

Reading Guide for *The Age of Walls* by Tim Marshall

Chapter 1, China

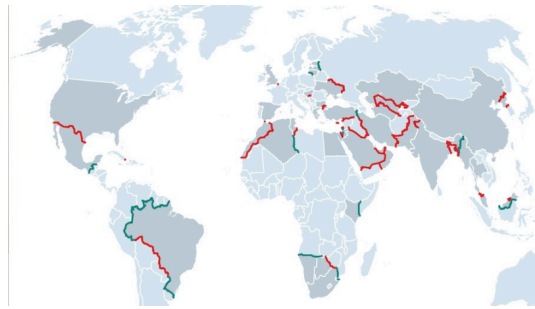
“Fences and walls are not necessary. Mostly they are manifestations of superficial thinking.”

How to use these reading guides:

Each chapter reading guide begins with a short introduction that provides background to help you better understand the chapter, and what follows are the important themes, quotes, definitions, & essential questions--sprinkled with important names, places, & events you should know--to guide you.

This first reading guide on Chapter 1, China, provides more detail than subsequent chapters will. It will be your job for Chapters 2 through 8 to note the details you will need in your courses throughout your sophomore, junior, and senior years.

Here are the reading guides for Chapters 1 through 3, China, the United States, and Israel-Palestine.



<https://www.archipanic.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/01.-World-Border-Barriers.jpg>

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*This chapter presents an overview of modern China’s challenges and priorities both internally (“Domestic Policy”) and in its foreign policy. Marshall describes China as a “multiethnic empire with Chinese characteristics,” and that is important to understand. Multiethnic nations have challenges keeping themselves united, and China has decided its unity will be preserved with a very strong, control-oriented central government run by the only political party allowed in China, the Communist Party. And while it has adopted some elements of **capitalism** to realize the enormous economic potential of its people and land, the government keeps a very firm hand on its people.*

*Tim Marshall writes that the Great Wall of China “was built around one simplistic idea: on one side of it was civilization and on the other barbarity” (p. 15-17). Today they have built a new wall, a **Great Digital Firewall** they call **the Golden Shield** to protect its people from “such damaging ideas as democracy, free speech, and an unplugged culture.”*

*We often hear how China is rising and will challenge the United States for global supremacy. That’s true, but it is also true that China is not monolithic. It, like all countries, has problems and challenges, and it is using walls of various sorts to address those problems.*

p. 13-14 **President Xi Jinping** (in China, surnames are placed first) sees it's his job "to ensure the center holds." China's greatest divide: between urban and rural, rich and poor. And President Xi has to bridge that gap.



p. 15-17 The Great Wall of China "was built around one simplistic idea: on one side of it was civilization and on the other barbarity."

The Han people see themselves as the true Chinese.

p. 17. References are made to the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards, and Chairman Mao

The **Cultural Revolution**, formally the *Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*, was a sociopolitical movement in China from 1966 until 1976. Launched by Mao Zedong, then Chairman of the Communist Party of China, its stated goal was to preserve Chinese Communism by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society, and to re-impose Mao Zedong Thought (known outside China as Maoism) as the dominant ideology in the Party. The Revolution marked Mao's return to a position of power after the failures of his Great Leap Forward. The movement paralyzed China politically and damaged its economy and society, and killed an estimated 500,000 to 2,000,000 people.



**Red Guards** were a mass student-led paramilitary social movement mobilized and guided by Mao Zedong in 1966 and 1967, during the first phase of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which he had instituted.

The "Four Olds" – Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, Old Ideas –which the Cultural Revolution aimed at destroying

p. 18 Qin Shi Huang founded the Qin Dynasty 221 BCE

p. 19-21 China is intent on squashing separatist (i.e., independence) movements in Xinjiang and Tibet, which Chairman Mao annexed (took over) in western China in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The

Uighurs (pronounced “weegehers”) are Muslims and feel discriminated against economically, socially, and politically. Tibet is Buddhist.

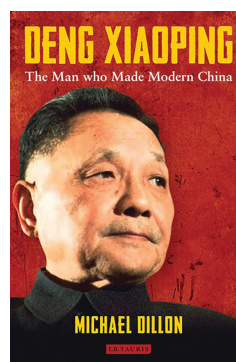
### Uighur population in Xinjiang



The Communist Party, which runs China, “has learned the lessons of history and knows what happens when the state is weakened by a fragmented population.” –p. 21.

Pages 21-24 provide a history of China from the 1800s through today. *Read this carefully.*

- Economic inequality splintered the state, weakening it---Japan was able to invade in 1930s and subjugate the people, Mao emerges from World War II intent on suppressing dissent so the new communist government’s power could be maintained.
- Mao succeeded, but he also retarded economic development.



- **Deng Xiaoping** then gambled and opened China to the outside world in order to improve trade and development. *It succeeded.*
  - But it’s a “race against the clock.” (p. 23) China has to keep making things and the world has to keep buying those things. **This is the lesson of basic economics:** you have to keep selling your goods to the outside world. And you do that by keeping your labor cheap so that the goods are inexpensive.
  - Marshall describes this as a “fascinating capitalist version of the old Soviet Communist system.” *It has lifted millions of Chinese out of poverty but it has also widened the rich-poor gap between the prosperous coast and poor interior.* And that is potentially a big problem.
    - “Zhao and not Zhao” = “the haves and have-nots”

p. 25-30 Challenges Facing China Today -- *Growing Inequality*

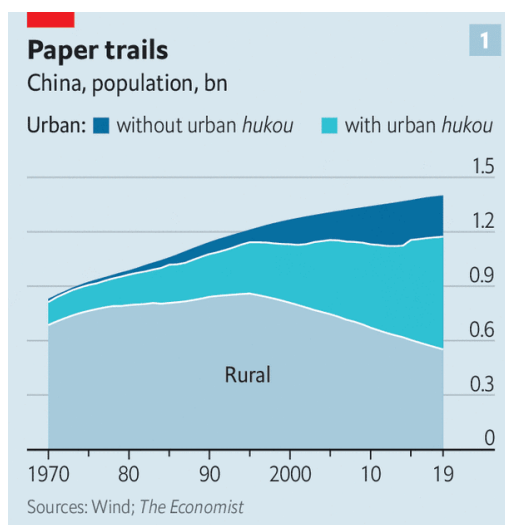
“To get rich is glorious...However, what we [Chinese] mean by getting rich is different from what you mean....To get rich in a socialist society means prosperity for the entire people.”

– Deng Xiaoping

Marshall discusses the economic inequality problem China has.

The top 1% owns 33% of the wealth, & the bottom 25% own 1% of the wealth. This inequality, like China's prosperity, began with Deng's opening of China's economy in 1979.

- **Generations** are also divided
- Migrations – Millions are being moved, west to east, from farms to the cities.
  - P. 26-27 the **Hukou System** – a form of registration that keeps the rural people in a second-class status.
- Beijing also fears growing **regionalism** which would also damage national unity (p. 28)
- While China enforced a **one-child policy** to address overpopulation, an **aging population** is also a problem, as it threatens economic progress. Why does it threaten economic progress?



The Economist



p. 29-36 China does not have an open internet. Social media is strictly controlled by the government. They have built a firewall – “The Great Firewall of China,” called the **Golden Shield** – to control the flow of information. Make sure you know why & how they have done this (p. 31-32).

p. 36 The last paragraph summarizes how and why China values and enforced **unity**.

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