

= China ( The Office ) =

" China " is the tenth episode of the seventh season of the American comedy television series The Office and the show 's 136th episode overall . It originally aired on NBC on December 2 , 2010 . The episode was written by Halsted Sullivan and Warren Lieberstein , and directed by Charles McDougall . The episode guest stars Mark Proksch as Nate and Hugh Dane as Hank .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In this episode , Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) reads an article about China growing as a global power and decides it must be stopped before it takes over the United States . Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) threatens to move Dunder Mifflin to a new building after everyone in the office complains about Dwight Schrute 's ( Rainn Wilson ) building standards . Darryl Philbin ( Craig Robinson ) is sick of Andy Bernard 's ( Ed Helms ) annoying text messages .

The episode received largely positive reviews from television critics , many of whom felt that the confrontation between Oscar and Michael was realistic and humorous . " China " was viewed by 7 @. @ 31 million viewers and received a 3 @. @ 7 rating among adults between the age of 18 and 49 , marking a slight drop in the ratings when compared to the previous week . Despite this , the episode was the highest @- @ rated NBC series of the night that it aired , as well as the highest @- @ rated non @- @ sports NBC broadcast for the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

While at the dentist , Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) reads an article about China 's growing global power , and he decides that China must be stopped before it takes over the United States . Oscar Martinez ( Oscar Nunez ) tries to correct one of the statements , but when Ryan Howard ( B.J. Novak ) checks the fact online , it turns out Michael 's statement was correct . Everyone mocks Oscar for his mistake , as Oscar is usually the smartest one in the office , having built this reputation by often correcting his coworkers . Oscar invites Michael for a cup of coffee , but the other employees realize that Oscar wants to discuss China in more detail , in order to reestablish himself as the office 's intellectual heavyweight . Seeing an opportunity to give Oscar a taste of his own medicine , they start quizzing Michael on different facts about China , but he cannot answer , so he makes note cards to keep track . When Michael and Oscar have their conversation , Ryan , Erin , Jim , Andy , and Kelly also sit in to watch . Michael blanks on one topic , but then changes the subject to conversation itself . The employees toast him , while Oscar is left infuriated .

Everyone in the office complains about Dwight Schrute 's ( Rainn Wilson ) building standards , such as un @- @ plying toilet paper , adding motion sensors to the lights , and placing a roach billboard over the windows to the office . Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) , as office administrator , threatens to move everyone to a different building if nothing is done . She leaves and comes back with pictures of a newer office space and says they can move in three months . Dwight investigates and finds that the office building does not exist . When Dwight plays coy around Pam , she admits to Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) that she lied about the office building and that she is afraid of failing again after failing as an artist and a salesperson . Jim tries in vain to reassure her , and she breaks down in tears . Later Nate ( Mark Proksch ) , Dwight 's building assistant , discreetly gives Pam a book on the state building regulations . Pam shows Dwight that his policies are in violation of the laws written in the book , so Dwight puts everything back to normal . The camera crew confronts Dwight with footage showing that he overheard Pam 's conversation with Jim and instructed Nate to give her the book on the building regulations . Dwight admits that he allowed her to win , but mocks the idea that he did so out of compassion .

Darryl Philbin ( Craig Robinson ) is sick of Andy Bernard 's ( Ed Helms ) pointless text messages . After one text , Darryl tells Andy that he is one bad text away from being blocked , but Andy wagers that he is one good text from a high five , to which Darryl agrees . Darryl then gets a text from Andy telling him to come to the parking lot , where there are pigeons eating an ice cream cone . Darryl laughs and gives Andy a high five .

= = Production = =

" China " was written by producers Halsted Sullivan and Warren Lieberstein , their fourth writing credit on the series . Warren Lieberstein is the brother of Paul Lieberstein , who was the showrunner of the show at the time . The entry was directed by Charles McDougall , his fifth directing credit on the series . " China " is the third episode to feature Nate , played by YouTube star Mark Proksch . After the producers of The Office saw a series of prank videos that Proksch did under the name " Kenny Strasser " , they hired him to become a recurring character .

The Season Seven DVD contains a number of deleted scenes from this episode . Notable cut scenes include Michael talking more about his fear of China , Nate swapping an " energy @-@ saving cord " for an " un @-@ energy @-@ saving cord " , Dwight making fun of Pam 's concerns , Pam discussing the new office space with Dwight , Jim criticizing Pam 's plan to the camera , Erin talking about moving , and Michael furthering his argument with Oscar in the coffee shop .

= = Cultural references = =

Michael is initially worked up about China after reading an article in Newsweek , an American weekly news magazine . Michael notes that he was forced to read Newsweek in the waiting room at his dentist 's office because some " kid had the magazine I wanted to read " , hinting that the magazine Michael wanted to read was the children 's magazine Highlights for Children . Andy sends Darryl a text that only reads " Megan Fox " , a reference to the actress . Creed notes that he understands , but cannot speak , Pirate slang . Andy attempts to motivate Michael with a pep talk taken from the 1979 movie Rocky II . During Michael and Oscar 's discussion in the lobby of the office building , a copy of Call of Duty can be seen behind the counter . Fans have speculated that this may be a reference to the third season episode " The Coup " , which used the game as a plot device .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast on December 2 , 2010 , " China " was viewed by an estimated 7 @. @ 31 million viewers and received a 3 @. @ 7 rating / 10 percent share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 3 @. @ 7 percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds , and 10 percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . This marked a slight drop in the ratings after one week off due to Thanksgiving . The episode became the highest @- @ rated non @- @ sports related NBC program for the original week it aired and also became the ninth most @- @ watched show for the week of broadcast among adults aged 18 ? 49 .

This episode got overwhelmingly positive reviews . Phoebe Reilly of Vulture wrote highly of the episode and called it " the best of the season so far . " James Poniewoznik of Time compared the episode and the season at large to the later work of The Beatles ; he noted that , " after becoming known for a string of ambitious " entries , they both " decide [ d ] to take a step backward stylistically " . For this reason , he enjoyed " China " , and opined that " The China plot , which thankfully focused less on Michael 's craziness than his ( and his coworkers ' ) relationship with Oscar , demonstrated how well @- @ drawn the show has been even when it comes to its more peripheral characters . " He also said the episode was " vintage Office . "

Bonnie Stiernberg of Paste magazine wrote highly of the episode and called it " a half hour of heartwarming comedy " . She was particularly pleased with how Michael was able to overcome Oscar with pathos , and she enjoyed the episode 's subplots . Dan Forcella of TV Fanatic praised the episode and awarded it five stars out of five . He wrote that " If my favorite thing for Jim to do is prank Dwight , my second favorite is when he backs Michael . " Furthermore , he wrote that " While this A story was filled with plenty of laughs , [ ... ] Dwight 's B story was absolutely murderous [ and ] all gold " . He also felt that the C plot was enjoyable , because " Andy is great in small doses " .

Myles McNutt of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B + " grade . He noted that The Office was

not suited for political examination , because , as the show is grounded in reality , the concept of the office as " a microcosm for global politics is ? uneven . " However , McNutt argued that because the show used the conceit of China as a " red herring [ ... ] to introduce a story about Oscar as ' Actually , ' and the gap between Michael ? s rhetorical potential and his actual knowledge of just about any subject " , the story " steps back and finds a small moment within [ the larger ] conflict . " McNutt also enjoyed the B @-@ plot with Pam and Dwight , noting that the ending was " honestly quite sweet " .