

O. Post-Maoism (1978-)

1. Mao Zedong died in 1976, giving a new generation of leaders the opportunity to define China's path forward. As we saw at the beginning, the man who took over was Deng Xiaoping.
2. One thing that made it possible for Deng to choose to reconnect China to the rest of the world was that the United States decided not to block China's path. In **1972** president Richard Nixon became the first American president to visit China and to say that America would not use its power and influence to isolate China, even though it had a communist government.
3. One hope of Americans in creating a new relationship with China was that it would lead to the rise of democracy in China. In **1989**, hoping to pressure the government to provide more political freedom, university students gathered in Tiananmen Square in the center of Beijing in front of the ancient imperial palace to protest. Deng Xiaoping sent in the army to break up the protest and the students were *massacred*.
4. Despite this horrible conduct, the United States granted China "most favored nation" trading status in **1994**, and since then trade had continued to grow between the two countries.
5. In **1997** Hong Kong was returned to Chinese control by Britain based on a promise that the democratic freedom there would be respected. Recently, however, China has been changing the laws of Hong Kong to take away the freedoms of the people there. It refuses to listen to any criticism about these issues.
6. The latest conduct of China is worrisome on many fronts. It has created a social credit system complete with apps and cameras throughout major cities for policing its people 24/7. It has built huge concentration camps to control its Muslim population. It is also regularly threatening Taiwan with a military takeover and it is building islands in the South China Sea between the Philippines and Vietnam in order to create a claim to controlling the waters there. All these actions reflect a return to wanting more control over the people, and an expectation that China can act as the "Middle Kingdom" of East Asia.