. B 5. C
Module 11 Quiz	1. A 2. D 3. D 4. A 5. B
Module 12 Quiz	1. C 2. B 3. D 4. A 5. C
Module 13 Quiz	1. C 2. B 3. A 4. D 5. B
Module 14 Quiz	1. A 2. D 3. C 4. C 5. D