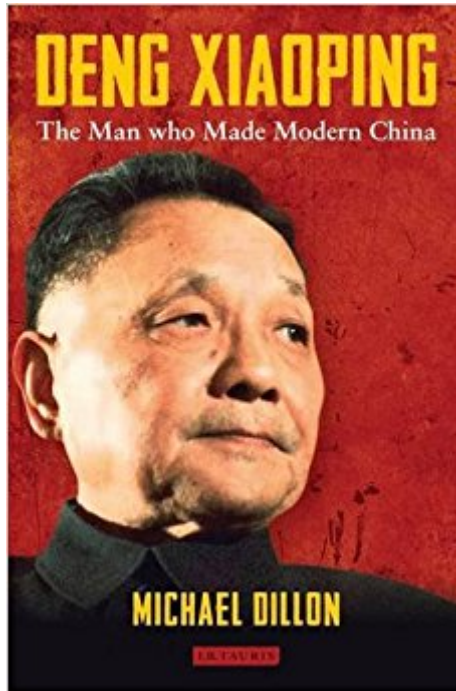




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# Deng Xiaoping: A Political Biography



## Synopsis

One of the most important figures in global politics during the second half of the 20th century; Deng Xiaoping is generally considered the central figure behind China's economic liberalization programme that produced historically unprecedented growth rates and development beginning in the late 1970s. Lifting nearly a billion people out of poverty, Deng Xiaoping's 'Four Modernisations' called for reform in agriculture, industry, military, and science and technology. Today these reforms are considered to be the crucial turning point in modern Chinese history, enabling China to effectively harness its previously-latent power in its quest to become a global economic superpower. Just ten years after this tremendous achievement, Deng's brutal suppression of the democracy movement at Tiananmen Square severely undermined his international and domestic reputation. To explain the seeming contradictions between Deng Xiaoping's desire for economic liberalization and political conservatism, Michael Dillon's biography utilizes recently-released Chinese sources to detail Deng Xiaoping's emergence from a minority, second-class community in the Sichuan province, via education in France, to his meteoric rise to the top of the CCP's political hierarchy, illustrating the ways in which his life of struggle and survival shaped his political career. Dillon's biography addresses Xiaoping as both an intensely committed communist capable of playing a principal role in the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961, while incurring the wrath of Mao only ten years later as he was exiled and purged during the Cultural Revolution. Emphasizing Deng Xiaoping's effectiveness as a party operator and political bruiser rather than an intellectual capable of formulating the reforms for which he eventually took credit, this book sheds light on Deng's ability to capitalize upon the planning expertise of other party members. This biography of the central figure in China's economic liberalization is essential for any reader interested in or affected by China's rise to global prominence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A well paced, and judicious account, well written and very easy to read. It's strength is in giving equal weight to the various phases of Deng's career, rather than focussing too much on the post 1978 period. It also captures something of the complexity and contradictoriness of Deng." - Kerry Brown, author of *The New Emperors* "Through this fascinating and clearly written biography of Deng Xiaoping, Michael Dillon shows us how different Chinese power politics works from our economic and political world. Economic liberalisation that seems capitalist to the extreme, is combined with state interference and ideological conservatism. In this respect Xi Jinping can be seen as a straight continuation of Deng Xiaoping's reform agenda." - Barend Ter Haar, Run Run Shaw Professor of Chinese, University of Oxford.

Michael Dillon was founding Director of the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Durham, UK, where he taught modern Chinese history. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Asiatic Society and was Visiting Professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing in 2009. He is the author of *China: A Modern History* (I.B.Tauris).

China's economic resurgence that began in 1979 could not have occurred without Deng Xiaoping. Deng had been one of Mao's greatest supporters over the years, but his differences are what mattered in the end. At first they simply resulted in Deng being banished to 're-education' in rural areas or dismissal from all his top posts. However, with the support of Zhou Enlai and top Army marshals he returned to power for a third time, this time to stay. His main contribution - obtaining the support of the Communist Party shortly after Mao's death and while the nation was just recovering from Mao's 'Cultural Revolution' that had removed, beaten, and sometimes killed capitalists and those called 'revisionists.' Unfortunately, too many instead choose to criticize Deng for his resistance to meaningful political reform - because he saw it as inimical to rapid improvement, instead creating never-ending time-wasting ideological arguments. Prior to leading China, he had studied and worked in northern France, participated in the 1934-35 Long March and the civil war with the nationalists between 1945-49. He'd also led a political campaign to 'tame' Chinese who had

vented criticisms of Mao's maladministration and corruption that ultimately led to the disastrous 'Great Leap Forward.' (Close to a million 'rightists' - liberals, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, pro-democracy leaders - to labor camps and death.) Later he partially redeemed himself by ordering the designation off 'rightist' be removed from their records when he returned to power in the 1970s. Deng's efforts led China to achieve the most rapid growth in a major economy in world history, the fastest growth of living standards of any major economy, and lifting 620 million out of internationally defined poverty. He'd realized the Soviet-model of socialism, practiced by China for 30 years, hadn't improved people's livelihoods. The subsequent 'Socialist Market Economy' freed the entrepreneurial spirit of its citizens, increased the responsibility of local authorities, and allowed ideas and expertise from the outside world to enter into and benefit China.

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