[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Redirect](/wiki/Template:Redirect) [Template:Pp-semi-protected](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-protected) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Good article](/wiki/Template:Good_article) [Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country)

**China**, officially the **People's Republic of China** (**PRC**), in Asia, is the world's [most populous state](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_population), with a population of over [1.381 billion](/wiki/Demographics_of_China).[[1]](#cite_note-1) The state is governed by its [vanguard party](/wiki/Communist_Party_of_China) based in the [capital](/wiki/Historical_capitals_of_China) of [Beijing](/wiki/Beijing).[Template:Sfnb](/wiki/Template:Sfnb) It exercises [jurisdiction](/wiki/Jurisdiction) over 22 [provinces](/wiki/Provinces_of_China), five [autonomous regions](/wiki/Autonomous_regions_of_China), four [direct-controlled municipalities](/wiki/Direct-controlled_municipalities_of_China) (Beijing, [Tianjin](/wiki/Tianjin), [Shanghai](/wiki/Shanghai), and [Chongqing](/wiki/Chongqing)), two mostly self-governing [special administrative regions](/wiki/Special_administrative_region) ([Hong Kong](/wiki/Hong_Kong) and [Macau](/wiki/Macau)), and claims sovereignty over [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan).

Covering approximately 9.6 million square kilometers, China is the world's [second largest state by land area](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_land_area),[[2]](#cite_note-2) and either the [third or fourth-largest by total area](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_total_area), depending on the method of measurement.[Template:Efn](/wiki/Template:Efn) China's landscape is vast and diverse, ranging from [forest steppes](/wiki/Mongolian-Manchurian_grassland) and the [Gobi](/wiki/Gobi_Desert) and [Taklamakan](/wiki/Taklamakan_Desert) deserts in the arid north to [subtropical](/wiki/Subtropical) forests in the wetter south. The [Himalaya](/wiki/Himalaya), [Karakoram](/wiki/Karakoram), [Pamir](/wiki/Pamir_Mountains) and [Tian Shan](/wiki/Tian_Shan) mountain ranges separate China from [south](/wiki/South_Asia) and [central](/wiki/Central_Asia) Asia. The [Yangtze](/wiki/Yangtze_River) and [Yellow](/wiki/Yellow_River) rivers, the third and sixth longest in the world, respectively, run from the [Tibetan Plateau](/wiki/Tibetan_Plateau) to the densely populated eastern seaboard. China's coastline along the Pacific Ocean is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) long, and is bounded by the [Bohai](/wiki/Bohai_Sea), [Yellow](/wiki/Yellow_Sea), [East China](/wiki/East_China_Sea), and [South China](/wiki/South_China_Sea) seas.

China is a [cradle of civilization](/wiki/Cradle_of_civilization), with its known history beginning with an ancient civilization – one of the world's earliest – that flourished in the fertile basin of the [Yellow River](/wiki/Yellow_River) in the [North China Plain](/wiki/North_China_Plain). For millennia, China's political system was based on hereditary monarchies known as [dynasties](/wiki/Dynasties_in_Chinese_history). Since 221 BCE, when the [Qin Dynasty](/wiki/Qin_Dynasty) first conquered several states to form a Chinese empire, the state has expanded, fractured and reformed numerous times. The [Republic of China](/wiki/Republic_of_China_(1912–1949)) (ROC) replaced the [last dynasty](/wiki/Qing_Dynasty) in 1912, and ruled the [Chinese mainland](/wiki/Mainland_China) until 1949, when it was defeated by the [Communist Party of China](/wiki/Communist_Party_of_China) in the [Chinese Civil War](/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War). The Communist Party established the People's Republic of China in Beijing on 1 October 1949, while the ROC government relocated to [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan) with its present capital in [Taipei](/wiki/Taipei). Both the ROC and PRC continue to claim to be the legitimate government of all China.

