

China

Coordinates: 35°N 103°E 

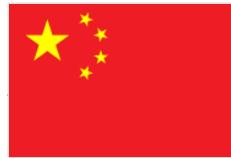
China (Chinese: 中国; pinyin: Zhōngguó), officially the **People's Republic of China (PRC)**,^[k] is a country in East Asia. It is the world's second-most populous country with a population exceeding 1.4 billion. China spans the equivalent of five time zones and borders fourteen countries by land,^[l] tied with Russia as having the most of any country in the world. With an area of nearly 9.6 million square kilometres (3,700,000 sq mi), it is the world's third largest country by total land area.^[m] The country consists of 22 provinces,^[n] five autonomous regions, four municipalities, and two semi-autonomous special administrative regions. The national capital is Beijing, and the most populous city and largest financial center is Shanghai.

The region that is now China has been inhabited since the Paleolithic era, with the Yellow River basin being a cradle of civilization. The sixth to third centuries BCE saw both significant conflict and the emergence of Classical Chinese literature and philosophy. In 221 BCE, China was unified under an emperor, ushering in more than two millennia in which China was governed by one or more imperial dynasties, such as the Han, Tang, and Ming. Some of China's most notable achievements, such as the invention of gunpowder, the establishment of the Silk Road, and the building of the Great Wall, occurred during this period.

In 1912, the Chinese monarchy was overthrown and the Republic of China established. The Republic saw consistent conflict for most of the mid-20th century, including a civil war between the Kuomintang government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which began in 1927, as well as the Second Sino-Japanese War that began in 1937 and continued until 1945, therefore becoming involved in World War II. The latter led to a temporary stop in the civil war and numerous Japanese atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre, which continue to influence China-Japan relations. In 1949, the CCP established control over China as the Kuomintang fled to Taiwan. Early communist rule saw two major projects: the Great Leap Forward, which resulted in a sharp economic decline and massive famine; and the Cultural Revolution, a movement to purge all non-communist elements of Chinese society that led to mass violence and persecution. Beginning in 1978, the Chinese government began economic reforms that moved the country away from planned economics and raised China's standard of living, but political reforms were cut short by the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, which ended in a massacre.

People's Republic of China

中华人民共和国 (Chinese)



Flag



National Emblem

Anthem:

义勇军进行曲
Yìyǒngjūn Jīnxíngqǔ
"March of the Volunteers"

0:50



Territory controlled by the People's Republic of China is shown in dark green; territory claimed but not controlled is shown in light green.

Capital	Beijing 39°55'N 116°23'E
Largest city by population	Shanghai
Official languages	Standard Chinese ^[a]
Recognized regional languages	Mongolian • Uyghur • Tibetan • Zhuang • Others
Official script	Simplified Chinese ^[b]
Ethnic groups (2020) ^[1]	91.1% Han Chinese 8.9% others
Religion (2020) ^[2]	74.5% No religion / folk 18.3% Buddhism 5.2% Christianity 1.6% Islam

China is a unitary one-party socialist republic led by the CCP. It is one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and a founding member of several multilateral and regional organizations such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund, the New Development Bank, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the RCEP. It is also a member of the BRICS, the G20, the APEC, and the East Asia Summit. China ranks poorly in measures of democracy, transparency, and human rights, including for press freedom, religious freedom, and ethnic equality. Making up around one-fifth of the world economy, China is the world's largest economy by GDP at purchasing power parity, the second-largest economy by nominal GDP, and the second-wealthiest country. The country is one of the fastest-growing major economies and is the world's largest manufacturer and exporter, as well as the second-largest importer. China is a nuclear-weapon state with the world's largest standing army by military personnel and the second-largest defense budget.

Etymology

The word "China" has been used in English since the 16th century; however, it was not a word used by the Chinese themselves during this period. Its origin has been traced through Portuguese, Malay, and Persian back to the Sanskrit word *Cīna*, used in ancient India.^[16] "China" appears in Richard Eden's 1555 translation^[o] of the 1516 journal of the Portuguese explorer Duarte Barbosa.^{[p][16]} Barbosa's usage was derived from Persian *Chīn* (چین), which was in turn derived from Sanskrit *Cīna* (चीन).^[21] *Cīna* was first used in early Hindu scripture, including the *Mahābhārata* (5th century BCE) and the *Laws of Manu* (2nd century BCE).^[22] In 1655, Martino Martini suggested that the word China is derived ultimately from the name of the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE).^{[23][22]} Although usage in Indian sources precedes this dynasty, this derivation is still given in various sources.^[24] The origin of the Sanskrit word is a matter of debate, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.^[16]

Alternative suggestions include the names for Yelang and the Jing or Chu state.^{[22][25]} The official name of the modern state is the "People's Republic of China" (simplified Chinese: 中华人民共和国; traditional Chinese: 中華人民共和國; pinyin: *Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gōnghéguó*). The shorter form is "China" *Zhōngguó* (中国; 中國) from *zhōng* ("central") and *guó* ("state"),^[q] a term which developed under the Western Zhou dynasty in reference to its royal demesne.^{[r][s]} It was then applied to the area around Luoyi (present-day Luoyang) during the Eastern Zhou and then to China's Central Plain before being used as an occasional synonym for the state under the Qing.^[27] It was often used as a cultural concept to distinguish the Huaxia people from perceived "barbarians".^[27] The name *Zhongguo* is also

	0.4% others
Demony(s)	Chinese
Government	Unitary Marxist-Leninist one-party socialist republic
• CCP General Secretary ^[c]	Xi Jinping
President ^[d]	
CMC	
Chairman ^[e]	
• Premier	Li Qiang
• Congress Chairman	Zhao Leji
• CPPCC Chairman ^[f]	Wang Huning
Legislature	National People's Congress
Formation	
• First pre-imperial dynasty	c. 2070 BCE
• First imperial dynasty	221 BCE
• Establishment of the Republic of China	1 January 1912
• Proclamation of the People's Republic	1 October 1949
• First constitution	20 September 1954
• Current constitution	4 December 1982
• Most recent polity admitted	20 December 1999
Area	
• Total	9,596,961 km ² (3,705,407 sq mi) ^[g] (3rd / 4th)
• Water (%)	2.8 ^[h]
Population	
• 2023 estimate	▼ 1,411,750,000 ^[6] (1st)
• Density	145 ^[7] /km ² (375.5/sq mi) (83rd)
GDP (PPP)	2023 estimate
• Total	▲ \$33.015 trillion ^[8] (1st)
• Per capita	▲ \$23,382 ^[8] (73rd)
GDP (nominal)	2023 estimate
• Total	▲ \$19.374 trillion ^{[i][8]} (2nd)
• Per capita	▲ \$13,721 ^[8] (64th)
Gini (2019)	▼ 38.2 ^[9] medium

translated as "Middle Kingdom" in English.^[30] China (PRC) is sometimes referred to as the Mainland when distinguishing the ROC from the PRC.^{[31][32][33][34]}

History

Prehistory

China is regarded as one of the world's oldest civilisations.^{[35][36]} Archaeological evidence suggests that early hominids inhabited the country 2.25 million years ago.^[37] The hominid fossils of *Peking Man*, a *Homo erectus* who used fire,^[38] were discovered in a cave at Zhoukoudian near Beijing; they have been dated to between 680,000 and 780,000 years ago.^[39] The fossilized teeth of *Homo sapiens* (dated to 125,000–80,000 years ago) have been discovered in Fuyan Cave in Dao County, Hunan.^[40] Chinese proto-writing existed in Jiahu around 6600 BCE,^[41] at Damaidi around 6000 BCE,^[42] Dadiwan from 5800 to 5400 BCE, and Banpo dating from the 5th millennium BCE. Some scholars have suggested that the Jiahu symbols (7th millennium BCE) constituted the earliest Chinese writing system.^[41]

Early dynastic rule

According to Chinese tradition, the first dynasty was the Xia, which emerged around 2100 BCE.^[43] The Xia dynasty marked the beginning of China's political system based on hereditary monarchies, or dynasties, which lasted for a millennium.^[44] The Xia dynasty was considered mythical by historians until scientific excavations found early Bronze Age sites at Erlitou, Henan in 1959.^[45] It remains unclear whether these sites are the remains of the Xia dynasty or of another culture from the same period.^[46] The succeeding Shang dynasty is the earliest to be confirmed by contemporary records.^[47] The Shang ruled the plain of the Yellow River in eastern China from the 17th to the 11th century BCE.^[48] Their oracle bone script (from c. 1500 BCE)^{[49][50]} represents the oldest form of Chinese writing yet found^[51] and is a direct ancestor of modern Chinese characters.^[52]

The Shang was conquered by the Zhou, who ruled between the 11th and 5th centuries BCE, though centralized authority was slowly eroded by feudal warlords. Some principalities eventually emerged from the weakened Zhou, no longer fully obeyed the Zhou king, and continually waged war with each other during the 300-year Spring and Autumn period. By the time of the Warring States period of the 5th–3rd centuries BCE, there were only seven powerful states left.^[53]

Imperial China

The Warring States period ended in 221 BCE after the state of Qin conquered the other six kingdoms, reunited China and established the dominant order of autocracy. King Zheng of Qin proclaimed himself the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty. He enacted Qin's legalist reforms throughout China, notably the forced standardization of Chinese characters, measurements, road widths (i.e., the cart axles' length), and currency. His dynasty also

HDI (2021)	▲ 0.768 ^[10] high · 79th
Currency	Renminbi (元/¥) ^[j] (CNY)
Time zone	UTC+8 (CST) <i>DST is not observed</i>
Date format	yyyy-mm-dd or yyyy年m月d日 (CE; Chinese calendar)
Driving side	right (mainland) left (Hong Kong and Macau)
Calling code	+86 (mainland) +852 (Hong Kong) +853 (Macau)
ISO 3166 code	CN
Internet TLD	.cn • .中国 • .中國 (mainland) .hk • .香港 (Hong Kong) .mo • .澳门 • .澳門 (Macau)



China (today's Guangdong), Mangi (inland of Xanton), and Cataio (inland of China and Chequan, and including the capital Cambalu, Xandu, and a marble bridge) are all shown as separate regions on this 1570 map by Abraham Ortelius.



10,000-year-old pottery, Xianren Cave culture (18000–7000 BCE)

conquered the Yue tribes in Guangxi, Guangdong, and Vietnam.^[54] The Qin dynasty lasted only fifteen years, falling soon after the First Emperor's death, as his harsh authoritarian policies led to widespread rebellion.^{[55][56]}

Following a widespread civil war during which the imperial library at Xianyang was burned,^[t] the Han dynasty emerged to rule China between 206 BCE and CE 220, creating a cultural identity among its populace still remembered in the ethnonym of the Han Chinese.^{[55][56]} The Han expanded the empire's territory considerably, with military campaigns reaching Central Asia, Mongolia, South Korea, and Yunnan, and the recovery of Guangdong and northern Vietnam from Nanyue. Han involvement in Central Asia and Sogdia helped establish the land route of the Silk Road, replacing the earlier path over the Himalayas to India. Han China gradually became the largest economy of the ancient world.^[58] Despite the Han's initial decentralization and the official abandonment of the Qin philosophy of Legalism in favor of Confucianism, Qin's legalist institutions and policies continued to be employed by the Han government and its successors.^[59]

After the end of the Han dynasty, a period of strife known as Three Kingdoms followed,^[60] whose central figures were later immortalized in one of the Four Classics of Chinese literature. At its end, Wei was swiftly overthrown by the Jin dynasty. The Jin fell to civil war upon the ascension of a developmentally disabled emperor; the Five Barbarians then invaded and ruled northern China as the Sixteen States. The Xianbei unified them as the Northern Wei, whose Emperor Xiaowen reversed his predecessors' apartheid policies and enforced a drastic sinification on his subjects, largely integrating them into Chinese culture. In the south, the general Liu Yu secured the abdication of the Jin in favor of the Liu Song. The various successors of these states became known as the Northern and Southern dynasties, with the two areas finally reunited by the Sui in 581. The Sui restored the Han to power through China, reformed its agriculture, economy and imperial examination system, constructed the Grand Canal, and patronized Buddhism. However, they fell quickly when their conscription for public works and a failed war in northern Korea provoked widespread unrest.^{[61][62]}

Under the succeeding Tang and Song dynasties, Chinese economy, technology, and culture entered a golden age.^[63] The Tang dynasty retained control of the Western Regions and the Silk Road,^[64] which brought traders to as far as Mesopotamia and the Horn of Africa,^[65] and made the capital Chang'an a cosmopolitan urban center. However, it was devastated and weakened by the An Lushan Rebellion in the 8th century.^[66] In 907, the Tang disintegrated completely when the local military governors became ungovernable. The Song dynasty ended the separatist situation in 960, leading to a balance of power between the Song and Khitan Liao. The Song was the first government in world history to issue paper money and the first Chinese polity to establish a permanent standing navy which was supported by the developed shipbuilding industry along with the sea trade.^[67]

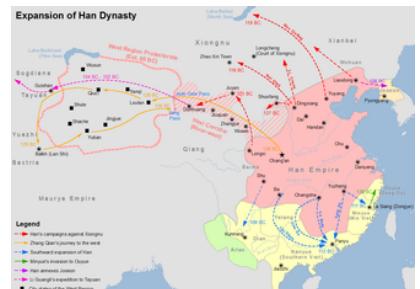
Between the 10th and 11th century CE, the population of China doubled in size to around 100 million people, mostly because of the expansion of rice cultivation in central and southern China, and the production of abundant food surpluses. The Song dynasty also saw a revival of Confucianism, in response to the growth of Buddhism during the Tang,^[68] and a flourishing of philosophy and the arts, as landscape art and porcelain were brought to new levels of maturity and complexity.^{[69][70]} However, the military weakness of the Song army was observed by the Jurchen Jin dynasty. In 1127, Emperor Huizong of Song and the capital Bianjing were captured during the Jin–Song Wars. The remnants of the Song retreated to southern China.^[71]



Yinxu, the ruins of the capital of the late Shang dynasty (14th century BCE)



China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, is famed for having united the Warring States' walls to form the Great Wall of China. Most of the present structure, however, dates to the Ming dynasty.



