

# China's Opening Society



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Despite its recent rapid economic growth, China's political system has remained resolutely authoritarian. However, an increasingly open economy is creating the infrastructure for an open society, with the rise of a non-state sector in which a private economy, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and different forms of social forces are playing an increasingly powerful role in facilitating political change and promoting good governance. This book examines the development of the non-state sector and NGOs in China since the onset of reform in the late 1970s. It explores the major issues facing the non-state sector in China today, assesses the institutional barriers that are faced by its developing civil society, and compares China's example with wider international experience. It shows how the 'get-rich-quick' ethos of the Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin years, that prioritised rapid GDP growth above all else, has given way under the Jiantao Hu regime to a renewed concern with social reforms, in areas such as welfare, medical care, education, and public transportation. It demonstrates how this change has led to encouragement by the Hu government of the development of the non-state sector as a means to perform regulatory functions and to achieve effective provision of public and social services. It explores the tension between the government's desire to keep the NGOs as "helping hands" rather than as autonomous, independent organizations, and their ability to perform these roles successfully.

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Zheng Yongnian is Professor and Director of Research, China Policy Institute, School of Contemporary Chinese Studies, University of Nottingham. He researches on China's domestic transformation and its external impact. He has written numerous books, including *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China* (1999), *Globalization and State Transformation in China* (2004), *Will China Become Democratic?* (2004) and *Technological Empowerment: The Internet, State and Society in China* (2007). He served as consultant to the United Nations Development Programme on China's rural development and democracy.

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