China had the largest economy in the world for most of the past two thousand years, during which it has seen cycles of [prosperity](/wiki/Prosperity) and decline.[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[4]](#cite_note-4) Since the introduction of [economic reforms in 1978](/wiki/Chinese_economic_reform), China has become one of the world's [fastest-growing](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_real_GDP_growth_rate) major economies. [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), it is the world's second-largest economy by [nominal GDP](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) and largest by [purchasing power parity](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)) (PPP). China is also the world's largest exporter and second-largest importer of goods.[[5]](#cite_note-5) China is a recognized [nuclear weapons state](/wiki/List_of_states_with_nuclear_weapons) and has the world's [largest standing army](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_active_troops) and [second-largest defense budget](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures).[[6]](#cite_note-6)<ref name=SIPRI2014/> The PRC has been a [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) member since 1971, when it replaced the ROC as a [permanent member](/wiki/Permanent_members_of_the_United_Nations_Security_Council) of the [U.N. Security Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council). China is also a member of numerous formal and informal multilateral organizations, including the [WTO](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization), [APEC](/wiki/Asia-Pacific_Economic_Cooperation), [BRICS](/wiki/BRICS), the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization](/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organization) (SCO), the [BCIM](/wiki/BCIM) and the [G-20](/wiki/G-20_major_economies). China is a [great power](/wiki/Great_power) and a major [regional power](/wiki/Regional_power) within Asia, and has been characterized as a [potential superpower](/wiki/Potential_superpowers).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8)

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Infobox Chinese](/wiki/Template:Infobox_Chinese) [Template:Chinese text](/wiki/Template:Chinese_text) The word "China" is thought to have been originally derived from the [Sanskrit](/wiki/Sanskrit) word [*Cīna*](/wiki/Chinas) ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)), which is translated into the [Persian](/wiki/Persian_language) word *Chīn* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)).[[9]](#cite_note-9) *Cīna* was first used in early [Hindu](/wiki/Hindu) scripture, including the [*Mahābhārata*](/wiki/Mahābhārata) (5th century BCE) and the [*Laws of Manu*](/wiki/Manusmṛti) (2nd century BCE).<ref name=wade>Wade, Geoff. "[The Polity of Yelang and the Origin of the Name 'China'](http://www.sino-platonic.org/complete/spp188_yelang_china.pdf)". [*Sino-Platonic Papers*](/wiki/Sino-Platonic_Papers), No. 188, May 2009, p. 20.</ref> The word "China" itself was first recorded in 1516 in the journal of the Portuguese explorer [Duarte Barbosa](/wiki/Duarte_Barbosa).[[10]](#cite_note-10) The journal was translated and published in England in 1555.[[11]](#cite_note-11) The traditional theory, proposed in the 17th century by [Martino Martini](/wiki/Martino_Martini) and supported by many later scholars, is that the word China and its earlier related forms are ultimately derived from the state of "[Qin](/wiki/Qin_(state))" ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)), the westernmost of the Chinese kingdoms during the [Zhou dynasty](/wiki/Zhou_dynasty) which unified China to form the [Qin dynasty](/wiki/Qin_dynasty).[[12]](#cite_note-12) Other suggestions for the derivation of "China" however exist.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14) The official name of the modern state is the People's Republic of China ([Template:Zh](/wiki/Template:Zh)). The common Chinese names for the state are [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) ([Template:Zh](/wiki/Template:Zh), from [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), "central" or "middle", and [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), "state" or "states", and in modern times, "nation") and [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) ([Template:Zh](/wiki/Template:Zh)), although the state's official name has been changed numerous times by successive [dynasties](/wiki/Dynasties_in_Chinese_history) and modern governments. The term [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) appeared in various ancient texts, such as the [*Classic of History*](/wiki/Classic_of_History) of the 6th century BCE,[Template:Efn](/wiki/Template:Efn) and in pre-imperial times it was often used as a cultural concept to distinguish the [Huaxia](/wiki/Huaxia) tribes from perceived "barbarians". The term, which can be either singular or plural, referred to the group of states or provinces in the [central plain](/wiki/Central_Plain_(China)), but was not used as a name for the state as a whole until the nineteenth century. The Chinese were not unique in regarding their state as "central", with other civilizations having the same view of themselves.[[15]](#cite_note-15)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

