

## Central Themes and Key Points

KEY POINTS IN DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST ASIA >> 20th CENTURY

[BACK TO KEY POINTS TOC](#)

China: 1945-2000

- When WW II ends in 1945 with Japan's defeat in China, the Nationalists and the Communist forces fight a civil war for control of China. The Communists are victorious in 1949 and the Nationalists leave the mainland of China and establish a rival government on the island of Taiwan. (The rival governments continue to exist today as the People's Republic of China on the mainland and the Republic of China on Taiwan.)
- In October 1949, Mao Tse-tung declares the establishment of the People's Republic of China and proclaims that "the Chinese people have stood up" after 100 years of subjugation by foreign powers on China's soil.
- Mao and his particular vision of communism in China dominate from 1949 until his death in 1976. The Maoist period is characterized by mass mobilization and the prominence of ideology. The Great Leap Forward of 1956-58 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 are Maoist campaigns designed, in the first instance, to bring China up to the level of the developed nations by an economic "great leap" and, in the second instance, to rid Chinese culture of impediments to the communist society Mao envisions. The Great Leap Forward results in an estimated 30,000 deaths from famine; the Cultural Revolution pits Chinese against Chinese in brutal persecution.
- After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping introduces the "Open Door" policy of economic liberalization with elements of a market economy that has brought China into the global economy and led to rapid economic modernization in China.
- Despite the continued expansion of a market economy in China, the Chinese Communist Party still governs China with few signs of political liberalization. The suppression of the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square testifies to this, as does the continued imprisonment of political dissidents and political activists promoting a multi-party system.
- China in the 21st century is resuming its historical position as a dominant force in Asia and in the world. It is a multi-ethnic society with urban and rural areas and different regions of the country profiting from economic changes at varying rates. Knowledge about China's large population, economic growth, cultural, artistic, and technological achievements, and political developments is important for all.