Map showing the expansion of Han dynasty in the 2nd century BC

The Mongol conquest of China began in 1205 with the gradual conquest of Western Xia by Genghis Khan,^[72] who also invaded Jin territories.^[73] In 1271, the Mongol leader Kublai Khan established the Yuan dynasty, which conquered the last remnant of the Song dynasty in 1279. Before the Mongol invasion, the population of Song China was 120 million citizens; this was reduced to 60 million by the time of the census in 1300.^[74] A peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang led a rebellion that overthrew the Yuan in 1368 and founded the Ming dynasty as the Hongwu Emperor. Under the Ming dynasty, China enjoyed another golden age, developing one of the strongest navies in the world and a rich and prosperous economy amid a flourishing of art and culture. It was during this period that admiral Zheng He led the Ming treasure voyages throughout the Indian Ocean, reaching as far as East Africa.^[75]



The Tang dynasty at its greatest extent and Tang's protectorates

In the early years of the Ming dynasty, China's capital was moved from Nanjing to Beijing. With the budding of capitalism, philosophers such as Wang Yangming further critiqued and expanded Neo-Confucianism with concepts of individualism and equality of four occupations.^[76] The scholar-official stratum became a supporting force of industry and commerce in the tax boycott movements, which, together with the famines and defense against Japanese invasions of Korea (1592–1598) and Manchu invasions led to an exhausted treasury.^[77] In 1644, Beijing was captured by a coalition of peasant rebel forces led by Li Zicheng. The Chongzhen Emperor committed suicide when the city fell. The Manchu Qing dynasty, then allied with Ming dynasty general Wu Sangui, overthrew Li's short-lived Shun dynasty and subsequently seized control of Beijing, which became the new capital of the Qing dynasty.^[78]



The Qing conquest of the Ming and expansion of the empire

The Qing dynasty, which lasted from 1644 until 1912, was the last imperial dynasty of China. Its conquest of the Ming (1618–1683) cost 25 million lives and the economy of China shrank drastically.^[79] After the Southern Ming ended, the further conquest of the Dzungar Khanate added Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang to the empire.^[80] The centralized autocracy was strengthened to suppress anti-Qing sentiment with the policy of valuing agriculture and restraining commerce, the *Haijin* ("sea ban"), and ideological control as represented by the literary inquisition, causing social and technological stagnation.^{[81][82]}

Fall of the Qing dynasty

In the mid-19th century, the Qing dynasty experienced Western imperialism in the Opium Wars with Britain and France. China was forced to pay compensation, open treaty ports, allow extraterritoriality for foreign nationals, and cede Hong Kong to the British^[83] under the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, the first of the Unequal Treaties. The First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) resulted in Qing China's loss of influence in the Korean Peninsula, as well as the cession of Taiwan to Japan.^[84] The Qing dynasty also began experiencing internal unrest in which tens of millions of people died, especially in the White Lotus Rebellion, the failed Taiping Rebellion that ravaged southern China in the 1850s and 1860s and the Dungan Revolt (1862–1877) in the northwest. The initial success of the Self-Strengthening Movement of the 1860s was frustrated by a series of military defeats in the 1880s and 1890s.^[85]



The Eight-Nation Alliance invaded China to defeat the anti-foreign Boxers and their Qing backers. The image shows a celebration ceremony inside the Chinese imperial palace, the Forbidden City after the signing of the Boxer Protocol in 1901.

In the 19th century, the great Chinese diaspora began. Losses due to emigration were added to by conflicts and catastrophes such as the Northern Chinese Famine of 1876–1879, in which between 9 and 13 million people died.^[86] The Guangxu Emperor drafted a reform plan in 1898 to establish a modern constitutional monarchy, but these plans were thwarted by the Empress Dowager Cixi. The ill-fated anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1901 further weakened the dynasty.

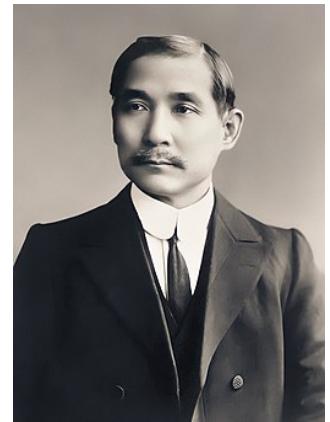
Although Cixi sponsored a program of reforms, the Xinhai Revolution of 1911–1912 brought an end to the Qing dynasty and established the Republic of China.^[87] Puyi, the last Emperor of China, abdicated in 1912.^[88]

Establishment of the Republic and World War II

On 1 January 1912, the Republic of China was established, and Sun Yat-sen of the Kuomintang (the KMT or Nationalist Party) was proclaimed provisional president.^[89] On 12 February 1912, regent Empress Dowager Longyu sealed the imperial abdication decree on behalf of 4 year old Puyi, the last emperor of China, ending 5,000 years of monarchy in China.^[90] In March 1912, the presidency was given to Yuan Shikai, a former Qing general who in 1915 proclaimed himself Emperor of China. In the face of popular condemnation and opposition from his own Beiyang Army, he was forced to abdicate and re-establish the republic in 1916.^[91]

After Yuan Shikai's death in 1916, China was politically fragmented. Its Beijing-based government was internationally recognized but virtually powerless; regional warlords controlled most of its territory.^{[92][93]} In the late 1920s, the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek, the then Principal of the Republic of China Military Academy, was able to reunify the country under its own control with a series of deft military and political maneuverings, known collectively as the Northern Expedition.^{[94][95]} The Kuomintang moved the nation's capital to Nanjing and implemented "political tutelage", an intermediate stage of political development outlined in Sun Yat-sen's San-min program for transforming China into a modern democratic state.^{[96][97]} The political division in China made it difficult for Chiang to battle the communist-led People's Liberation Army (PLA), against whom the Kuomintang had been warring since 1927 in the Chinese Civil War. This war continued successfully for the Kuomintang, especially after the PLA retreated in the Long March, until Japanese aggression and the 1936 Xi'an Incident forced Chiang to confront Imperial Japan.^[98]

The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), a theater of World War II, forced an uneasy alliance between the Kuomintang and the Communists. Japanese forces committed numerous war atrocities against the civilian population; in all, as many as 20 million Chinese civilians died.^[99] An estimated 40,000 to 300,000 Chinese were massacred in the city of Nanjing alone during the Japanese occupation.^[100] During the war, China, along with the UK, the United States, and the Soviet Union, were referred to as "trusteeship of the powerful"^[101] and were recognized as the Allied "Big Four" in the Declaration by United Nations.^{[102][103]} Along with the other three great powers, China was one of the four major Allies of World War II, and was later considered one of the primary victors in the war.^{[104][105]} After the surrender of Japan in 1945, Taiwan, including the Pescadores, was handed over to Chinese control. However, the validity of this handover is controversial, in that whether Taiwan's sovereignty was legally transferred and whether China is a legitimate recipient, due to complex issues that arose from the handling of Japan's surrender. China emerged victorious but war-ravaged and financially drained. The continued distrust between the Kuomintang and the Communists led to the resumption of civil war. Constitutional rule was established in 1947, but because of the ongoing unrest, many provisions of the ROC constitution were never implemented in mainland China.^[106]



Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of Republic of China, one of the first republics in Asia



Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong toasting together in 1945 following the end of World War II

Civil War and the People's Republic

Before the existence of the People's Republic, the CCP had declared several areas of the country as the Chinese Soviet Republic (Jiangxi Soviet), a predecessor state to the PRC, in November 1931 in Ruijin, Jiangxi. The Jiangxi Soviet was wiped out by the KMT armies in 1934 and was relocated to Yan'an in Shaanxi where the Long March concluded in 1935.^[107] It would be the base of the communists before major

combat in the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949. Afterwards, the CCP took control of most of mainland China, and the Kuomintang retreating offshore to Taiwan, reducing its territory to only Taiwan, Hainan, and their surrounding islands.

On 1 October 1949, CCP Chairman Mao Zedong formally proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China at the new nation's founding ceremony and inaugural military parade in Tiananmen Square, Beijing.^[109] In 1950, the People's Liberation Army captured Hainan from the ROC^[110] and annexed Tibet.^[111] However, remaining Kuomintang forces continued to wage an insurgency in western China throughout the 1950s.^[112]

The government consolidated its popularity among the peasants through the Land Reform Movement, which included the execution of between 1 and 2 million landlords.^[113] China developed an independent industrial system and its own nuclear weapons.^[114] The Chinese population increased from 550 million in 1950 to 900 million in 1974.^[115] However, the Great Leap Forward, an idealistic massive reform project, resulted in an estimated 15 to 55 million deaths between 1959 and 1961, mostly from starvation.^{[116][117]} In 1964, China's first atomic bomb exploded successfully.^[118] In 1966, Mao and his allies launched the Cultural Revolution, sparking a decade of political recrimination and social upheaval that lasted until Mao's death in 1976. In October 1971, the PRC replaced the Republic of China in the United Nations, and took its seat as a permanent member of the Security Council.^[119] This UN action also created the problem of the political status of Taiwan and the Two Chinas issue.



The founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China was held at 3:00 pm on October 1, 1949. The picture above shows Mao Zedong's announcement of the founding of the People's Republic of China in Tiananmen Square.^[108]

Reforms and contemporary history

After Mao's death, the Gang of Four was quickly arrested by Hua Guofeng and held responsible for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, and instituted large-scale political and economic reforms, together with the "Eight Elders", CCP members who held huge influence during this time. The CCP loosened governmental control over citizens' personal lives, and the communes were gradually disbanded in favor of working contracted to households. The Cultural Revolution was also rebuked, with millions of its victims being rehabilitated.^[120] Agricultural collectivization was dismantled and farmlands privatized, while foreign trade became a major new focus, leading to the creation of special economic zones (SEZs). Inefficient state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were restructured and unprofitable ones were closed outright, resulting in massive job losses. This marked China's transition from a planned economy to a mixed economy with an increasingly open-market environment.^[121] China adopted its current constitution on 4 December 1982.



The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests was ended by a military-led massacre which brought condemnations and sanctions against the Chinese government from various foreign countries.

In 1989, the country saw large pro-democracy protests, eventually leading to the Tiananmen Square massacre by the leadership, bringing condemnations and sanctions against the Chinese government from various foreign countries, though the effect on external relations was short-lived.^[122] Jiang Zemin, Party secretary of Shanghai at the time, was selected to replace Zhao Ziyang as the CCP general secretary; Zhao was put under house arrest for his sympathies to the protests. Jiang later additionally took the presidency and Central Military Commission chairmanship posts, effectively becoming China's top leader. Li Peng, who was instrumental in the crackdown, remained premier until 1998, after which Zhu Rongji became the premier. Under their administration, China continued economic reforms,^[123] further closing many SOEs and massively trimming down "iron rice bowl"; occupations with guaranteed job security.^{[124][125]} During Jiang's rule, China's economy grew sevenfold,^[124] and its performance pulled an estimated 150 million peasants out of poverty and sustained an average annual gross domestic product growth rate of 11.2%.^[126]

British Hong Kong and Portuguese Macau returned to China in 1997 and 1999, respectively, as the Hong Kong and Macau special administrative regions under the principle of one country, two systems. The country joined the World Trade Organization in 2001.^[124]

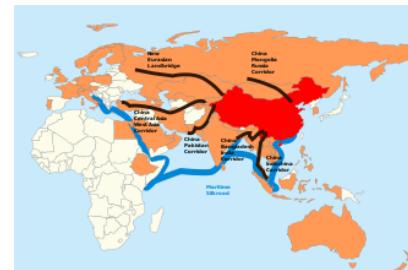
Between 2001 and 2002, Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao succeeded Jiang and Zhu as paramount leader and premier respectively; Jiang attempted to remain CMC chairman for longer before giving up the post entirely between 2004 and 2005.^[124] Under Hu and Wen, China maintained its high rate of economic growth, overtaking the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan to become the world's second-largest economy.^[127] However, the growth also severely impacted the country's resources and environment,^{[128][129]} and caused major social displacement.^{[130][131]} Hu and Wen also took a relatively more conservative approach towards economic reform, expanding support for SOEs.^{[132]:217} Additionally under Hu, China hosted the Beijing Olympics in 2008.^[133]

Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang succeeded Hu and Wen as paramount leader and premier respectively between 2012 and 2013; Li Keqiang was later succeeded by Li Qiang in 2023. Shortly after his ascension to power Xi launched a vast anti-corruption crackdown,^[134] that prosecuted more than 2 million officials by 2022.^{[135]:171} Leading many new Central Leading Groups to bypass traditional bureaucracy, Xi consolidated power further than his predecessors.^{[136][137]} Xi has also pursued changes to China's economy, supporting SOEs^[138] and making eradicating extreme poverty through "targeted poverty alleviation" a key goal.^[139] In 2013, Xi launched the Belt and Road Initiative, a global infrastructure investment project.^[140] Xi has also taken a more assertive stance on foreign and security issues.^[141] Since 2017, the Chinese government has been engaged in a harsh crackdown in Xinjiang, with an estimated one million people, mostly Uyghurs, but including other ethnic and religious minorities, in internment camps.^[142] The National People's Congress in 2018 amended the constitution to remove the two-term limit on holding the Presidency, allowing for a third and further terms.^[143] In 2020, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) passed a national security law that authorize the Hong Kong government wide-ranging tools to crack down on dissent.^[144] From December 2019 to December 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic led the government to enforce strict public health measures intended to completely eradicate the virus, a goal that was eventually abandoned after protests against the policy in 2022.^{[145][146]}

Geography

China's landscape is vast and diverse, ranging from the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts in the arid north to the subtropical forests in the wetter south. The Himalaya, Karakoram, Pamir and Tian Shan mountain ranges separate China from much of South and Central Asia. The Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, the third- and sixth-longest in the world, respectively, run from the Tibetan Plateau to the densely populated eastern seaboard. China's coastline along the Pacific Ocean is 14,500 km (9,000 mi) long and is bounded by the Bohai, Yellow, East China and South China seas. China connects through the Kazakh border to the Eurasian Steppe which has been an artery of communication between East and West since the Neolithic through the Steppe Route – the ancestor of the terrestrial Silk Road(s).