### Prehistory[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Archaeological evidence suggests that early [hominids](/wiki/Hominidae) inhabited China between 250,000 and 2.24 million years ago.[[16]](#cite_note-16) A cave in [Zhoukoudian](/wiki/Zhoukoudian) (near present-day [Beijing](/wiki/Beijing)) exhibits hominid fossils dated at between 680,000 and 780,000 BCE.[[17]](#cite_note-17) The fossils are of [Peking Man](/wiki/Peking_Man), an example of [*Homo erectus*](/wiki/Homo_erectus) who [used fire](/wiki/Control_of_fire_by_early_humans).[[18]](#cite_note-18) Fossilised teeth of *Homo sapiens* dating to 125,000–80,000 BCE have been discovered in [Fuyan Cave](/wiki/Fuyan_Cave) in [Dao County](/wiki/Dao_County), [Hunan](/wiki/Hunan).[[19]](#cite_note-19) Chinese [proto-writing](/wiki/Proto-writing) existed in [Jiahu](/wiki/Jiahu) around 7000 BC,[[20]](#cite_note-20) [Dadiwan](/wiki/Dadiwan_culture) from 5800 BC to 5400 BC, [Damaidi](/wiki/Damaidi) around 6000 BC [[21]](#cite_note-21) and [Banpo](/wiki/Banpo) dating from the 5th millennium BC. Some scholars have suggested that the [Jiahu symbols](/wiki/Jiahu_symbols) (7th millennium BC) constituted the earliest Chinese writing system.[[20]](#cite_note-20)

### Early dynastic rule[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Yinxu.jpg)[Yinxu](/wiki/Yinxu), ruins of an ancient [palace](/wiki/Palace) dating from the [Shang Dynasty](/wiki/Shang_Dynasty) (14th century BCE) According to Chinese tradition, the first dynasty was the [Xia](/wiki/Xia_Dynasty), which emerged around 2100 BCE.[[22]](#cite_note-22) The dynasty was considered mythical by historians until scientific excavations found early [Bronze Age](/wiki/Bronze_Age) sites at [Erlitou](/wiki/Erlitou_culture), Henan in 1959.[[23]](#cite_note-23) It remains unclear whether these sites are the remains of the [Xia Dynasty](/wiki/Xia_Dynasty) or of another culture from the same period.[[24]](#cite_note-24) The succeeding [Shang dynasty](/wiki/Shang_dynasty) is the earliest to be confirmed by contemporary records.[[25]](#cite_note-25) The Shang ruled the plain of the [Yellow River](/wiki/Yellow_River) in eastern China from the 17th to the 11th century BCE.[[26]](#cite_note-26) Their [oracle bone script](/wiki/Oracle_bone_script) (from c. 1500 BCE) [[27]](#cite_note-27)[[28]](#cite_note-28) represents the oldest form of Chinese writing yet found,[[29]](#cite_note-29) and is a direct ancestor of modern [Chinese characters](/wiki/Chinese_characters).[[30]](#cite_note-30) The Shang were conquered by the [Zhou](/wiki/Zhou_dynasty), who ruled between the 11th and 5th centuries BCE, though centralized authority was slowly eroded by feudal warlords. Many independent states eventually emerged from the weakened Zhou state and continually waged war with each other in the 300-year [Spring and Autumn Period](/wiki/Spring_and_Autumn_Period), only occasionally deferring to the Zhou king. By the time of the [Warring States period](/wiki/Warring_States_period) of the 5th–3rd centuries BCE, there were seven powerful sovereign states in what is now China, each with its own king, ministry and army.

### Imperial China[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[thumb|right|Some of the thousands of life-size](/wiki/File:Terracotta_pmorgan.jpg) [Terracotta Warriors](/wiki/Terracotta_Army) of the [Qin Dynasty](/wiki/Qin_Dynasty), c. 210 BCE

