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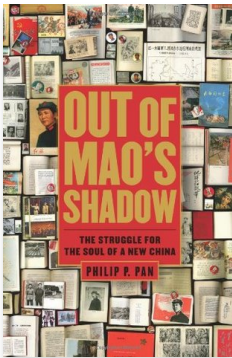
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Out of Mao's Shadow: The Struggle for the Soul of a New China

by Philip P. Pan

4.10 ·  Rating details · 1,492 ratings · 145 reviews

Prize-winning journalist Philip P. Pan offers an unprecedented inside look at the momentous battle underway for China's future. On one side is the entrenched party elite determined to preserve its authoritarian grip on power. On the other is a collection of lawyers, journalists, entrepreneurs, activists, hustlers, and dreamers striving to build a more tolerant, open, and d
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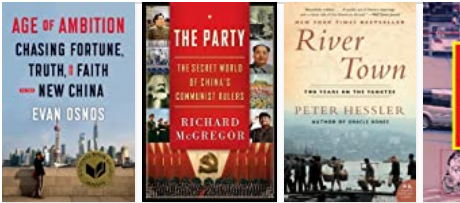
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Hardcover, 368 pages
Published June 17th 2008 by Simon & Schuster (first published January 1st 2008)
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ABOUT PHILIP P. PAN

Philip P. Pan
8 followers

Philip P. Pan is the weekend editor for the New York Times, a former foreign correspondent for The Washington Post, and that newspaper's former bureau chief in Beijing and Moscow. He lived in China for more than a decade and his work has been recognized with the Livingston Award for international reporting, an Overseas Press Club award and the Asia Society's Osborn Elliott Prize for excellence in [...more](#)

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Jason Koivu rated it
Shelves: [non-fiction](#)

Dec 21, 2014

I thought China got it's shit together after Mao's death. Apparently I was wrong.

Out of Mao's Shadow by Philip Pan is yet another book notched in my ongoing self-education of that huge honkin' thing known as China. I've got two reasons for my interest.

One, China is a world player now. When I was a kid, China was the overpopulated country that produced cheap plastic goods, and that was essentially it. Now China is stretching out and opening up. They are interacting with the rest of the world. On [...more](#)

59 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Alice Poon rated it
Shelves: [asia-themed](#), [favorites](#), [non-fiction](#)

Feb 15, 2014

[This review was posted on my Asia Sentinel blog on August 30, 2008.]

There are perhaps two resounding messages that the author tries to convey in this book: firstly that “those counting on the capitalists to lead the charge for democratization in China are likely to be disappointed”, and secondly, that the society’s struggle for social justice and civic liberties is often futile, although passionate individuals with a conscience and a sense of justice are ceaselessly trying against all odds to a [...more](#)

19 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Richard Burger rated it

Feb 23, 2012

Perhaps the most unforgettable scene in the movie *Alien*, perhaps the greatest science fiction movie ever made, is the attempt by the fast-disappearing crew to resurrect the decapitated robot, Ash, whom they beg for an answer to their simple question:

Ripley: How do we kill it, Ash? There's gotta be a way of killing it. How, how do we do it?

Ash: You can't... You still don't understand what you're dealing with, do you? A perfect organism. Its structural perfection is matched only by its hostility.

L [...more](#)

16 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Lacey Boland rated it

Jun 25, 2008

This book is a compilation of stories of the individuals in China who are working for political and social change. It made me realize that even though I may not be encountering many voices of dissent during my time here in China, they do exist and certainly have throughout the country's tumultuous



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TRIVIA ABOUT OUT OF MAO'S SHAD...

No trivia or quizzes yet. [Add some now »](#)

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Alice Lippart rated it · review of another edition
Shelves: [read-in-2018](#), [non-fiction](#), [history](#)

Feb 24, 2018

Very informative and absolutely fascinating.

11 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Leftbanker rated it
Shelves: [history](#), [politics](#), [economics-politics](#), [china](#)

Dec 06, 2019

This was an excellent account of China in the post-Mao era while back-tracking to fill in some gaps (at least for me). China continues to intrigue me while also freaking me the fuck out at the same time. I feel that I know the country and its motivations much better after reading his book.

I think this guy wrote for the Washington Post and most of this book felt like article, and I don't mean that to criticize. His notes on the horrors of the cultural revolution were fascinating. I highly recomme [...more](#)

9 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Brian rated it
Shelves: [first-time-reading-author](#), [historical-political-or-biography](#), [read-in-2008](#), [favorites](#), [contemporary-events](#)

Jul 24, 2008

With the upcoming Olympics, I figured it was time to get a bit more educated on modern day China. This was a fascinating historical analysis by Washington post reporter Phillip Pan about China's recent economic reforms and the lack of political reforms (one party rule, lack of religious freedom, government censor of papers/internet/doctors, child population control), and whether the situation can co-exist/continue.