The territory of China lies between latitudes 18° and 54° N, and longitudes 73° and 135° E. The geographical center of China is marked by the Center of the Country Monument at 35°50'40.9"N 103°27'7.5"E. China's landscapes vary significantly across its vast territory. In the east, along the shores of the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea, there are extensive and densely populated alluvial plains, while on the edges of the Inner Mongolian plateau in the north, broad grasslands predominate. Southern China is dominated by hills and low mountain ranges, while the central-east hosts the deltas of China's two major rivers, the Yellow River and the Yangtze River. Other major rivers include the Xi, Mekong, Brahmaputra and Amur. To the west sit major mountain ranges, most notably the Himalayas. High plateaus feature among the more arid



Belt and Road Initiative and related projects



China topographic map with East Asia countries

landscapes of the north, such as the Taklamakan and the Gobi Desert. The world's highest point, Mount Everest (8,848 m), lies on the Sino-Nepalese border.^[147] The country's lowest point, and the world's third-lowest, is the dried lake bed of Ayding Lake (-154 m) in the Turpan Depression.^[148]

Climate

China's climate is mainly dominated by dry seasons and wet monsoons, which lead to pronounced temperature differences between winter and summer. In the winter, northern winds coming from high-latitude areas are cold and dry; in summer, southern winds from coastal areas at lower latitudes are warm and moist.^[150]

A major environmental issue in China is the continued expansion of its deserts, particularly the Gobi Desert.^{[151][152]} Although barrier tree lines planted since the 1970s have reduced the frequency of sandstorms, prolonged drought and poor agricultural practices have resulted in dust storms plaguing northern China each spring, which then spread to other parts of East Asia, including Japan and Korea. China's environmental watchdog, SEPA, stated in 2007 that China is losing 4,000 km² (1,500 sq mi) per year to desertification.^[153] Water quality, erosion, and pollution control have become important issues in China's relations with other countries. Melting glaciers in the Himalayas could potentially lead to water shortages for hundreds of millions of people.^[154] According to academics, in order to limit climate change in China to 1.5 °C (2.7 °F) electricity generation from coal in China without carbon capture must be phased out by 2045.^[155] With current policies, the GHG emissions of China will probably peak in 2025, and by 2030 they will return to 2022 levels. However, such pathway still leads to 3 degree temperature rise.^[156] Official government statistics about Chinese agricultural productivity are considered unreliable, due to exaggeration of production at subsidiary government levels.^{[157][158]} Much of China has a climate very suitable for agriculture and the country has been the world's largest producer of rice, wheat, tomatoes, eggplant, grapes, watermelon, spinach, and many other crops.^[159]

Biodiversity

China is one of 17 megadiverse countries,^[160] lying in two of the world's major biogeographic realms: the Palearctic and the Indomalayan. By one measure, China has over 34,687 species of animals and vascular plants, making it the third-most biodiverse country in the world, after Brazil and Colombia.^[161] The country signed the Rio de Janeiro Convention on Biological Diversity on 11 June 1992, and became a party to the convention on 5 January 1993.^[162] It later produced a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, with one revision that was received by the convention on 21 September 2010.^[163]

China is home to at least 551 species of mammals (the third-highest such number in the world),^[164] 1,221 species of birds (eighth),^[165] 424 species of reptiles (seventh)^[166] and 333 species of amphibians (seventh).^[167] Wildlife in China shares habitat with, and bears acute pressure from, the world's largest population of humans. At least 840 animal species are threatened, vulnerable or in danger of local extinction in China, due mainly to human activity such as habitat destruction, pollution and poaching for food, fur and ingredients for traditional Chinese medicine.^[168] Endangered wildlife is protected by law, and as of 2005, the country has over 2,349 nature reserves, covering a total area of 149.95 million hectares, 15 percent of China's total land area.^[169] Most wild animals have been eliminated from the core agricultural regions of east and central China, but they have fared better in the mountainous south and west.^{[170][171]} The Baiji was confirmed extinct on 12 December 2006.^[172]

Köppen-Geiger climate classification map for China (1980-2016)



Köppen-Geiger climate classification map for mainland China^[149]



A giant panda, China's most famous endangered and endemic species, at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in Sichuan

China has over 32,000 species of vascular plants,^[173] and is home to a variety of forest types. Cold coniferous forests predominate in the north of the country, supporting animal species such as moose and Asian black bear, along with over 120 bird species.^[174] The understory of moist conifer forests may contain thickets of bamboo. In higher montane stands of juniper and yew, the bamboo is replaced by rhododendrons. Subtropical forests, which are predominate in central and southern China, support a high density of plant species including numerous rare endemics. Tropical and seasonal rainforests, though confined to Yunnan and Hainan, contain a quarter of all the animal and plant species found in China.^[174] China has over 10,000 recorded species of fungi,^[175] and of them, nearly 6,000 are higher fungi.

Environment

In the early 2000s, China has suffered from environmental deterioration and pollution due to its rapid pace of industrialization.^{[176][177]} Regulations such as the 1979 Environmental Protection Law are fairly stringent, though they are poorly enforced, as they are frequently disregarded by local communities and government officials in favor of rapid economic development.^[178] China is the country with the second highest death toll because of air pollution, after India, with approximately 1 million deaths caused by exposure to ambient air pollution.^{[179][180]} Although China ranks as the highest CO₂ emitting country in the world,^[181] it only emits 8 tons of CO₂ per capita, significantly lower than developed countries such as the United States (16.1), Australia (16.8) and South Korea (13.6).^[182] Greenhouse gas emissions by China are the world's largest.^[182]



The Three Gorges Dam is the largest hydroelectric dam in the world.

In recent years, China has clamped down on pollution. In March 2014, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping "declared war" on pollution during the opening of the National People's Congress.^[183] After extensive debate lasting nearly two years, the parliament approved a new environmental law in April. The new law empowers environmental enforcement agencies with great punitive power and large fines for offenders, defines areas which require extra protection, and gives independent environmental groups more ability to operate in the country. In 2020, Xi announced that China aims to peak emissions before 2030 and go carbon-neutral by 2060 in accordance with the Paris Agreement,^[184] which, according to Climate Action Tracker, if accomplished it would lower the expected rise in global temperature by 0.2 – 0.3 degrees – "the biggest single reduction ever estimated by the Climate Action Tracker".^[184] In September 2021 Xi Jinping announced that China will not build "coal-fired power projects abroad". The decision can be "pivotal" in reducing emissions. The Belt and Road Initiative did not include financing such projects already in the first half of 2021.^[185]

The country also had significant water pollution problems; only 84.8% of China's national surface water was graded between Grade I-III by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment in 2021, which indicates that they're suitable for human consumption.^[186] China had a 2018 Forest Landscape Integrity Index mean score of 7.14/10, ranking it 53rd globally out of 172 countries.^[187] In 2020, a sweeping law was passed by the Chinese government to protect the ecology of the Yangtze River. The new laws include strengthening ecological protection rules for hydropower projects along the river, banning chemical plants within 1 kilometer of the river, relocating polluting industries, severely restricting sand mining as well as a complete fishing ban on all the natural waterways of the river, including all its major tributaries and lakes.^[188]

China is also the world's leading investor in renewable energy and its commercialization, with \$546 billion invested in 2022;^[189] it is a major manufacturer of renewable energy technologies and invests heavily in local-scale renewable energy projects.^{[190][189]} In 2022, 61.2% of China's electricity came from coal (largest producer in the world), 14.9% from hydroelectric power (largest), 9.3% from wind (largest), 4.7% from solar energy (largest), 4.7% from nuclear energy (second-largest), 3.1% from natural gas (fifth-largest), and 1.9%

from bioenergy (largest); in total, 30.8% of China's energy came from renewable energy sources.^[191] Despite its emphasis on renewables, China remains deeply connected to global oil markets and next to India, has been the largest importer of Russian crude oil in 2022.^{[192][193]}

Political geography

The People's Republic of China is the second-largest country in the world by land area after Russia.^{[u][v]} China's total area is generally stated as being approximately 9,600,000 km² (3,700,000 sq mi).^[194] Specific area figures range from 9,572,900 km² (3,696,100 sq mi) according to the Encyclopædia Britannica,^[195] to 9,596,961 km² (3,705,407 sq mi) according to the UN Demographic Yearbook,^[3] and the CIA World Factbook.^[5]

China has the longest combined land border in the world, measuring 22,117 km (13,743 mi) and its coastline covers approximately 14,500 km (9,000 mi) from the mouth of the Yalu River (Amnok River) to the Gulf of Tonkin.^[5] China borders 14 nations and covers the bulk of East Asia, bordering Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar in Southeast Asia; India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan^[w] and Afghanistan in South Asia; Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia; and Russia, Mongolia, and North Korea in Inner Asia and Northeast Asia. It is narrowly separated from Bangladesh and Thailand to the southwest and south, and has several maritime neighbors such as Japan, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.^[196]



Map showing the territorial claims of the PRC

Politics

The People's Republic of China is a one-party Marxist–Leninist state^[197] governed solely by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), making it one of the world's last countries governed by a communist party. The Chinese constitution states that the PRC "is a socialist state governed by a people's democratic dictatorship that is led by the working class and based on an alliance of workers and peasants," and that the state institutions "shall practice the principle of democratic centralism".^[198] The main body of the constitution also declares that "the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)."^[199]



The Great Hall of the People where the National People's Congress convenes



The Zhongnanhai, headquarters of the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party

The PRC officially terms itself as a democracy, using terms such as "socialist consultative democracy",^[200] and "whole-process people's democracy".^[201] However, the country is commonly described as an authoritarian one-party state and a dictatorship,^{[202][203]} with among the heaviest restrictions worldwide in many areas, most notably against freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, reproductive rights, free formation of social organizations, freedom of religion and free access to the Internet.^[204] China has consistently been ranked amongst the lowest as an "authoritarian regime" by the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, ranking at 156th out of 167 countries in 2022.^[205]

Political concerns in China include the growing gap between rich and poor and government corruption.^[206] Nonetheless, the level of public support for the government is high, according to surveys. A 2020 survey from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research also had most Chinese expressing satisfaction with the government on information dissemination and delivery of daily necessities during the COVID-19

pandemic.^{[207][208]} A Harvard University survey published in July 2020 found that citizen satisfaction with the government had increased since 2003, also rating China's government as more effective and capable than ever before in the survey's history.^[209]

Chinese Communist Party

According to the CCP constitution, its highest body of the CCP is the National Congress held every five years.^[210] The National Congress elects the Central Committee, who then elects the party's Politburo, Politburo Standing Committee and the general secretary (party leader), the top leadership of the country.^[210] The general secretary holds ultimate power and authority over state and government and serves as the informal paramount leader.^[211] The current general secretary is Xi Jinping, who took office on 15 November 2012.^[136] At the local level, the secretary of the CCP committee of a subdivision outranks the local government level; CCP committee secretary of a provincial division outranks the governor while the CCP committee secretary of a city outranks the mayor.^[212] The CCP is officially guided by "socialism with Chinese characteristics", which is Marxism adapted to Chinese circumstances.^[213]



The Chinese Communist Party is the founding and ruling political party of the People's Republic of China.

Government

The government in China is under the sole control of the CCP, with the CCP constitution outlining the party as the "highest force for political leadership".^[214] The CCP controls appointments in government bodies, with most senior government officials being CCP members.^[214]

The nearly 3,000 member National People's Congress (NPC) is constitutionally the "highest state organ of power",^[198] though it has been also described as a "rubber stamp" body.^[215] The NPC meets annually, while the NPC Standing Committee, around 150 member body elected from NPC delegates, meets every couple of months.^[215] Elections are not pluralistic, with nominations at all levels being controlled by the CCP.^[216] The NPC is dominated by the CCP, with another eight minor parties having nominal representation under the condition of upholding CCP leadership.^[217]



Xi Jinping
CCP General
Secretary and
President



Li Qiang
Premier



Zhao Leji
Congress Chairman



Wang Huning
CPPCC Chairman

The president is the ceremonial head of state, elected by the NPC. The incumbent president is Xi Jinping, who is also the general secretary of the CCP and the chairman of the Central Military Commission, making him China's paramount leader. The premier is the head of government, with Li Qiang being the incumbent premier. The premier is officially nominated by the president and then elected by the NPC, and has generally been either the second or third-ranking member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC).