The Warring States period ended in 221 BCE after the [state of Qin](/wiki/State_of_Qin) conquered the other six kingdoms and established the first unified Chinese state. [Qin Shi Huang](/wiki/Qin_Shi_Huang), the emperor of Qin, proclaimed himself "First Emperor" ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)) and imposed reforms throughout China, notably the forced standardization of Chinese characters, measurements, length of cart axles, and currency. His dynasty also [conquered the Yue tribes](/wiki/Qin's_campaign_against_the_Yue_tribes), incorporating the [Lingnan](/wiki/Lingnan) area into China.[[31]](#cite_note-31) The [Qin dynasty](/wiki/Qin_dynasty) lasted only fifteen years, falling soon after Qin Shi Huang's death, as its harsh [legalist](/wiki/Legalism_(philosophy)) and authoritarian policies led to widespread rebellion.[[32]](#cite_note-32)[[33]](#cite_note-33) The subsequent [Han dynasty](/wiki/Han_dynasty) ruled China between 206 BCE and 220 CE, and created a lasting [Han cultural identity](/wiki/Han_Chinese) among its populace that has endured to the present day.[[32]](#cite_note-32)[[33]](#cite_note-33) The Han Dynasty [expanded the empire's territory considerably](/wiki/History_of_the_Han_Dynasty) with military campaigns reaching southern [Korea](/wiki/Korean_Peninsula), [Vietnam](/wiki/Vietnam), [Mongolia](/wiki/Mongolia) and [Central Asia](/wiki/Central_Asia), and also helped establish the [Silk Road](/wiki/Silk_Road) in Central Asia. Han China gradually became the largest economy of the ancient world.[[34]](#cite_note-34) The Han Dynasty adopted [Confucianism](/wiki/Confucianism), a philosophy developed in the Spring and Autumn period, as its official state ideology. Despite the Han's official abandonment of Legalism, the official ideology of the Qin, Legalist institutions and policies remained and formed the basis of the Han government.[[35]](#cite_note-35) [thumb|left|The](/wiki/File:Chinesische-mauer.jpg) [Great Wall of China](/wiki/Great_Wall_of_China) was built by several dynasties over two thousand years to protect the sedentary agricultural regions of the [Chinese interior](/wiki/China_Proper) from incursions by [nomadic](/wiki/Nomad) [pastoralists](/wiki/Pastoralists) of the northern [steppes](/wiki/Steppes).

After the [collapse of Han](/wiki/End_of_the_Han_dynasty), a period of disunion known as the period of the [Three Kingdoms](/wiki/Three_Kingdoms) followed.[[36]](#cite_note-36) The brief unification of the [Jin dynasty](/wiki/Jin_dynasty_(265–420)) was broken by the [uprising of the Five Barbarians](/wiki/Uprising_of_the_Five_Barbarians). In 581 CE, China was reunited under the [Sui](/wiki/Sui_Dynasty). However, the Sui Dynasty declined following its defeat in the [Goguryeo–Sui War](/wiki/Goguryeo–Sui_War) (598–614).[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38) Under the succeeding [Tang](/wiki/Tang_dynasty) and [Song](/wiki/Song_dynasty) dynasties, Chinese economy, technology and culture entered a golden age.[[39]](#cite_note-39) After the [campaigns against the Turks](/wiki/Tang_campaign_against_the_Western_Turks), China returned control of the [Western Regions](/wiki/Western_Regions) and reopened the Silk Road during the flourishing age of Tang dynasty,[[40]](#cite_note-40) which was devastated and weakened by the [An Shi Rebellion](/wiki/An_Shi_Rebellion) in the 8th century.[[41]](#cite_note-41) The Song dynasty was the first government in world history to issue paper money and the first Chinese [polity](/wiki/Polity) to establish a permanent standing navy which was supported by the developed shipbuilding industry along with the sea trade.[[42]](#cite_note-42) Between the 10th and 11th centuries, 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](/wiki/Neo-Confucianism), in response to the growth of Buddhism during the Tang,[[43]](#cite_note-43) and a flourishing of philosophy and the arts, as [landscape art](/wiki/Landscape_art) and [porcelain](/wiki/Porcelain) were brought to new levels of maturity and complexity.[[44]](#cite_note-44)[[45]](#cite_note-45) However, the military weakness of the Song army was observed by the [Jurchen](/wiki/Jurchen_people) [Jin dynasty](/wiki/Jin_dynasty_(1115–1234)). In 1127, [Emperor Huizong of Song](/wiki/Emperor_Huizong_of_Song) and the capital [Bianjing](/wiki/Bianjing) were captured during the [Jin–Song Wars](/wiki/Jin–Song_Wars), remnants of the Song retreated to [southern China](/wiki/Northern_and_southern_China).[[46]](#cite_note-46) [thumb|Detail from](/wiki/File:Along_the_River_During_the_Qingming_Festival_(detail_of_original).jpg) [*Along the River During the Qingming Festival*](/wiki/Along_the_River_During_the_Qingming_Festival), a 12th-century painting showing everyday life in the [Song dynasty's](/wiki/Song_dynasty) capital city, Bianjing (today's [Kaifeng](/wiki/Kaifeng))

