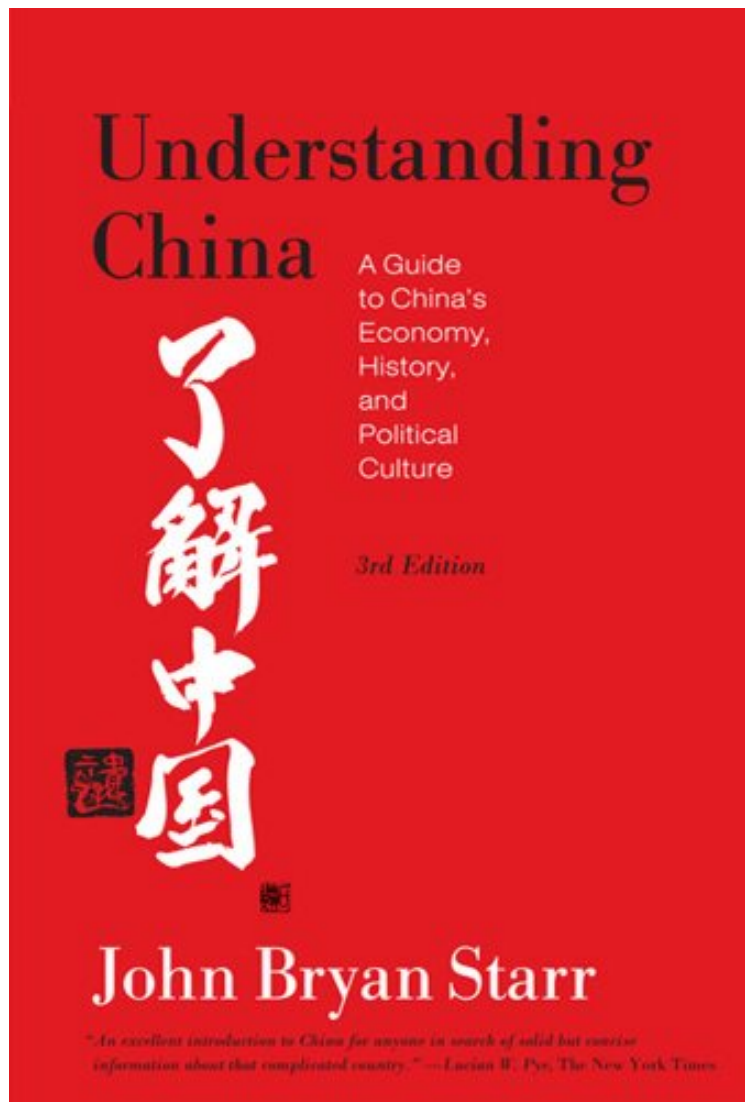


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Understanding China [3rd Edition]: A Guide to China's Economy, History, and Political Culture

John Bryan Starr

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.com Without question, the 21st century will include an increase China's global importance--a situation that is sometimes ground for optimism, sometimes fear. Despite the recent growth of interest in the region, China's political and economic nuances remain widely misunderstood. Those seeking to grasp the complexities of modern-day China will find much to admire in *Understanding China*, a remarkably concise, fact-filled, and fair-minded survey by Yale professor John Bryan Starr. Written for a general audience, *Understanding China* fills in historical context while evaluating the major issues facing the People's Republic today, from environmental degradation to exploding population growth. Bryan's conclusion: China's problems are too intractable to support the current political system for much longer. And despite the free-market accommodations of the Deng era, it's not democracy he envisions as China's most likely fate, but rather a political future controlled largely by the People's Liberation Army. It's a grim forecast, but one ably supported by the book's data and statistics. From School Library Journal YA? A marvelous resource for learning about China. Originally a series of lectures, the book covers the entire spectrum of that vast and sometimes enigmatic land. Starr writes, for instance, about how the Communist party and the armed forces actually work in relation to the government and vice versa, rural and urban social ills, population control, unemployment, corruption, inflation, intellectual freedom, foreign relations, pollution, and more. The culture is examined from the Chinese point of view, and is often contrasted with American culture, all done in an evenhanded way. Additionally, the statistics cited are compared with data from the U.S. in order to give a point of reference. Chinese history, as it affects current outlooks and practices, is interspersed throughout. Each logically organized chapter treats a separate topic. Although there is some repetition of concepts and data, the book will still be useful for research. This succinct and easy-to-read title removes much of the puzzlement with which many Americans regard China and the Chinese. The chapter on human-rights practices alone is sure to spark lively discussion in history, government, and American culture classes. A lucid examination of Chinese character, practices, and problems.? Judy McAloon, Potomac Library, Prince William County, VA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Packed with facts and figures, but enlivened with firsthand observations . . . [Understanding China] provides an excellent introduction to China for anyone in search of solid but concise information about that complicated country."--Lucian W. Pye, *The New York Times Book*