The premier presides over the State Council, China's cabinet, composed of four vice premiers and the heads of ministries and commissions.^[198] The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is a political advisory body that is critical in China's "united front" system, which aims to gather non-CCP voices to support the CCP. Similar to the people's congresses, CPPCC's exist at various division, with the National Committee of the CPPCC being chaired by Wang Huning, one of China's top leaders.^[218]

Administrative divisions

The People's Republic of China is constitutionally a unitary state officially divided into 23 provinces,^[x] five autonomous regions (each with a designated minority group), and four directly-administered municipalities—collectively referred to as "mainland China"—as well as the special administrative regions (SARs) of Hong Kong and Macau.^[219] The PRC considers Taiwan to be its 23rd province,^[220] although it is governed by the Republic of China (ROC), which claims to be the legitimate representative of China and its territory, though it has downplayed this claim since its democratization.^[221] Geographically, all 31 provincial divisions of mainland China can be grouped into six regions: North China, Northeast China, East China, South Central China, Southwest China, and Northwest China.^[222]



List of administrative divisions in the PRC

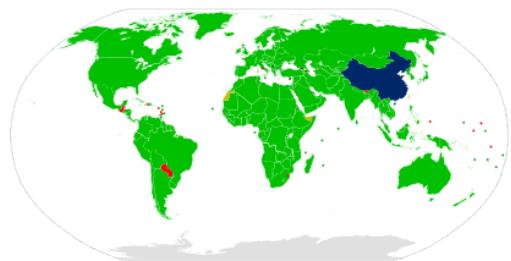
Provinces (省)	<u>Anhui</u> (安徽省) <u>Fujian</u> (福建省) <u>Gansu</u> (甘肃省) <u>Guangdong</u> (广东省) <u>Guizhou</u> (贵州省) <u>Hainan</u> (海南省) <u>Hebei</u> (河北省) <u>Heilongjiang</u> (黑龙江省)	<u>Henan</u> (河南省) <u>Hubei</u> (湖北省) <u>Hunan</u> (湖南省) <u>Jiangsu</u> (江苏省) <u>Jiangxi</u> (江西省) <u>Jilin</u> (吉林省) <u>Liaoning</u> (辽宁省) <u>Qinghai</u> (青海省)	<u>Shaanxi</u> (陕西省) <u>Shandong</u> (山东省) <u>Shanxi</u> (山西省) <u>Sichuan</u> (四川省) <u>Yunnan</u> (云南省) <u>Zhejiang</u> (浙江省)
Claimed Province	<i>Taiwan</i> (台湾省), governed by the <i>Republic of China</i>		
Autonomous regions (自治区)	<u>Guangxi</u> (广西壮族自治区) <u>Inner Mongolia / Nei Menggu</u> (内蒙古自治区)	<u>Ningxia</u> (宁夏回族自治区) <u>Tibet / Xizang</u> (西藏自治区)	<u>Xinjiang</u> (新疆维吾尔自治区)
Municipalities (直辖市)	<u>Beijing</u> (北京市) <u>Chongqing</u> (重庆市)	<u>Shanghai</u> (上海市) <u>Tianjin</u> (天津市)	
Special administrative regions (特别行政区)	<u>Hong Kong / Xianggang</u> (香港特别行政区)	<u>Macau / Aomen</u> (澳门特别行政区)	

Foreign relations

The PRC has diplomatic relations with 179 United Nations members states and maintains embassies in 174. Since 2019, China has the largest diplomatic network in the world.^{[223][224]} In 1971, the PRC replaced the Republic of China (ROC) as the sole representative of China in the United Nations and as one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.^[225] It is a member of intergovernmental organizations including the G20,^[226] East Asia Summit,^[227] and APEC.^[228] China was also a former member and leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, and still considers itself an advocate for developing countries.^[229] Along with Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa, China is a member of the BRICS group of emerging major economies and hosted the group's third official summit at Sanya, Hainan in April 2011.^[230]

The PRC officially maintains the one-China principle, which holds the view that there is only one sovereign state in the name of China, represented by the PRC, and that Taiwan is part of that China.^[231] The unique status of Taiwan has led to countries recognizing the PRC to maintain unique "one-China policies" that differ from each other; some countries explicitly recognize the PRC's claim over Taiwan, while others, including the US and Japan, only acknowledge the claim.^[231] Chinese officials have protested on numerous occasions when foreign countries have made diplomatic overtures to Taiwan,^[232] especially in the matter of armament sales.^[233] Most countries have switched recognition from the ROC to the PRC since the latter replaced the former in the United Nations in 1971 as the sole representative of China.^[234]

Much of current Chinese foreign policy is reportedly based on Premier Zhou Enlai's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and is also driven by the concept of "harmony without uniformity", which encourages diplomatic relations between states despite ideological differences.^[235] This policy may have led China to support or maintain close ties with states that are regarded as dangerous or repressive by Western nations,



Diplomatic relations of China

such as Myanmar,^[236] North Korea and Iran.^[237] China has a close political, economic and military relationship with Russia,^[238] and the two states often vote in unison in the United Nations Security Council.^{[239][240][241]}

Trade relations

China became the world's largest trading nation in 2013 as measured by the sum of imports and exports, as well as the world's largest commodity importer, comprising roughly 45% of maritime's dry-bulk market.^{[242][243]} By 2016, China was the largest trading partner of 124 other countries.^[244] China is the largest trading partner for the ASEAN nations, with a total trade value of \$669.2 billion in 2021 accounting for 20% of ASEAN's total trade.^[245] ASEAN is also China's largest trading partner.^[246] In 2020, China became the largest trading partner of the European Union for goods, with the total value of goods trade reaching nearly \$700 billion.^[247] China, along with ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, is a member of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free-trade area covering 30% of the world's population and economic output.^[248] China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. In 2004, it proposed an entirely new East Asia Summit (EAS) framework as a forum for regional security issues.^[249] The EAS, which includes ASEAN Plus Three, India, Australia and New Zealand, held its inaugural summit in 2005.^[250]



On 21 May 2014, China and Russia signed a \$400 billion gas deal. Currently, Russia is supplying natural gas to China.

China has had a long and complex trade relationship with the United States. In 2000, the United States Congress approved "permanent normal trade relations" (PNTR) with China, allowing Chinese exports in at the same low tariffs as goods from most other countries.^[251] China has a significant trade surplus with the United States, one of its most important export markets.^[252] Economists have argued that the renminbi is undervalued, due to currency intervention from the Chinese government, giving China an unfair trade advantage.^[253] The US and other foreign governments have also alleged that China does not respect intellectual property (IP) rights and steals IP through espionage operations,^[254] with the US Department of Justice saying that 80% of all the prosecutions related to economic espionage it brings were about conduct to benefit the Chinese state.^[255]

Since the turn of the century, China has followed a policy of engaging with African nations for trade and bilateral co-operation;^{[256][257][258]} in 2022, Sino-African trade totalled \$282 billion, having grown more than 20 times over two decades.^[259] According to Madison Condon "China finances more infrastructure projects in Africa than the World Bank and provides billions of dollars in low-interest loans to the continent's emerging economies."^[260] China maintains extensive and highly diversified trade links with the European Union, and became its largest trading partner for goods, with the total value of goods trade reaching nearly \$700 billion.^[247] China has furthermore strengthened its trade ties with major South American economies,^[261] and is the largest trading partner of Brazil, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, and several others.^[262]

In 2013, China initiated the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a large global infrastructure building initiative with funding on the order of \$50–100 billion per year.^[263] BRI could be one of the largest development plans in modern history.^[264] It has expanded significantly over the last six years and, as of April 2020, includes 138 countries and 30 international organizations. In addition to intensifying foreign policy relations, the focus here is particularly on building efficient transport routes. The focus is particularly on the maritime Silk Road with its connections to East Africa and Europe and there are Chinese investments or related declarations of intent at numerous ports such as Gwadar, Kuantan, Hambantota, Piraeus and Trieste. However many of these loans made under the Belt and Road program are unsustainable and China has faced a number of calls for debt relief from debtor nations.^{[265][266]}

Territorial disputes

Ever since its establishment, the PRC has claimed the territories governed by the Republic of China (ROC), a separate political entity today commonly known as Taiwan, as a part of its territory. It regards the island of Taiwan as its Taiwan Province, Kinmen and Matsu as a part of Fujian Province and islands the ROC controls in the South China Sea as a part of Hainan Province and Guangdong Province. These claims are controversial because of the complicated Cross-Straits relations, with the PRC treating the one-China principle as one of its most important diplomatic principles in dealing with other countries.^[231]

China has resolved its land borders with 12 out of 14 neighboring countries, having pursued substantial compromises in most of them.^{[267][268][269]} China currently has a disputed land border with India^[270] and Bhutan.^[271] China is additionally involved in maritime disputes with multiple countries over the ownership of several small islands in the East and South China Seas, such as Socotra Rock, the Senkaku Islands and the entirety of South China Sea Islands,^{[272][273]} along with the EEZ disputes over East China Sea.



Map depicting territorial disputes between the PRC and neighboring states. For a larger map, see [here](#).

Sociopolitical issues and human rights

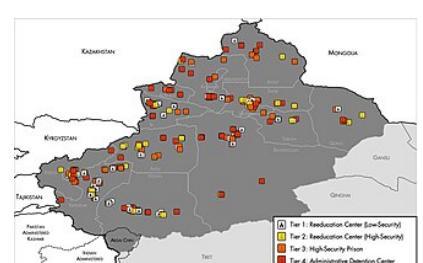
The situation of human rights in China has attracted significant criticism from a number of foreign governments, foreign press agencies, and non-governmental organizations, alleging widespread civil rights violations such as detention without trial, forced confessions, torture, restrictions of fundamental rights, and excessive use of the death penalty.^{[204][274]} Since its inception, Freedom House has ranked China as "not free" in its Freedom in the World survey,^[204] while Amnesty International has documented significant human rights abuses.^[274] The Constitution of the People's Republic of China states that the "fundamental rights" of citizens include freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to a fair trial, freedom of religion, universal suffrage, and property rights. However, in practice, these provisions do not afford significant protection against criminal prosecution by the state.^{[275][276]}

Although some criticisms of government policies and the ruling CCP are tolerated, censorship of political speech and information are amongst the harshest in the world and routinely used to prevent collective action.^[277] China also has the most comprehensive and sophisticated Internet censorship regime in the world, with numerous websites being blocked.^[278] The government suppresses popular protests and demonstrations that it considers a potential threat to "social stability", as was the case with the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and massacre.^[279] China additionally uses a massive espionage network of cameras, facial recognition software, sensors, and surveillance of personal technology as a means of social control of persons living in the country.^[280]



March in memory of Chinese Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo who died of organ failure while in government custody in 2017

China is regularly accused of large-scale repression and human rights abuses in Tibet and Xinjiang,^{[282][283][284]} where significant amounts of ethnic minorities reside, including violent police crackdowns and religious suppression.^{[285][286]} In Xinjiang, repression has significantly escalated since 2016, after which at least one million Uyghurs and other ethnic and religion minorities have been detained in internment camps, officially termed "Vocational Education and Training Centers", aimed at changing the political thinking of detainees, their identities, and their religious beliefs.^[142] According to witnesses, actions including political indoctrination, torture, physical and psychological abuse, forced sterilization, sexual abuse, and forced labor are common in these facilities.^[287] According to a 2020 report, China's treatment of Uyghurs



In Xinjiang, China has been accused of committing genocide against Uyghurs and detaining more than one million Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in camps.^[281]

meets the UN definition of genocide,^[288] while a separate UN Human Rights Office report said they could potentially meet the definitions for crimes against humanity.^[289]

Global studies from Pew Research Center in 2014 and 2017 ranked the Chinese government's restrictions on religion as among the highest in the world, despite low to moderate rankings for religious-related social hostilities in the country.^{[290][291]} The Global Slavery Index estimated that in 2016 more than 3.8 million people were living in "conditions of modern slavery", or 0.25% of the population, including victims of human trafficking, forced labor, forced marriage, child labor, and state-imposed forced labor. The state-imposed re-education through labor (*laojiao*) system was formally abolished in 2013, but it is not clear to which extent its various practices have stopped.^[292] The Chinese penal system also includes the much larger reform through labor (*laogai*) system, which includes labor prison factories, detention centers, and re-education camps; the Laogai Research Foundation has estimated in June 2008 that there were nearly 1,422 of these facilities, though it cautioned that this number was likely an underestimate.^[293]



2019–20 Hong Kong protests

Military

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is considered one of the world's most powerful militaries and has rapidly modernized in the recent decades.^[294] It consists of the Ground Force (PLAGF), the Navy (PLAN), the Air Force (PLAAF), the Rocket Force (PLARF) and the Strategic Support Force (PLASSF). Its nearly 2.2 million active duty personnel is the largest in the world. The PLA holds the world's third-largest stockpile of nuclear weapons,^{[295][296]} and the world's second-largest navy by tonnage.^[297] China's official military budget for 2022 totalled US\$230 billion (1.45 trillion Yuan), the second-largest in the world, though SIPRI estimates that its real expenditure that year was US\$292 billion.^[298] According to SIPRI, its military spending from 2012 to 2021 averaged US\$215 billion per year or 1.7 per cent of GDP, behind only the United States at US\$734 billion per year or 3.6 per cent of GDP.^[299] The PLA is commanded by the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the party and the state; though officially two separate organizations, the two CMCs have identical membership except during leadership transition periods and effectively function as one organization. The chairman of the CMC is the commander-in-chief of the PLA, with the officeholder also generally being the CCP general secretary, making them the paramount leader of China.^[300]