In the 13th century, China was [gradually conquered by the Mongol Empire](/wiki/Mongol_invasion_of_China). In 1271, the [Mongol](/wiki/Mongols) leader [Kublai Khan](/wiki/Kublai_Khan) established the [Yuan dynasty](/wiki/Yuan_dynasty); the Yuan 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.[[47]](#cite_note-47) A peasant named [Zhu Yuanzhang](/wiki/Zhu_Yuanzhang) overthrew the Yuan Dynasty in 1368 and founded the [Ming dynasty](/wiki/Ming_dynasty). 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 [Zheng He](/wiki/Zheng_He) led [voyages throughout the world, reaching as far as Africa](/wiki/Treasure_voyages).[[48]](#cite_note-48) In the early years of the Ming Dynasty, China's capital was moved from [Nanjing](/wiki/Nanjing) to Beijing. With the budding of capitalism, philosophers such as [Wang Yangming](/wiki/Wang_Yangming) further critiqued and expanded Neo-Confucianism with concepts of [individualism](/wiki/Individualism) and equality of [four occupations](/wiki/Four_occupations).[[49]](#cite_note-49) The [scholar-official](/wiki/Scholar-official) stratum became a supporting force of industry and commerce in the tax boycott movements, which, together with the famines and the wars against [Japanese invasions of Korea](/wiki/Japanese_invasions_of_Korea_(1592–1598)) and [Manchu invasions](/wiki/Qing_conquest_of_the_Ming) led to an exhausted treasury.[[50]](#cite_note-50) In 1644, Beijing was captured by a coalition of peasant rebel forces led by [Li Zicheng](/wiki/Li_Zicheng). The last Ming [Chongzhen Emperor](/wiki/Chongzhen_Emperor) committed suicide when the city fell. The Manchu [Qing dynasty](/wiki/Qing_dynasty) then allied with Ming dynasty general [Wu Sangui](/wiki/Wu_Sangui) and overthrew Li's short-lived [Shun dynasty](/wiki/Shun_dynasty), and subsequently seized control of Beijing, which became the new capital of the Qing Dynasty.

### End of dynastic rule[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[thumb|left|A 19th-century painting depicting the](/wiki/File:Regaining_the_Provincial_Capital_of_Ruizhou.jpg) [Taiping Rebellion](/wiki/Taiping_Rebellion) of 1850–1864 The [Qing dynasty](/wiki/Qing_dynasty), which lasted from 1644 until 1912, was the last imperial dynasty of China. As a [conquest dynasty](/wiki/Conquest_Dynasties), it successively conquered the [Ming loyalists](/wiki/South_Ming) and [Dzungar Khanate](/wiki/Dzungar_Khanate), adding Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang into the empire,[[51]](#cite_note-51) and strengthened the centralized autocracy to crackdown on [anti-Qing sentiment](/wiki/Anti-Qing_sentiment). The [Haijin](/wiki/Haijin) ("sea ban") and the ideological control as represented by the [literary inquisition](/wiki/Literary_inquisition) caused social and technological stagnation.[[52]](#cite_note-52)[[53]](#cite_note-53) In the 19th century, the dynasty experienced Western imperialism following the [First Opium War](/wiki/First_Opium_War) (1839–42) and the [Second Opium War](/wiki/Second_Opium_War) (1856–60) with Britain and France. China was forced to sign unequal treaties, pay compensation, open treaty ports, allow extraterritoriality for foreign nationals, and cede [Hong Kong](/wiki/Hong_Kong) to the British[[54]](#cite_note-54) under the 1842 [Treaty of Nanking](/wiki/Treaty_of_Nanking). The [First Sino-Japanese War](/wiki/First_Sino-Japanese_War) (1894–95) resulted in Qing China's loss of influence in the [Korean Peninsula](/wiki/Korean_Peninsula), as well as the cession of Taiwan to [Japan](/wiki/Japan).[[55]](#cite_note-55) The Qing dynasty also began experiencing internal unrest in which millions of people died. In the 1850s and 1860s, the failed [Taiping Rebellion](/wiki/Taiping_Rebellion) ravaged southern China. [Other major rebellions](/wiki/Timeline_of_late_anti-Qing_rebellions) included the [Punti-Hakka Clan Wars](/wiki/Punti-Hakka_Clan_Wars) (1855–67), the [Nian Rebellion](/wiki/Nian_Rebellion) (1851–68), the [Miao Rebellion](/wiki/Miao_Rebellion_(1854–73)) (1854–73), the [Panthay Rebellion](/wiki/Panthay_Rebellion) (1856–73) and the [Dungan Revolt](/wiki/Dungan_Revolt_(1862–77)) (1862–77). The initial success of the [Self-Strengthening Movement](/wiki/Self-Strengthening_Movement) of the 1860s was frustrated by the series of military defeats in the 1880s and 1890s.