Zhao Ziyang's resignation as party leader when refusing to order the military agai [...more](#)

7 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Brian Griffith rated it
Shelves: [cultural-social-change](#), [china](#), [history-general](#)

Dec 11, 2020

Pan carefully documents the efforts of Chinese dissidents, lawyers, journalists, labor organizers, or local peasants as they fight systematic corruption and abuse of power. He highlights brave people, taking huge risks, gambling what strategy will work. The stories start off seriously depressing. At first I thought this would be a book of lamentations. But the small victories over time grow impressive, and the real characters Pan introduces deserve a place in world history.

7 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Horace Derwent marked it as to-read

Jul 11, 2020

the giddy people packed the street and the Square flashing victory signs, from atop of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, where Mao proclaimed his red reign in 1949 and where his protrait still hangs, the men at the helm of the Communist Party looked out on the masses and basked in the outpouring of the national pride.

the collective outburst of joy in the political heart of the nation, not since

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Quite good – Pan does an excellent job of weaving a narrative thread that connects the profiled individuals. Some further discussion of the more meta- issues might have been nice, but it succeeds quite well at putting a face on dissent in China.

5 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Qiong added it

Apr 22, 2018

I am afraid this is not as good as its rating says it to be.

Well, hang on. It is more complicated than that.

The author's stance is pre-set. In the introduction page, he writes, "many people who care about China tell themselves that democratization is inevitable, that the people will eventually prevail and the one-party will fail. I certainly hope so."

I was stunned reading this, when I had barely started. Journalists and reporters are supposed to give objective accounts and leave their readers to [...more](#)

4 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Cav rated it

· review of another edition

May 18, 2020

Shelves: [history](#), [culture](#), [politics](#), [asia](#), [real-life-saga](#), [biography](#), [communism](#), [sociology](#)

This was a decent read. "Out Of Mao's Shadow" follows the stories of a handful of Chinese citizens, who, through their unique ways, have challenged the authoritarian status quo of the Chinese Communist Party.

The book tells the stories of these remarkable individuals, and also provides the relevant historical context along the way.



The book reads a bit like a novel divided into sections. Each chapter covers the story of a different Chinese dissident.

The book also talks a bit about Mao; his 5- [...more](#)

4 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



James rated it

· review of another edition

May 03, 2014

Shelves: [china](#), [history](#), [non-fiction](#), [politics](#)

Out of Mao's Shadow tells the stories of individuals caught up in the chaotic transition China is undergoing from a Maoist state to a modern player in the global economy, a capitalist authoritarian state that will cast a long shadow

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Each of the chapters introduces a [...more](#)4 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)**Hayley** rated it

Aug 16, 2012

Shelves: [nonfiction](#), [anthropology](#)

This book sort of exploded my brain. I know embarrassingly little about world history in general, but the last century of China's history seemed to me especially, as an American who never "needed to know" anything, fuzzy at best. I think many of us, if we haven't had a particularly zealous teacher or reached out to find the information ourselves, see modern China as a vaguely Communist blob full of people who probably have a better work ethic than we do; we harbor weird xenophobic anxieties about [...more](#)

4 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)**Owlseyes** marked it as to-read

Dec 17, 2016

Shelves: [china](#), [author-a-foreign-correspondent](#), [2000-2007-beijing](#), [for-the-washington-post](#), [2009-moscow](#), [harvard-college-studies](#), [studied-chinese](#), [studied-russian](#), [gold-medal-arthur-ross-book-award](#), [sars-epidemic-cover-up](#)

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(Zhao Ziyang)



(Lin Zhao Wrote poetry in blood)

"On a warm Friday night in the summer of 2001, I stood amid hundreds of thousands of young Chinese pouring into Tiananmen Square in a joyous and largely spontaneous celebration of Beijing's successful bid to host the Summer Olympics in 2008."

"The army crushed those protests, and in the early 1990s, when I was studying Mandarin in Beijing, the memory of the massacre still darkened university campuses. But now people seeme [...more](#)

4 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Steven Grimm rated it
Shelves: [sociology-politics](#)

Sep 03, 2011

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notable dustups over human rights and other issues, and as such reads like a collection of biographical short stories.

There's no overarch [...more](#)

4 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Ian McHugh rated it

· review of another edition

Jul 24, 2015

A devastating account of China in the first decade of the 21st Century. The timing of this book, just prior to the Beijing Olympics of 2008, was crucial as, since then, the popular view is that China has 'cleaned up its act' somewhat.

This book outlines just how insidious the presence of the CPC was in everyday life. Read against Evan Osnos' "Age of Ambition" it can give readers an excellent introduction to 21st Century China.

It also gives insight into the pre-Olympics China which, despite the pr [...more](#)

4 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Alice rated it

Aug 27, 2008

Recommends it for: Anyone interested in largest country in the world
Recommended to Alice by: Jon Stewart (not personally of course)

I'm not quite through with this, but I am deeply impressed. I've had mixed luck with journalists attempting to do in-depth political and social anthropology, but this one is quite good -- easily as good as anything by Philip Caputo. Because China is so closed off, we so rarely get to hear any of the fascinating stories of individual lives that Pan tells here. The basic thesis of the book is that free markets don't necessarily lead to free societies and it's not clear at all that China will ever [...more](#)

3 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Xue Yun rated it

· review of another edition

Sep 07, 2010

Shelves: 12-grade

The first few pages bored me. I was reading it and thinking, another book criticizing the Chinese government? But then when I reached the chapter about Lin Zhao, things started to change. Reading about Lin's passion and faith in Mao frustrated me. How could a young women who could have chosen the nationalist instead of Mao, be betrayed by Father Mao?