Chengdu J-20 5th generation stealth fighter

Economy

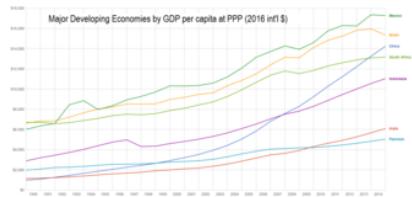
China has the world's second-largest economy in terms of nominal GDP,^[301] and the world's largest in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP).^[302] As of 2022, China accounts for around 18% of global economy by nominal GDP.^[303] China is one of the world's fastest-growing major economies,^[304] with its economic growth having been almost consistently above 6 percent since the introduction of economic reforms in 1978.^[305] According to the World Bank, China's GDP grew from \$150 billion in 1978 to \$17.96 trillion by 2022.^[306] Of the world's 500 largest companies, 142 are headquartered in China.^[307]

China was one of the world's foremost economic powers throughout the arc of East Asian and global history. The country had one of the largest economies in the world for most of the past two millennia,^[308] during which it has seen cycles of prosperity and decline.^{[309][310]} Since economic reforms began in 1978, China has developed into a highly diversified economy and one of the most consequential players in international trade. Major sectors of competitive strength include manufacturing, retail, mining, steel, textiles, automobiles, energy generation, green energy, banking, electronics, telecommunications, real estate, e-commerce, and tourism. China has three out of the ten largest stock exchanges in the world^[311]—Shanghai, Hong Kong and Shenzhen—that together have a market capitalization of over \$15.9 trillion, as of October 2020.^[312] China has four (Shanghai, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Shenzhen) out of the world's top ten most competitive financial centers, which is more than any other country in the 2020 Global Financial

Centres Index.^[313] By 2035, China's four cities (Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen) are projected to be among the global top ten largest cities by nominal GDP according to a report by Oxford Economics.^[314]

Modern-day China is often described as an example of state capitalism or party-state capitalism.^{[316][317]} In 1992, Jiang Zemin termed the country a socialist market economy.^[318] Others have described it as a form of Marxism–Leninism adapted to co-exist with global capitalism.^[319] The state dominates in strategic "pillar" sectors such as energy production and heavy industries, but private enterprise has expanded enormously, with around 30 million private businesses recorded in 2008.^{[320][321][322]} According to official statistics, privately owned companies constitute more than 60% of China's GDP.^[323]

China has been the world's largest manufacturing nation since 2010, after overtaking the US, which had been the largest for the previous hundred years.^{[324][325]} China has also been the second largest in high-tech manufacturing country since 2012, according to US National Science Foundation.^[326] China is the second largest retail market in the world, next to the United States.^[327] China leads the world in e-commerce, accounting for over 37% of the global market share in 2021.^[328] China is the world's leader in electric vehicle consumption and production, manufacturing and buying half of all the plug-in electric cars (BEV and PHEV) in the world as of 2022.^[329] China is also the leading producer of batteries for electric vehicles as well as several key raw materials for batteries.^[330] Long heavily relying on non-renewable energy sources such as coal, China's adaptation of renewable energy has increased significantly in recent years, with their share increasing from 26.3 percent in 2016 to 31.9 percent in 2022.^[331]



China and other major developing economies by GDP per capita at purchasing-power parity, 1990–2013. The rapid economic growth of China (blue) is readily apparent.^[315]

Wealth

China accounted for 17.9% of the world's total wealth in 2021, second highest in the world after the US.^[332] It ranks at 64th at GDP (nominal) per capita, making it an upper-middle income country.^[333] Though China used to make up much of the world's poor, it now makes up much of the world's middle-class.^[334] China brought more people out of extreme poverty than any other country in history^{[335][336]}—between 1978 and 2018, China reduced extreme poverty by 800 million. China reduced the extreme poverty rate—per international standard, it refers to an income of less than \$1.90/day—from 88% in 1981 to 1.85% by 2013.^[337] The portion of people in China living below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day (2011 PPP) fell to 0.3% in 2018 from 66.3% in 1990. Using the lower-middle income poverty line of \$3.20 per day, the portion fell to 2.9% in 2018 from 90.0% in 1990. Using the upper-middle income poverty line of \$5.50 per day, the portion fell to 17.0% from 98.3% in 1990.^[338]



Shanghai World Financial Center, Jin Mao Tower and Shanghai Tower, Lujiazui

From 1978 to 2018, the average standard of living multiplied by a factor of twenty-six.^[339] Wages in China have grown a lot in the last 40 years—real (inflation-adjusted) wages grew seven-fold from 1978 to 2007.^[340] Per capita incomes have risen significantly – when the PRC was founded in 1949, per capita income in China was one-fifth of the world average; per capita incomes now equal the world average itself.^[339] China's development is highly uneven. Its major cities and coastal areas are far more prosperous compared to rural and interior regions.^[341] It has a high level of economic inequality,^[342] which has increased quickly after the economic reforms,^[343] though has decreased significantly in the 2010s.^[344] In 2019 China's Gini coefficient was 0.382, according to the World Bank.^[9]

As of April 2023, China was second in the world, after the US, in total number of billionaires and total number of millionaires, with 495 Chinese billionaires^[345] and 6.2 million millionaires.^[332] In 2019, China overtook the US as the home to the highest number of people who have a net personal wealth of at least \$110,000, according to the global wealth report by Credit Suisse.^{[346][347]} According to the Hurun Global

Rich List 2020, China is home to five of the world's top ten cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou in the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 10th spots, respectively) by the highest number of billionaires, which is more than any other country.^[348] China had 85 female billionaires as of January 2021, two-thirds of the global total, and minted 24 new female billionaires in 2020.^[349] China has had the world's largest middle-class population since 2015,^[350] and the middle-class grew to a size of 400 million by 2018.^[351]

China in the global economy

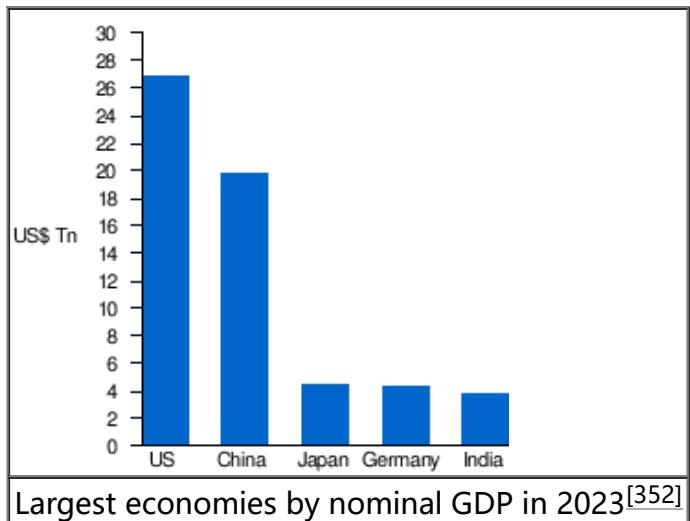
China is a member of the WTO and is the world's largest trading power, with a total international trade value of US\$6.3 trillion in 2022.^[353] China is the world's largest exporter and second-largest importer of goods.^[354] Its foreign exchange reserves reached US\$3.128 trillion as of December 2022,^[355] making its reserves by far the world's largest.^{[356][357]} In 2022, China was amongst the world's largest recipient of inward foreign direct investment (FDI), attracting \$180 billion, though most of these were speculated to be from Hong Kong.^[358] In 2021, China's foreign exchange remittances were \$US53 billion making it the second largest recipient of remittances in the world.^[359] China also invests abroad, with a total outward FDI of \$62.4 billion in 2012,^[360] and a number of major takeovers of foreign firms by Chinese companies.^[361] China is a major owner of US public debt, holding trillions of dollars worth of U.S. Treasury bonds.^{[362][363]} China's undervalued exchange rate has caused friction with other major economies,^[364] and it has also been widely criticized for manufacturing large quantities of counterfeit goods.^{[365][366]} In 2020, Harvard University's Economic Complexity Index ranked complexity of China's exports 17th in the world, up from 24th in 2010.^[367]

Following the 2007–08 financial crisis, Chinese authorities sought to actively wean off of its dependence on the U.S. dollar as a result of perceived weaknesses of the international monetary system.^[368] To achieve those ends, China took a series of actions to further the internationalization of the Renminbi. In 2008, China established the dim sum bond market and expanded the Cross-Border Trade RMB Settlement Pilot Project, which helps establish pools of offshore RMB liquidity.^{[369][370]} This was followed with bilateral agreements to settle trades directly in renminbi with Russia,^[371] Japan,^[372] Australia,^[373] Singapore,^[374] the United Kingdom,^[375] and Canada.^[376] As a result of the rapid internationalization of the renminbi, it became the eighth-most-traded currency in the world by 2018, an emerging international reserve currency,^[377] and a component of the IMF's special drawing rights; however, partly due to capital controls that make the renminbi fall short of being a fully convertible currency, it remains far behind the Euro, Dollar and Japanese Yen in international trade volumes.^[378] As of 2022, Yuan is the world's fifth-most traded currency.^[379]

Science and technology

Historical

China was a world leader in science and technology until the Ming dynasty.^[380] Ancient Chinese discoveries and inventions, such as papermaking, printing, the compass, and gunpowder (the Four Great Inventions), became widespread across East Asia, the Middle East and later Europe. Chinese mathematicians were the first to use negative numbers.^{[381][382]} By the 17th century, the Western hemisphere surpassed China in scientific and technological advancement.^[383] The causes of this early modern Great Divergence continue to be debated by scholars.^[384]



Largest economies by nominal GDP in 2023^[352]

After repeated military defeats by the European colonial powers and Japan in the 19th century, Chinese reformers began promoting modern science and technology as part of the Self-Strengthening Movement. After the Communists came to power in 1949, efforts were made to organize science and technology based on the model of the Soviet Union, in which scientific research was part of central planning.^[385] After Mao's death in 1976, science and technology were promoted as one of the Four Modernizations,^[386] and the Soviet-inspired academic system was gradually reformed.^[387]

硝頭柱一十八條	皮屨八片	皮索二十條
鐵鉛十八箇	大木樑二箇	界札索十條
水浸二箇	扭馬二	麻搭四具
唧箇四箇	土布袋二十五箇	小水桶四隻
銀三具	糧一領	鐵三具
右總花類備用以蓋廈及防火箭	火索三十條	

Earliest known written formula for gunpowder, from the *Wujing Zongyao* of 1044 CE

Modern era

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, China has made significant investments in scientific research^[389] and is quickly catching up with the US in R&D spending.^{[390][391]} China officially spent around 2.4% of its GDP on R&D in 2020, totaling to around \$377.8 billion.^[392] According to the World Intellectual Property Indicators, China received more applications than the US did in 2018 and 2019 and ranked first globally in patents, utility models, trademarks, industrial designs, and creative goods exports in 2021.^{[393][394][395]} It was ranked 11th in the Global Innovation Index in 2022, a considerable improvement from its rank of 35th in 2013.^{[396][397]} Chinese supercomputers have been ranked the fastest in the world on a few occasions;^[398] however, these supercomputers rely on critical components—namely processors—imported from outside of China.^[399] China has also struggled with developing several technologies domestically, such as the most advanced semiconductors and reliable jet engines.^{[400][401]}

China is developing its education system with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).^[402] It became the world's largest publisher of scientific papers in 2016.^{[403][404][405]} Chinese-born academicians have won prestigious prizes in the sciences and in mathematics, although most of them had conducted their winning research in Western nations.^[406]



Headquarters of Tencent in Shenzhen, one of the largest technology and entertainment companies in the world^[388]

Space program

The Chinese space program started in 1958 with some technology transfers from the Soviet Union. However, it did not launch the nation's first satellite until 1970 with the *Dong Fang Hong I*, which made China the fifth country to do so independently.^[412]

In 2003, China became the third country in the world to independently send humans into space with Yang Liwei's spaceflight aboard *Shenzhou 5*. As of 2023, eighteen Chinese nationals have journeyed into space, including two women. In 2011, China launched its first space station testbed, *Tiangong-1*.^[413] In 2013, a Chinese robotic rover *Yutu* successfully touched down on the lunar surface as part of the *Chang'e 3* mission.^[414]



Launch of Shenzhou 13 by a Long March 2F rocket. China is one of the only three countries with independent human spaceflight capability.

