



# Twentieth-Century China

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This course follows the main historical developments in China from the establishment of the first Republic in 1911 to the rise of the Communist regime in 1949, the introduction of market reforms in the 1990s, and China's current bid for political and economic world relevance.

The collapse of the imperial system and the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1911 generated widespread hopes for a successful nation-building effort that would free China from Western imperialism and lead it out of its economic decline and general poverty. Reforms, however, were hindered by internal political struggles and the escalation of Japanese imperialist aggression that culminated with the invasion of China in 1937.



In 1949 Mao Zedong established the People's Republic of China (PRC), initiating three decades of Communist rule that was to take China through dramatic social and economic upheavals, including the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Today, more than 30 years after the death of Mao in 1976, China is experimenting with new forms of social and economic organization under the banner of “Communism with Chinese characteristics.” As the economic interests increasingly outweigh ideological differences in the global marketplace, the PRC is in the process of creating a “China” and a “Chinese” identity that is as much about capitalism, flashy karaoke discos, and flaunting its international muscle as it is about the revival of traditional social and religious rituals.

