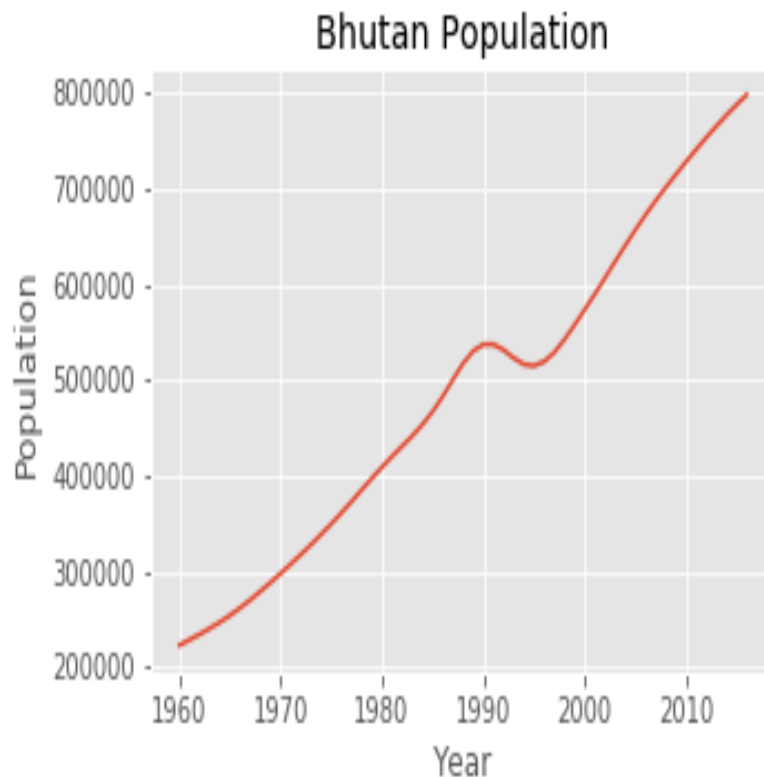


Bhutan



Coordinates: $27^{\circ}25'01''\text{N}$ $90^{\circ}26'06''\text{E}$ / 27.417°N 90.435°E / 27.417 ; 90.435 Bhutan (/buˈtʌn/; ᠪᠠᠭᠳᠤᠨ Druk Yul), officially the Kingdom of Bhutan (ᠪᠠᠭᠳᠤᠨ Druk Gyal Khap), is a landlocked country in South Asia. Located in the Eastern Himalayas, it is bordered by Tibet Autonomous Region of China in the north, the Sikkim state of India and the Chumbi Valley of Tibet in the west, the Arunachal Pradesh state of India in the east, and the state of Assam and North Bengal in the south. Bhutan is geopolitically in South Asia and is the region's second least populous nation after the Maldives. Thimphu is its capital and largest city, while Phuntsholing is its financial center. The independence of Bhutan has endured for centuries and it has never been colonized in its history. Situated on the ancient Silk Road between Tibet, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, the Bhutanese state developed a distinct national identity based on Buddhism. Headed by a spiritual leader known as the Zhabdrung Rinpoche, the territory was composed of many fiefdoms and governed as a Buddhist theocracy. Following a civil war in the 19th century, the House of Wangchuck reunited the country and established relations with the British Empire. Bhutan fostered a strategic partnership with India during the rise of Chinese communism and has a disputed border with the People's Republic of China. In 2008, it transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy and held the first election to the National Assembly of Bhutan. The National Assembly of Bhutan is part of the bi-cameral parliament of the Bhutanese democracy.