In 2019, China became the first country to land a probe—*Chang'e 4*—on the far side of the Moon.^[415] In 2020, *Chang'e 5* successfully returned Moon samples to the Earth, making China the third country to do so independently after the United States and the Soviet Union.^[416] In 2021, China became the third country to land a spacecraft on Mars and the second one to deploy a rover (*Zhurong*) on Mars, after the United States.^[417] China completed its own modular space station, the *Tiangong*, in low Earth orbit on 3 November 2022.^{[418][419][420]} On 29 November 2022, China performed its first in-orbit crew handover aboard the *Tiangong*.^{[421][422]}

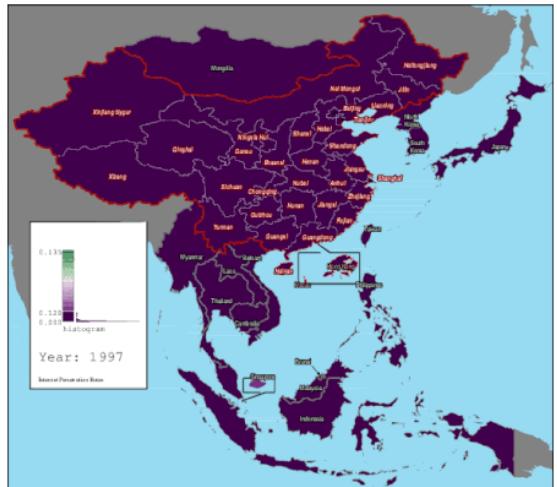
In May 2023, China announces plan to land humans on Moon by 2030.^[423]

Infrastructure

After a decades-long infrastructural boom,^[424] China has produced numerous world-leading infrastructural projects: China has the world's largest bullet train network,^[425] the most supertall skyscrapers in the world,^[426] the world's largest power plant (the Three Gorges Dam),^[427] and a global satellite navigation system with the largest number of satellites in the world.^[428]

Telecommunications

China is the largest telecom market in the world and currently has the largest number of active cellphones of any country in the world, with over 1.69 billion subscribers, as of February 2023. It also has the world's largest number of internet and broadband users, with over 1.05 billion Internet users since 2021^[429]—equivalent to around 73.7% of its population—and almost all of them being mobile as well. By 2018, China had more than 1 billion 4G users, accounting for 40% of world's total.^[430] China is making rapid advances in 5G—by late 2018, China had started large-scale and commercial 5G trials.^[431] As of March 2022, China had over 500 million 5G users and 1.45 million base stations installed.^[432]



Internet penetration rates in China in the context of East Asia and Southeast Asia, 1995–2012

China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom, are the three large providers of mobile and internet in China. China Telecom alone served more than 145 million broadband subscribers and 300 million mobile users; China Unicom had about 300 million subscribers; and China Mobile, the largest of them all, had 925 million users, as of 2018.^[433] Combined, the three operators had over 3.4 million 4G base-stations in China.^[434] Several Chinese telecommunications companies, most notably Huawei and ZTE, have been accused of spying for the Chinese military.^[435]

China has developed its own satellite navigation system, dubbed BeiDou, which began offering commercial navigation services across Asia in 2012^[436] as well as global services by the end of 2018.^[437] Upon the completion of the 35th Beidou satellite, which was launched into orbit on 23 June 2020, Beidou followed GPS and GLONASS as the third completed global navigation satellite in the world.^[438]

Transport

Since the late 1990s, China's national road network has been significantly expanded through the creation of a network of national highways and expressways. In 2018, China's highways had reached a total length of 161,000 km (100,000 mi), making it the longest highway system in the world.^[439] China has the world's largest market for automobiles,^{[440][441]} having surpassed the United States in both auto sales and production. The country has also become a large exporter of automobiles, being the world's second-largest exporter of cars in 2022 after Japan.^[442] In early 2023, China has overtaken Japan, becoming the world's largest exporter of cars.^{[443][444]} A side-effect of the rapid growth of China's road network has been a significant rise in traffic accidents,^[445] though the number of fatalities in traffic accidents fell by 20% from 2007 to 2017. In urban areas, bicycles remain a common mode of transport, despite the increasing prevalence of automobiles – as of 2012, there are approximately 470 million bicycles in China.^[446] China's railways, which are operated by the state-owned China State Railway Group Company, are among the busiest in the world, handling a quarter of the world's rail traffic volume on only 6 percent of the world's tracks in 2006.^[447] As of 2021, the country had 150,000 km (93,206 mi) of railways, the second longest network in the world.^[448] The railways strain to meet enormous demand particularly during the Chinese New Year holiday, when the world's largest annual human migration takes place.^[449]

China's high-speed rail (HSR) system started construction in the early 2000s. By the end of 2022, high speed rail in China had reached 42,000 kilometers (26,098 miles) of dedicated lines alone, making it the longest HSR network in the world.^[450] Services on the Beijing–Shanghai, Beijing–Tianjin, and Chengdu–Chongqing lines reach up to 350 km/h (217 mph), making them the fastest conventional high speed railway services in the world. With an annual ridership of over 2.29 billion passengers in 2019, it is the world's busiest.^[451] The network includes the Beijing–Guangzhou high-speed railway, the single longest HSR line in the world, and the Beijing–Shanghai high-speed railway, which has three of longest railroad bridges in the world.^[452] The Shanghai maglev train, which reaches 431 km/h (268 mph), is the fastest commercial train service in the world.^[453]



The Duge Bridge is the highest bridge in the world.

Since 2000, the growth of rapid transit systems in Chinese cities has accelerated.^[454] As of January 2021, 44 Chinese cities have urban mass transit systems in operation^[455] and 39 more have metro systems approved.^[456] As of 2020, China boasts the five longest metro systems in the world with the networks in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Shenzhen being the largest.



The Port of Shanghai's deep water harbor on Yangshan Island in the Hangzhou Bay is the world's busiest container port since 2010.

There were approximately 241 airports in 2021.^[457]

China has over 2,000 river and seaports, about 130 of which are open to foreign shipping.^[458] In 2021, the Ports of Shanghai, Ningbo-Zhoushan, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Qingdao, Tianjin and Hong Kong ranked in the top 10 in the world in container traffic and cargo tonnage.^[459]



The Beijing Daxing International Airport features the world's largest single-building airport terminal.

Water supply and sanitation

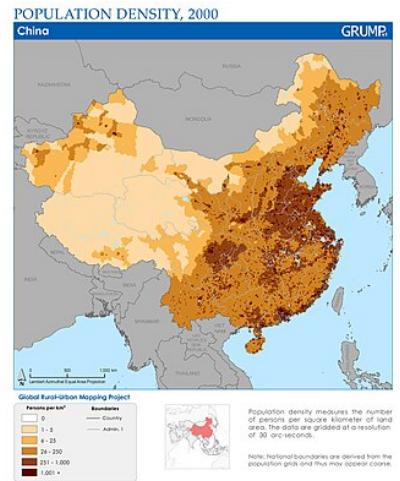
Water supply and sanitation infrastructure in China is facing challenges such as rapid urbanization, as well as water scarcity, contamination, and pollution.^[460] According to data presented by the Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply and Sanitation of World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in 2015, about 36% of the rural population in China still did not have access to improved sanitation.^[461] The ongoing South–North Water Transfer Project intends to abate water shortage in the north.^[462]

Demographics

The national census of 2020 recorded the population of the People's Republic of China as approximately 1,411,778,724. According to the 2020 census, about 17.95% of the population were 14 years old or younger, 63.35% were between 15 and 59 years old, and 18.7% were over 60 years old.^[463] Between 2010 and 2020, the average population growth rate was 0.53%.^[463]

Given concerns about population growth, China implemented a two-child limit during the 1970s, and, in 1979, began to advocate for an even stricter limit of one child per family. Beginning in the mid-1980s, however, given the unpopularity of the strict limits, China began to allow some major exemptions, particularly in rural areas, resulting in what was actually a "1.5"-child policy from the mid-1980s to 2015 (ethnic minorities were also exempt from one child limits). The next major loosening of the policy was enacted in December 2013, allowing families to have two children if one parent is an only child.^[464] In 2016, the one-child policy was replaced in favor of a two-child policy.^[465] A three-child policy was announced on 31 May 2021, due to population aging,^[465] and in July 2021, all family size limits as well as penalties for exceeding them were removed.^[466] According to data from the 2020 census, China's total fertility rate is 1.3, but some experts believe that after adjusting for the transient effects of the relaxation of restrictions, the country's actual total fertility rate is as low as 1.1.^[467] In 2023, National Bureau of Statistics estimated that the population fell 850,000 from 2021 to 2022, the first decline since 1961.^[468]

According to one group of scholars, one-child limits had little effect on population growth^[469] or the size of the total population.^[470] However, these scholars have been challenged. Their own counterfactual model of fertility decline without such restrictions implies that China averted more than 500 million births between 1970 and 2015, a number which may reach one billion by 2060 given all the lost descendants of births averted during the era of fertility restrictions, with one-child restrictions accounting for the great bulk of that reduction.^[471] The policy, along with traditional preference for boys, may have contributed to an imbalance in the sex ratio at birth.^{[472][473]} According to the 2020 census, the sex ratio at birth was 105.07 boys for every 100 girls,^[474] which is beyond the normal range of around 105 boys for every 100 girls.^[475] The 2020 census found that males accounted for 51.24 percent of the total population.^[474] However, China's sex ratio is more balanced than it was in 1953, when males accounted for 51.82 percent of the total population.^[476]



Population density map of the People's Republic of China (2000). The eastern coastal provinces are much more densely populated than the western interior.

Ethnic groups

China legally recognizes 56 distinct ethnic groups, who altogether comprise the *Zhonghua minzu*. The largest of these nationalities are the Han Chinese, who constitute more than 91% of the total population.^[463] The Han Chinese – the world's largest single ethnic group^[477] – outnumber other ethnic groups in every provincial-level division except Tibet and Xinjiang.^[478] Ethnic minorities account for less than 10% of the population of China, according to the 2020 census.^[463] Compared with the 2010 population census, the Han population increased by 60,378,693 persons, or 4.93%, while the population of the 55 national minorities combined increased by 11,675,179 persons, or 10.26%.^[463] The 2020 census recorded a total of 845,697 foreign nationals living in mainland China.^[479]

Languages

There are as many as 292 living languages in China.^[480] The languages most commonly spoken belong to the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, which contains Mandarin (spoken by 70% of the population),^[481] and other varieties of Chinese language: Yue (including Cantonese and Taishanese), Wu (including Shanghaiese and Suzhouinese), Min (including Fuzhouinese, Hokkien and Teochew), Xiang, Gan and Hakka. Languages of the Tibeto-Burman branch, including Tibetan, Qiang, Naxi and Yi, are spoken across the Tibetan and Yunnan–Guizhou Plateau. Other ethnic minority languages in southwestern China include Zhuang, Thai, Dong and Sui of the Tai-Kadai family, Miao and Yao of the Hmong–Mien family, and Wa of the Austroasiatic family. Across northeastern and northwestern China, local ethnic groups speak Altaic languages including Manchu, Mongolian and several Turkic languages: Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Salar and Western Yugur. Korean is spoken natively along the border with North Korea. Sarikoli, the language of Tajiks in western Xinjiang, is an Indo-European language. Taiwanese indigenous peoples, including a small population on the mainland, speak Austronesian languages.^[482]

Standard Mandarin, a variety of Mandarin based on the Beijing dialect, is the official national language of China and is used as a lingua franca in the country between people of different linguistic backgrounds.^{[483][484]}



Ethnolinguistic map of China in 1967



A trilingual sign in
Xishuangbanna, with Tai Lü
language on the top



Lihaozhai High School in Jianshui, Yunnan. The sign is in Hani (Latin alphabet), Nisu (Yi script), and Chinese.

Mongolian, Uyghur, Tibetan, Zhuang and various other languages are also regionally recognized throughout the country.^[485]

Urbanization

China has urbanized significantly in recent decades. The percent of the country's population living in urban areas increased from 20% in 1980 to over 64% in 2021.^{[486][487][488]} It is estimated that China's urban population will reach one billion by 2030, potentially equivalent to one-eighth of the world population.^[487]

China has over 160 cities with a population of over one million,^[489] including the 17 megacities as of 2021^{[490][491]} (cities with a population of over 10 million) of Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Xi'an, Suzhou, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Linyi, Shijiazhuang, Dongguan, Qingdao and Changsha.^[492] Among them, the total permanent population of Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing and Chengdu is above 20 million.^[493] Shanghai is China's most populous urban area^{[494][495]} while Chongqing is its largest city proper, the only city in China with the largest permanent population of over 30 million.^[496] By 2025, it is estimated that the country will be home to 221 cities with over a million inhabitants.^[497] The figures in the table below are from the 2017 census,^[498] and are only estimates of the urban populations within administrative city limits; a different ranking exists when considering the total municipal populations (which includes suburban and rural populations). The large "floating populations" of migrant workers make conducting censuses in urban areas difficult;^[499] the figures below include only long-term residents.



Map of the ten largest cities in China (2010)

Largest cities or municipalities in the People's Republic of China							
China Urban Construction Statistical Yearbook 2020 Urban Population and Urban Temporary Population [500][note 1][note 2]							
Rank	Name	Province	Pop.	Rank	Name	Province	Pop.
1	Shanghai	SH	24,281,400	11	Hong Kong	HK	7,448,900
2	Beijing	BJ	19,164,000	12	Zhengzhou	HA	7,179,400
3	Guangzhou	GD	13,858,700	13	Nanjing	JS	6,823,500
4	Shenzhen	GD	13,438,800	14	Xi'an	SN	6,642,100
5	Tianjin	TJ	11,744,400	15	Jinan	SD	6,409,600
6	Chongqing	CQ	11,488,000	16	Shenyang	LN	5,900,000
7	Dongguan	GD	9,752,500	17	Qingdao	SD	5,501,400
8	Chengdu	SC	8,875,600	18	Harbin	HL	5,054,500
9	Wuhan	HB	8,652,900	19	Hefei	AH	4,750,100
10	Hangzhou	ZJ	8,109,000	20	Changchun	JL	4,730,900

1. Population of Hong Kong as of 2018 estimate.^[501]

2. The data of Chongqing in the list is the data of "Metropolitan Developed Economic Area", which contains two parts: "City Proper" and "Metropolitan Area". The "City proper" are consist of 9 districts: Yuzhong, Dadukou, Jiangbei, Shapingba, Jiulongpo, Nan'an, Beibei, Yubei, & Banan, has the urban population of 5,646,300 as of 2018. And the "Metropolitan Area" are consist of 12 districts: Fuling, Changshou, Jiangjin, Hechuan, Yongchuan, Nanchuan, Qijiang, Dazu, Bishan, Tongliang, Tongnan, & Rongchang, has the urban population of 5,841,700.^[502] Total urban population of all 26 districts of Chongqing are up to 15,076,600.

