



China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed

By Andrew G. Walder

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China's Communist Party seized power in 1949 after a long period of guerrilla insurgency followed by full-scale war, but the Chinese revolution was just beginning. *China Under Mao* narrates the rise and fall of the Maoist revolutionary state from 1949 to 1976—an epoch of startling accomplishments and disastrous failures, steered by many forces but dominated above all by Mao Zedong.

Mao's China, Andrew Walder argues, was defined by two distinctive institutions established during the first decade of Communist Party rule: a Party apparatus that exercised firm (sometimes harsh) discipline over its members and cadres; and a socialist economy modeled after the Soviet Union. Although a large national bureaucracy had oversight of this authoritarian system, Mao intervened strongly at every turn. The doctrines and political organization that produced Mao's greatest achievements—victory in the civil war, the creation of China's first unified modern state, a historic transformation of urban and rural life—also generated his worst failures: the industrial depression and rural famine of the Great Leap Forward and the violent destruction and stagnation of the Cultural Revolution.

Misdiagnosing China's problems as capitalist restoration and prescribing continuing class struggle against imaginary enemies as the solution, Mao ruined much of what he had built and created no viable alternative. At the time of his death, he left China backward and deeply divided.

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China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed By Andrew G. Walder Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #913628 in Books
- Published on: 2015-04-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.30" h x 6.30" w x 9.40" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 440 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Andrew Walder's account of Mao's time in power is detailed, sophisticated and powerful...Walder takes on many pieces of conventional wisdom about Mao's China and pulls them apart...What was it that led so much of China's population to follow Mao's orders, in effect to launch a civil war against his own party? There is still much more to understand about the bond between Mao and the wider population. As we try to understand that bond, there will be few better guides than Andrew Walder's book. Sober, measured, meticulous in every deadly detail, it is an essential assessment of one of the world's most important revolutions. (Rana Mitter *Times Literary Supplement* 2016-01-13)

Walder convincingly shows that the effect of Maoist inequalities still distorts China today...In what will be a mind-opening book for many (and is a depressing reminder for others) Andrew Walder shows that in the decades after Mao, 'China began the long process of recovering from the damage of his misrule.' (Jonathan Mirsky *The Spectator* 2015-08-22)

Walder's argument is forthright and his assessment of Mao's legacy is unrelenting, and yet the abundance of detailed, well-researched descriptions of political campaigns, crackdowns, infighting, economic and demographic data, and everyday life of the Chinese people?combined with his masterful storytelling talent comparable to that of Jonathan Spence, another prominent Yale historian of China?makes the work a highly readable and excellent textbook of Mao's China with refreshing insights and a great deal of provocative ideas. (Liu Kang *China Review International* 2014-05-01)

Perspicacious scholarship by the preeminent American historical sociologist working on the People's Republic of China. A balanced, critical account of events of baffling complexity, and a sophisticated analysis of uniquely solid empirical data. If reading is indeed the basics for all learning, then this is *the* book to read in order to learn why Mao in the end accomplished so little of what he had hoped to achieve after 1949 and why his legacy remains so controversial. (Michael Schoenhals, Lund University)

This is a masterful synthesis of the literature on Mao Zedong's China and of Walder's own extensive sociological research. He combines Mao-centered political history with close attention to the organizational characteristics of the Communist Party, which explain its responsiveness to Mao Zedong's often disastrous initiatives. In the author's view, Mao was a 'rigidly dogmatic leader with extremely narrow and outdated ideas.' The book is replete with similarly incisive judgments. These will no doubt provoke controversy, but in the end, they are likely to be accepted. (Thomas P. Bernstein, Columbia University)

About the Author

Andrew G. Walder is Denise O'Leary and Kent Thiry Professor of Sociology, and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University.

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