The stories and vivid descriptions of the emotional and physical tortures that many faced, once again challenged my usual justifications of the Chi [...more](#)

3 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Kimfu rated it

· review of another edition

Jun 26, 2011

Shelves: read-2016-chinese

Good book. It helped solidify my knowledge of post-Mao China -- and it definitely solidified my opinion of Mao Zedong.

When I first read "Mao: The Unknown Story" by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday several years ago, I really liked it. I thought, "FINALLY, someone

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George rated it · review of another edition
Shelves: [non-fiction](#), [read-and-kept](#), [favorites](#)

May 23, 2018

4.5 stars. Lost half a star as it was not as objective as it could have been but was still thoroughly enjoyable and informative.

3 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Todd Stockslager rated it
Shelves: [travel-geography](#)

Jun 04, 2015

Review title: China: Souled out to Communism?

I recently spent two weeks in Beijing after working with a team of half-dozen or so co-workers there for five years via phone, email, and instant message. The trip was an eye-opener. One of my most important moments was having a lively discussion about "The Social Network", the Oscar-winning movie about the founding of Facebook. My co-worker had seen the movie, and had apparently read some about the history as well, and had some interesting opinions a [...more](#)

2 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



B. Cheng rated it
Shelves: [china](#), [library-audio](#)

Nov 17, 2016

I read a lot of China books and if you want a deep dive into some of the difficult issues currently facing China, this is an excellent take. One thing with a book like this is timeliness and despite being 8 years old, it doesn't feel dated or that you've missed anything for the most part (a new addition would surely want to update hen Guangcheng's tale of oppression and then escape to Beijing, but where the author leaves off at least gives a solid base for the story).

When we read, we're always ho [...more](#)

2 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



David rated it

May 14, 2009

This was a fascinating book for me, and I learned all kinds of things about Chinese history that were completely new – filled in lots of gaps in my understanding. If the book has shortcomings, it could be that there is too much to keep straight – the stories and characters keep flowing around and through each other and I had trouble keeping them all straight!

Mao Tse-tung (or Mao Zedong) was the chairman of the Communist Party of China from 1943 to his death in 1976. He remains controversial in C

[...more](#)

2 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Alex rated it
Shelves: [non-fiction](#), [audiobook](#)

Mar 31, 2013

A really interesting listen. I liked its format of many profiles, and the last few tied together particularly well. It was also rather disheartening. This is why I still prefer Hessler, because his books contain a well-balanced mix of optimism and criticism. Mao's Shadow has an obvious Western slant, and I often found myself thinking about the lens through which Pan wrote, but the fact that the Communist government is corrupt is not news to anyone,

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i nomas rated it
Shelves: china-stuff, history

Feb 05, 2009

Great book! I also have hometown love for Philip Pan since he writes for the Washington Post (and he studied in Beijing back in the day).

Conventional wisdom dictates that economic growth leads to political liberalization: you got your increasingly affluent middle class, which gives rise to civil society and whatnot, which then spawns oppositional politics. Alas, not so in China! This book is a vivid description of the brutal autocratic regime that persists in the PRC and the people who dare to r [...more](#)

2 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Bobby rated it

Oct 02, 2008

A very enjoyable look at the current state of Communist China. The books is most interesting when covering the history and coverups of Mao Zedong and communism since.

But as for Phillip Pan's premise, that China defies the western idea of free trade always bringing personal freedom, the anecdotes in the book seem to argue against his interpretation. [...more](#)

2 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



David Corleto-Bales rated it
Shelves: 2011

· review of another edition

Feb 26, 2011

Very interesting book about the "1989" generation of now middle-aged Chinese activists trying to expose the hidden histories of modern China through seeking out the victims--and sometimes perpetrators--of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath. Mao's mad, tyrannical rule is rehashed here in ways I had never seen before. I highly recommend it.

[...more](#)

2 likes · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Brandt rated it

· review of another edition

Mar 26, 2015

This book presents an intriguing and well represented account of life within the Chinese society. The personal stories, accompanied by author Philip P. Pan's exposition of the emotions and reality of the lives of Chinese citizen's, gives the reader an appeal to understand the differences between Western concepts of political freedom as opposed to Eastern.

Pan's attempt to explain the multitude of factors that require or produce political and social change within the context of economic develop [...more](#)

1 like · [Like](#) · [see review](#)



Todd Martin rated it
Shelves: history

Jul 05, 2021

Although the violence and mass casualties associated with the cultural revolution are behind them, China remains a repressive regime characterized by:

- Governmental corruption
- Criminalization of dissent
- Persecution of political enemies
- Rampant cronyism

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