Education

Since 1986, compulsory education in China comprises primary and junior secondary school, which together last for nine years.^[505] In 2021, about 91.4 percent of students continued their education at a three-year senior secondary school.^[506] The Gaokao, China's national university entrance exam, is a prerequisite for entrance into most higher education institutions. As of 2020, 58.42 percent of secondary school graduates were enrolled in higher education.^[507] Vocational education is available to students at the secondary and tertiary level.^[506] More than 10 million Chinese students graduated from vocational colleges nationwide every year.^[508]



Beijing's Peking University, one of the top-ranked universities in China^{[503][504]}

China has the largest education system in the world, with about 282 million students and 17.32 million full-time teachers in over 530,000 schools.^[509] Annual education investment went from less than US\$50 billion in 2003 to more than US\$817 billion in 2020.^{[510][511]} However, there remains an inequality in education spending. In 2010, the annual education expenditure per secondary school student in Beijing totalled ¥20,023, while in Guizhou, one of the poorest provinces in China, only totalled ¥3,204.^[512] Free compulsory education in China consists of primary school and junior secondary school between the ages of 6 and 15. In 2021, the graduation enrollment ratio at compulsory education level reached 95.4 percent, and around 91.4% of Chinese have received secondary education.^[506]

China's literacy rate has grown dramatically, from only 20% in 1949 and 65.5% in 1979.^[513] to 97% of the population over age 15 in 2020.^[514] In the same year, Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang, amongst the most affluent regions in China, were ranked the highest in the world in the Programme for International Student Assessment ranking for all three categories of Mathematics, Science and Reading.^[515]

As of 2021, China has over 3,000 universities, with over 44.3 million students enrolled in mainland China and 240 million Chinese citizens have received high education, making China the largest higher education system in the world.^{[516][517]} As of 2021, China had the world's second-highest number of top universities (the highest in Asia & Oceania region).^[518] Currently, China trails only the United States in terms of representation on lists of top 200 universities according to the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU).^[519] China is home to the two of the highest ranking universities (Tsinghua University and Peking University) in Asia and emerging economies according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.^[520] As of 2022, two universities in mainland China rank in the world's top 15, with Peking University (12th) and Tsinghua University (14th) and three other universities ranking in the world's top 50, namely Fudan, Zhejiang, and Shanghai Jiao Tong according to the QS World University Rankings.^[521] These universities are members of the C9 League, an alliance of elite Chinese universities offering comprehensive and leading education.^[522]

Health

The National Health and Family Planning Commission, together with its counterparts in the local commissions, oversees the health needs of the Chinese population.^[523] An emphasis on public health and preventive medicine has characterized Chinese health policy since the early 1950s. At that time, the Communist Party started the Patriotic Health Campaign, which was aimed at improving sanitation and hygiene, as well as treating and preventing several diseases. Diseases such as cholera, typhoid and scarlet fever, which were previously rife in China, were nearly eradicated by the campaign.^[524]

After Deng Xiaoping began instituting economic reforms in 1978, the health of the Chinese public improved rapidly because of better nutrition, although many of the free public health services provided in the countryside disappeared along with the People's Communes. Healthcare in China became mostly privatized, and experienced a significant rise in quality. In 2009, the government began a 3-year large-scale healthcare provision initiative worth

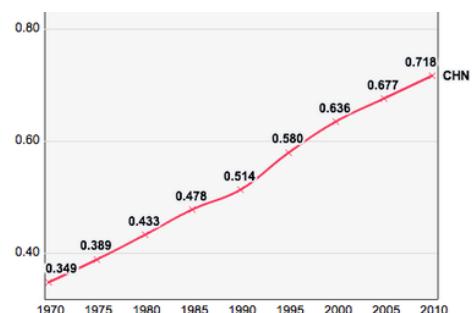


Chart showing the rise of China's Human Development Index from 1970 to 2010

US\$124 billion.^[525] By 2011, the campaign resulted in 95% of China's population having basic health insurance coverage.^[526] By 2022, China had established itself as a key producer and exporter of pharmaceuticals, with the country alone producing around 40 percent of active pharmaceutical ingredients in 2017.^[527]

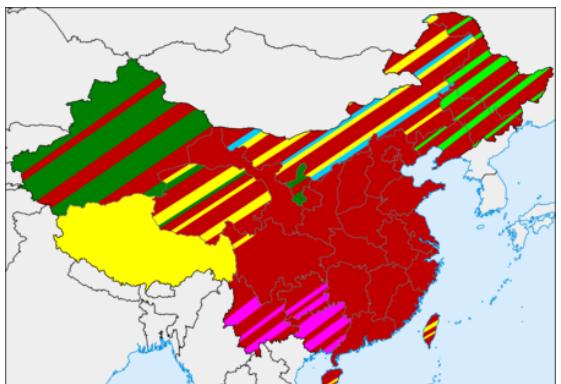
As of 2020, the life expectancy at birth in China is 78 years,^[528] and the infant mortality rate is 5 per thousand (in 2021).^[529] Both have improved significantly since the 1950s.^[z] Rates of stunting, a condition caused by malnutrition, have declined from 33.1% in 1990 to 9.9% in 2010.^[532] Despite significant improvements in health and the construction of advanced medical facilities, China has several emerging public health problems, such as respiratory illnesses caused by widespread air pollution,^[533] hundreds of millions of cigarette smokers,^[534] and an increase in obesity among urban youths.^{[535][536]} China's large population and densely populated cities have led to serious disease outbreaks in recent years, such as the 2003 outbreak of SARS, although this has since been largely contained.^[537] In 2010, air pollution caused 1.2 million premature deaths in China.^[538]

The COVID-19 pandemic was first identified in Wuhan in December 2019.^{[539][540]} Further studies are being carried out around the world on a possible origin for the virus.^{[541][542]} Beijing says it has been sharing Covid data in "a timely, open and transparent manner in accordance with the law".^[543] According to U.S. officials, the Chinese government has been concealing the extent of the outbreak before it became an international pandemic.^[544]

Religion

The government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party both officially espouse state atheism,^[549] and have conducted antireligious campaigns to this end.^[550] Religious affairs and issues in the country are overseen by the CCP's United Front Work Department.^[551] Freedom of religion is guaranteed by China's constitution, although religious organizations that lack official approval can be subject to state persecution.^{[552][553]}

Over the millennia, Chinese civilization has been influenced by various religious movements. The "three teachings", including Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Chinese Buddhism), historically have a significant role in shaping Chinese culture,^{[554][555]} enriching a theological and spiritual framework which harks back to the early Shang and Zhou dynasty. Chinese popular or folk religion, which is framed by the three teachings and other traditions,^[556] consists in allegiance to the *shen* (神), a character that signifies the "energies of generation", who can be deities of the environment or ancestral principles of human groups, concepts of civility, culture heroes, many of whom feature in Chinese mythology and history.^[557] Among the most popular cults are those of Mazu (goddess of the seas),^[558] Huangdi (one of the two divine patriarchs of the Chinese race),^{[558][559]} Guandi (god of war and business), Caishen (god of prosperity and richness), Pangu and many others. China is home to many of the world's tallest religious statues, including the tallest of all, the Spring Temple Buddha in Henan.^[560]



Geographic distribution of religions in China:
[545][546][547][548]

- Chinese folk religion (including Confucianism, Taoism, and groups of Chinese Buddhism)
- Buddhism tout court
- Islam
- Ethnic minorities' indigenous religions
- Mongolian folk religion
- Northeast China folk religion influenced by Tungus and Manchu shamanism; widespread Shanrendao

Clear data on religious affiliation in China is difficult to gather due to varying definitions of "religion" and the unorganized, diffusive nature of Chinese religious traditions. Scholars note that in China there is no clear boundary between three teachings religions and local folk religious practice.^[554] A 2015 poll conducted by Gallup International found that 61% of Chinese people self-identified as "convinced atheist",^[561] though Chinese religions or some of their strands are definable as non-theistic and humanistic religions, since they do not believe that divine creativity is completely transcendent, but it is inherent in the

world and in particular in the human being.^[562] According to a 2014 study, approximately 74% are either non-religious or practice Chinese folk belief, 16% are Buddhists, 2% are Christians, 1% are Muslims, and 8% adhere to other religions including Taoists and folk salvationism.^[563] In addition to Han people's local religious practices, there are also various ethnic minority groups in China who maintain their traditional autochthonous religions. The various folk religions today comprise 2–3% of the population, while Confucianism as a religious self-identification is common within the intellectual class. Significant faiths specifically connected to certain ethnic groups include Tibetan Buddhism and the Islamic religion of the Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and other peoples in Northwest China. The 2010 population census reported the total number of Muslims in the country as 23.14 million.

A 2021 poll from Ipsos and the Policy Institute at King's College London found that 35% of Chinese people said there was tension between different religious groups, which was the second lowest percentage of the 28 countries surveyed.^{[564][565]}

Culture and society



The Temple of Heaven, a center of heaven worship and an UNESCO World Heritage site, symbolizes the Interactions Between Heaven and Mankind.^[566]

Since ancient times, Chinese culture has been heavily influenced by Confucianism. Chinese culture, in turn, has heavily influenced East Asia and Southeast Asia.^[567] For much of the country's dynastic era, opportunities for social advancement could be provided by high performance in the prestigious imperial examinations, which have their origins in the Han dynasty.^[568] The literary emphasis of the exams affected the general perception of cultural refinement in China, such as the belief that calligraphy, poetry and painting were higher forms of art than dancing or drama. Chinese culture has long emphasized a sense of deep history and a largely inward-looking national perspective.^[569] Examinations and a culture of merit remain greatly valued in China today.^[570]



A Moon gate in a Chinese garden

The first leaders of the People's Republic of China were born into the traditional imperial order but were influenced by the May Fourth Movement and reformist ideals. They sought to change some traditional aspects of Chinese culture, such as rural land tenure, sexism, and the Confucian system of education, while preserving others, such as the family structure and culture of obedience to the state. Some observers see the period following the establishment of the PRC in 1949 as a continuation of traditional Chinese dynastic history, while others claim that the CCP's rule under Mao Zedong damaged the foundations of Chinese culture, especially through political movements such as the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, where many aspects of traditional culture were destroyed, having been denounced as "regressive and harmful" or "vestiges of feudalism". Many important aspects of traditional Chinese morals and culture, such as Confucianism, art,



Fenghuang County, an ancient town that harbors many architectural remains of Ming and Qing styles^[571]

literature, and performing arts like Peking opera, were altered to conform to government policies and propaganda at the time. Access to foreign media remains heavily restricted.^[572]

Today, the Chinese government has accepted numerous elements of traditional Chinese culture as being integral to Chinese society. With the rise of Chinese nationalism and the end of the Cultural Revolution, various forms of traditional Chinese art, literature, music, film, fashion and architecture have seen a vigorous revival,^{[573][574]} and folk and variety art in particular have sparked interest nationally and even worldwide.^[575]

Tourism

China received 65.7 million inbound international visitors in 2019,^[576] and in 2018 was the fourth-most-visited country in the world.^[576] It also experiences an enormous volume of domestic tourism; Chinese tourists made an estimated 6 billion travels within the country in 2019.^[577] China hosts the world's second-largest number of World Heritage Sites (56) after Italy, and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world (first in the Asia-Pacific).

Literature

Chinese literature is based on the literature of the Zhou dynasty.^[578] Concepts covered within the Chinese classic texts present a wide range of thoughts and subjects including calendar, military, astrology, herbology, geography and many others.^[579] Some of the most important early texts include the *I Ching* and the *Shujing* within the Four Books and Five Classics which served as the Confucian authoritative books for the state-sponsored curriculum in dynastic era. Inherited from the *Classic of Poetry*, classical Chinese poetry developed to its floruit during the Tang dynasty. Li Bai and Du Fu opened the forking ways for the poetic circles through romanticism and realism respectively. Chinese historiography began with the *Shiji*, the overall scope of the historiographical tradition in China is termed the Twenty-Four Histories, which set a vast stage for Chinese fictions along with Chinese mythology and folklore.^[580] Pushed by a burgeoning citizen class in the Ming dynasty, Chinese classical fiction rose to a boom of the historical, town and gods and demons fictions as represented by the Four Great Classical Novels which include *Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Journey to the West* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*.^[581] Along with the wuxia fictions of Jin Yong and Liang Yusheng,^[582] it remains an enduring source of popular culture in the Chinese sphere of influence.^[583]



The stories in *Journey to the West* are common themes in Peking opera.

