

<<当代英国>>

图书基本信息

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内容概要

A major European power, a leading voice in world affairs, birthplace of the parliamentary system, the pioneer of industrialization, and a dominating influence on Western culture, British society has shaped the world and continues to do so, even as today it finds itself adapting to a new globalized order. In this completely revised and updated second edition of Contemporary Britain, best-selling author John McCormick provides an authoritative and thought-provoking introduction to British society, geography, politics and culture, discussing the evolution of economic and social policy, and Britain's new place in Europe and the world. Its major theme is change and the often dramatic upheavals that Britain has undergone, from reconstruction after the Second World War through the legacies of Thatcher and Blair to today's challenges of multiculturalism and integration with the rest of Europe. Rejecting the thesis of decline, it argues that Britain has become a more successful society whose citizens are looking less at the past and more at present challenges and future possibilities. Assuming no prior knowledge and illustrated throughout with figures and tables, boxes focusing on key issues, and an extensive guide to further reading and relevant websites. Contemporary Britain is the ideal starting point for students and interested general readers alike.

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However, that attitudes may be changing, and the owners and operators of large businesses are becoming increasingly prominent in public life, if not necessarily admired. A prime example of the rise of the modern British business celebrity is offered by Sir Richard Branson, whose Virgin business empire has grown to include many different interests. Virgin began in the late 1960s as a cut-price record store in London. Branson then moved into the recording industry, becoming known more widely for the launch of the low-cost airline Virgin Atlantic, and expanding to areas as diverse as fashion, soft drinks, publishing, property, hotels, cinemas, and even railway services. Virgin Atlantic has been in a struggle against British Airways in its attempt to capture a greater share of the transatlantic air travel market through an alliance with American Airlines. Branson's ventures have not always been successful, but a flair for publicity has made him a well-known public figure, contributing to an assessment of public attitudes towards business, and of business as a career option. Despite criticism that the Thatcher administration failed to take care of the needs of the underclass, and despite continued problems with poverty, a growing income gap between rich and poor, and homelessness (see Box 3.1 in Chapter 3), the free-market philosophy had become so popular and institutionalized by the time Thatcher left office that when Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party in 1994, he set about modernizing the party and committing it to the maintenance of some of the more popular aspects.

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