



China: A Modern History

Michael Dillon

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China's transformation in the last few decades has been perhaps the most remarkable -- and most controversial -- development in modern history. Barely a century removed from the struggling and out-dated Qing Empire, China has managed to reinvent itself on an unprecedented scale: from Empire, to Communist state, to hybrid capitalist superpower. Yet the full implications of China's rapid march to modernity are not widely understood - particularly, the effects of China's meteoric rise on the nation's many ethnic minorities. *China: A Modern History* is the definitive guide to this complex contemporary phenomenon.

Deng Xiaoping's 1980s policy of 'reform and opening', which saw China enter the world market, is only the most recent in a series of dramatic shifts that have transformed Chinese society over the past 150 years. *China: A Modern History* explores these contrasts in detail, while also highlighting the enduring values which have informed Chinese identity for millennia.

Beginning with the waning years of the Qing dynasty, Dillon compellingly recounts the 19th-century period of 'national humiliation', when China became a virtual colony of the Western powers and Japan. Nationalists brought down the humbled Celestial Empire in 1911, ushering in a long period of discord from which Mao's Chinese Communist Party emerged bloodily triumphant in 1949. In a society still overwhelmingly agricultural, Mao's colossal structural changes propelled China to superpower status - but at an enormous human toll. By Mao's death in 1976, programmes like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution had once more brought China to the brink of total collapse. It was at this moment that, against all odds, China recast itself yet again: this time, under the visionary leadership of Deng Xiaoping, as a nation of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Informed by both ancient and contemporary values, China has entered the new century on a powerful footing, commanding unprecedented financial and industrial resources - prepared to meet the West on its own terms.

Michael Dillon's *China: A Modern History* is essential reading for those interested in the past, present and future course of one of the world's great nations. Clearly and compellingly written, this will stand as the best introduction to this spectacular and still-unfinished story.

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