In the wake of the New Culture Movement after the end of the Qing dynasty, Chinese literature embarked on a new era with written vernacular Chinese for ordinary citizens. Hu Shih and Lu Xun were pioneers in modern literature.^[584] Various literary genres, such as misty poetry, scar literature, young adult fiction and the xungen literature, which is influenced by magic realism,^[585] emerged following the Cultural Revolution. Mo Yan, a xungen literature author, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012.^[586]

Cuisine

Chinese cuisine is highly diverse, drawing on several millennia of culinary history and geographical variety, in which the most influential are known as the "Eight Major Cuisines", including Sichuan, Cantonese, Jiangsu, Shandong, Fujian, Hunan, Anhui, and Zhejiang cuisines.^[587] Chinese cuisine is also known for its width of cooking methods and ingredients,^[588] as well as food therapy that is emphasized by traditional Chinese medicine.^[589] Generally, China's staple food is rice in the south, wheat-based breads and noodles in the north. The diet of the common people in pre-modern times was largely grain and simple vegetables, with meat reserved for special occasions. The bean products,



Map showing major regional cuisines of China

such as tofu and soy milk, remain as a popular source of protein. Pork is now the most popular meat in China, accounting for about three-fourths of the country's total meat consumption.^[590] While pork dominates the meat market, there is also the vegetarian Buddhist cuisine and the pork-free Chinese Islamic cuisine. Southern cuisine, due to the area's proximity to the ocean and milder climate, has a wide variety of seafood and vegetables; it differs in many respects from the wheat-based diets across dry northern China. Numerous offshoots of Chinese food, such as Hong Kong cuisine and American Chinese food, have emerged in the nations that play host to the Chinese diaspora.

Architecture

Many architectural masters and masterpieces emerged in ancient China, creating many palaces, tombs, temples, gardens, houses, etc. The architecture of China is as old as Chinese civilization.^[591] The first communities that can be identified culturally as Chinese were settled chiefly in the basin of the Yellow River.^[592] Chinese architecture is the embodiment of an architectural style that has developed over millennia in China and has remained a vestigial source of perennial influence on the development of East Asian architecture.^{[593][594][595][596]} Since its emergence during the early ancient era, the structural principles of its architecture have remained largely unchanged. The main changes involved diverse decorative details. Starting with the Tang dynasty,^[597] Chinese architecture has had a major influence on the architectural styles of neighboring East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and Mongolia,^[598] and minor influences on the architecture of Southeast and South Asia including the countries of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines.^{[599][600]}

Chinese architecture is characterized by bilateral symmetry, use of enclosed open spaces, feng shui (e.g. directional hierarchies),^[601] a horizontal emphasis, and an allusion to various cosmological, mythological or in general symbolic elements. Chinese architecture traditionally classifies structures according to type, ranging from pagodas to palaces.^{[591][598]}

Chinese architecture varies widely based on status or affiliation, such as whether the structures were constructed for emperors, commoners, or for religious purposes. Other variations in Chinese architecture are shown in vernacular styles associated with different geographic regions and different ethnic heritages, such as the Stilt houses in the south, the Yaodong buildings in the northwest, the yurt buildings of nomadic people, and the Siheyuan buildings in the north.^[602]

Music

Chinese music covers a highly diverse range of music from traditional music to modern music. Chinese music dates back before the pre-imperial times. Traditional Chinese musical instruments were traditionally grouped into eight categories known as *bayin* (八音). Traditional Chinese opera is a form of musical theatre in China originating thousands of years and has regional style forms such as Beijing opera and Cantonese opera.^[603] Chinese pop (C-Pop) includes mandopop and cantopop. Chinese rap, Chinese hip hop and Hong Kong hip hop have become popular in contemporary times.^[604]

Cinema

Cinema was first introduced to China in 1896 and the first Chinese film, Dingjun Mountain, was released in 1905.^[605] China has the largest number of movie screens in the world since 2016,^[606] China became the largest cinema market in the world in 2020.^{[607][608]} The top 3 highest-grossing films in China in 2023 were The Battle at Lake Changjin (2021), Wolf Warrior 2 (2017), and Hi, Mom (2021).^[609]

Fashion

Hanfu is the historical clothing of the Han people in China. The qipao or cheongsam is a popular Chinese female dress.^[610] The hanfu movement has been popular in contemporary times and seeks to revitalize Hanfu clothing.^[611]

Sports

China has one of the oldest sporting cultures in the world. There is evidence that archery (*shèjiàn*) was practiced during the Western Zhou dynasty. Swordplay (*jiānshù*) and cuju, a sport loosely related to association football^[612] date back to China's early dynasties as well.^[613]

Physical fitness is widely emphasized in Chinese culture, with morning exercises such as qigong and tai chi widely practiced,^[614] and commercial gyms and private fitness clubs are gaining popularity across the country.^[615] Basketball is currently the most popular spectator sport in China.^[616] The Chinese Basketball Association and the American National Basketball Association also have a huge following, with native-born and NBA-bound Chinese players such as Yao Ming and Yi Jianlian being held in high esteem among the Chinese populace.^[617] China's professional football league, now known as Chinese Super League, was established in 1994, it is the largest football market in East Asia.^[618] Other popular sports in the country include martial arts, table tennis, badminton, swimming and snooker. Board games such as go (known as *wéiqí* in Chinese), xiangqi, mahjong, and more recently chess, are also played at a professional level.^[619] In addition, China is home to a huge number of cyclists, with an estimated 470 million bicycles as of 2012.^[446] Many more traditional sports, such as dragon boat racing, Mongolian-style wrestling and horse racing are also popular.^[620]



Go is an abstract strategy board game for two players, in which the aim is to surround more territory than the opponent and was invented in China more than 2,500 years ago.

China has participated in the Olympic Games since 1932, although it has only participated as the PRC since 1952. China hosted the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, where its athletes received 48 gold medals – the highest number of gold medals of any participating nation that year.^[621] China also won the most medals of any nation at the 2012 Summer Paralympics, with 231 overall, including 95 gold medals.^{[622][623]} In 2011, Shenzhen in Guangdong, China hosted the 2011 Summer Universiade. China hosted the 2013 East Asian Games in Tianjin and the 2014 Summer Youth Olympics in Nanjing; the first country to host both regular and Youth Olympics. Beijing and its nearby city Zhangjiakou of Hebei province collaboratively hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics, making Beijing the first dual olympic city in the world by holding both the Summer Olympics and the Winter Olympics.^{[624][625]}

See also



- [Outline of China](#)

Notes

- a. Chinese and English are the official languages in Hong Kong only. Chinese and Portuguese are the official languages in Macau only.
- b. ■ In Hong Kong, Traditional Chinese characters and the English alphabet are used.
■ In Macau, Traditional Chinese characters and Portuguese orthography are used.
■ In Inner Mongolia, the Mongolian script is used alongside simplified Chinese.
■ In Tibet, the Tibetan script is used alongside simplified Chinese.
■ In Xinjiang, the Uyghur Arabic alphabet is used alongside simplified Chinese.

- In Guangxi and Wenshan Prefecture, the Latin alphabet is used alongside simplified Chinese.
 - In Yanbian Prefecture, Chosŏn'gŭl (Hangul) is used alongside simplified Chinese.
- c. The *de facto top position* in the People's Republic of China
- d. The PRC's head of state; a largely ceremonial position
- e. Chairman of the Central Military Commission
- f. Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
- g. The area given is the official United Nations figure for the mainland and excludes Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.^[3] It also excludes the Trans-Karakoram Tract ($5,180 \text{ km}^2$ (2,000 sq mi)), Aksai Chin ($38,000 \text{ km}^2$ (15,000 sq mi)) and other territories in dispute with India. The total area of China is listed as $9,572,900 \text{ km}^2$ (3,696,100 sq mi) by the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.^[4] For further information, see Territorial changes of the People's Republic of China.
- h. This figure was calculated using data from the CIA World Factbook.^[5]
- i. GDP figures exclude Taiwan, and the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.
- j.
- Hong Kong dollar used in Hong Kong and Macau.
 - Macanese pataca used in Macau only.
- k. Chinese: 中华人民共和国; pinyin: *Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gōnghéguó*
- l. China's border with Pakistan is disputed by India, which claims the entire Kashmir region as its territory.
- m. The total area ranking relative to the United States depends on the measurement of the total areas of both countries. See List of countries and dependencies by area for more information. The following two primary sources (non-mirrored) represent the range (min./max.) of estimates of China's and the United States' total areas. Both sources (1) *exclude Taiwan* from the area of China; (2) *exclude* China's coastal and territorial waters. However, the CIA World Factbook *includes* the United States coastal and territorial waters, while Encyclopædia Britannica *excludes* the United States coastal and territorial waters.
 1. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* lists China as world's third-largest country (after Russia and Canada) with a total area of $9,572,900 \text{ km}^2$,^[11] and the United States as fourth-largest at $9,525,067 \text{ km}^2$.^[12]
 2. The CIA World Factbook lists China as the fourth-largest country (after Russia, Canada and the United States) with a total area of $9,596,960 \text{ km}^2$,^[13] and the United States as the third-largest at $9,833,517 \text{ km}^2$.^[14]

Notably, the Encyclopædia Britannica specifies the United States' area (excluding coastal and territorial waters) as $9,525,067 \text{ km}^2$, which is less than either source's figure given for China's area.^[12] Therefore, while it can be determined that China has a larger area excluding coastal and territorial waters, it is unclear which country has a larger area including coastal and territorial waters.

The United Nations Statistics Division's figure for the United States is $9,833,517 \text{ km}^2$ (3,796,742 sq mi) and China is $9,596,961 \text{ km}^2$ (3,705,407 sq mi). These closely match the CIA World Factbook figures and similarly *include* coastal and territorial waters for the United States, but *exclude* coastal and territorial waters for China.

Further explanation of disputed ranking: The dispute about which is the world's third-largest country arose from the inclusion of coastal and territorial waters for the United States. This discrepancy was deduced from comparing the CIA World Factbook and its previous iterations^[15] against the information for United States in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, particularly its footnote section.^[12] In sum, according to older versions of the CIA World Factbook (from 1982 to 1996), the U.S. was listed as the world's fourth-largest country (after Russia, Canada, and China) with a total area of $9,372,610 \text{ km}^2$ (3,618,780 sq mi). However, in the 1997 edition, the U.S. added coastal waters to its total area (increasing it to $9,629,091 \text{ km}^2$ (3,717,813 sq mi)). And then again in 2007, U.S. added territorial water to its total area (increasing it to $9,833,517 \text{ km}^2$ (3,796,742 sq mi)). During this time, China's total area remained unchanged. In other words, no

coastal or territorial water area was added to China's total area figure. The United States has a coastal water area of 109,362 km² (42,225 sq mi), and a territorial water area of 195,213 km² (75,372 sq mi), for a total of 304,575 km² (117,597 sq mi) of additional water space. This is larger than entire countries like Italy, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Adding this figure to the U.S. will boost it over China in ranking since China's coastal and territorial water figures are currently unknown (no official publication) and thus cannot be added into China's total area figure.

- n. The PRC claims the territories controlled by the ROC (Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu), which it does not control, as its disputed 23rd province, Taiwan Province. See § Administrative divisions for more details.
- o. "... Next into this, is found the great China, whose king is thought to be the greatest prince in the world, and is named Santoa Raia".^[17]^[18]
- p. "... The Very Great Kingdom of China".^[19] (Portuguese: ... *O Grande Reino da China* ...).^[20]
- q. Although this is the present meaning of *guó*, in Old Chinese (when its pronunciation was something like /*qʷˤək/)^[26] it meant the walled city of the Chinese and the areas they could control from them.^[27]
- r. Its earliest extant use is on the ritual bronze vessel He zun, where it apparently refers to only the Shang's immediate demesne conquered by the Zhou.^[28]
- s. Its meaning "Zhou's royal demesne" is attested from the 6th-century BC Classic of History, which states "Huangtian bestowed the lands and the peoples of the central state to the ancestors" (皇天既付中國民越厥疆土于先王).^[29]
- t. Owing to Qin Shi Huang's earlier policy involving the "burning of books and burying of scholars", the destruction of the confiscated copies at Xianyang was an event similar to the destructions of the Library of Alexandria in the west. Even those texts that did survive had to be painstakingly reconstructed from memory, luck, or forgery.^[57] The Old Texts of the Five Classics were said to have been found hidden in a wall at the Kong residence in Qufu. Mei Ze's "rediscovered" edition of the Book of Documents was only shown to be a forgery in the Qing dynasty.
- u. China is larger than Canada and the United States in terms of land area.
- v. According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the total area of the United States, at 9,522,055 km² (3,676,486 sq mi), is slightly smaller than that of China. Meanwhile, the *CIA World Factbook* states that China's total area was greater than that of the United States until the coastal waters of the Great Lakes was added to the United States' total area in 1996. From 1989 through 1996, the total area of US was listed as 9,372,610 km² (3,618,780 sq mi) (land area plus inland water only). The listed total area changed to 9,629,091 km² (3,717,813 sq mi) in 1997 (with the Great Lakes areas and the coastal waters added), to 9,631,418 km² (3,718,711 sq mi) in 2004, to 9,631,420 km² (3,718,710 sq mi) in 2006, and to 9,826,630 km² (3,794,080 sq mi) in 2007 (territorial waters added).
- w. China's border with Pakistan and part of its border with India falls in the disputed region of Kashmir. The area under Pakistani administration is claimed by India, while the area under Indian administration is claimed by Pakistan.
- x. China claims the de facto state of Taiwan, which it does not control, as its disputed 23rd province, i.e. Taiwan Province. See § Administrative divisions for more details.
- y. Tsung-Dao Lee,^[406] Chen Ning Yang,^[406] Daniel C. Tsui,^[407] Charles K. Kao,^[408] Yuan T. Lee,^[409] Tu Youyou^[410] Shing-Tung Yau^[411]
- z. The national life expectancy at birth rose from about 31 years in 1949 to 75 years in 2008,^[530] and infant mortality decreased from 300 per thousand in the 1950s to around 33 per thousand in 2001.^[531]

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External links

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