In the 19th century, the great [Chinese Diaspora](/wiki/Chinese_emigration) began. Losses due to emigration were added to by conflicts and catastrophes such as the [Northern Chinese Famine of 1876–79](/wiki/Northern_Chinese_Famine_of_1876–79), in which between 9 and 13 million people died.[[56]](#cite_note-56) In 1898, the [Guangxu Emperor](/wiki/Guangxu_Emperor) drafted a [reform plan](/wiki/Hundred_Days'_Reform) to establish a modern [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), but these plans were thwarted by the [Empress Dowager Cixi](/wiki/Empress_Dowager_Cixi). The ill-fated anti-Western [Boxer Rebellion](/wiki/Boxer_Rebellion) of 1899–1901 further weakened the dynasty. Although Cixi sponsored a program of reforms, the [Xinhai Revolution](/wiki/Xinhai_Revolution) of 1911–12 brought an end to the Qing dynasty and established the [Republic of China](/wiki/Republic_of_China_(1912–49)).

### Republic of China (1912–49)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Sun_Yat-sen_and_Chiang_Kai-shek.jpg)[Sun Yat-sen](/wiki/Sun_Yat-sen), the father of modern China (seated on right), and [Chiang Kai-shek](/wiki/Chiang_Kai-shek), later [President of the Republic of China](/wiki/President_of_the_Republic_of_China) [thumb|](/wiki/File:1945_Mao_and_Chiang.jpg)[Chiang Kai-shek](/wiki/Chiang_Kai-shek) and [Mao Zedong](/wiki/Mao_Zedong) toasting together in 1946 following the end of World War II On 1 January 1912, the Republic of China was established, and [Sun Yat-sen](/wiki/Sun_Yat-sen) of the [Kuomintang](/wiki/Kuomintang) (the KMT or Nationalist Party) was proclaimed provisional president.[[57]](#cite_note-57) However, the presidency was later given to [Yuan Shikai](/wiki/Yuan_Shikai), a former Qing general who in 1915 proclaimed himself [Emperor of China](/wiki/Empire_of_China_(1915–1916)). In the face of popular condemnation and opposition from his own [Beiyang Army](/wiki/Beiyang_Army), he was forced to abdicate and reestablish the republic.[[58]](#cite_note-58) 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.[[59]](#cite_note-59)[[60]](#cite_note-60) In the late 1920s, the Kuomintang, under [Chiang Kai-shek](/wiki/Chiang_Kai-shek), the then Principal of the [Republic of China Military Academy](/wiki/Republic_of_China_Military_Academy), was able to reunify the country under its own control with a series of deft military and political manoeuvrings, known collectively as the [Northern Expedition](/wiki/Northern_Expedition).[[61]](#cite_note-61)[[62]](#cite_note-62) The Kuomintang moved the nation's capital to [Nanjing](/wiki/Nanjing) and implemented "political tutelage", an intermediate stage of political development outlined in Sun Yat-sen's [San-min](/wiki/San-min_Doctrine) program for transforming China into a modern democratic state.[[63]](#cite_note-63)[[64]](#cite_note-64) The [political division](/wiki/List_of_warlords_and_military_cliques_in_the_Warlord_Era) in China made it difficult for Chiang to battle the [Communists](/wiki/Chinese_Communists), against whom the Kuomintang had been warring since 1927 in the [Chinese Civil War](/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War). This war continued successfully for the Kuomintang, especially after the Communists retreated in the [Long March](/wiki/Long_March), until Japanese aggression and the 1936 [Xi'an Incident](/wiki/Xi'an_Incident) forced Chiang to confront [Imperial Japan](/wiki/Imperial_Japan).[[65]](#cite_note-65) The [Second Sino-Japanese War](/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War) (1937–1945), a theatre of [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), forced an uneasy alliance between the Kuomintang and the Communists. Japanese forces committed numerous [war atrocities](/wiki/Japanese_war_crimes) against the civilian population; in all, as many as 20 million Chinese civilians died.[[66]](#cite_note-66) An estimated 200,000 Chinese [were massacred](/wiki/Nanking_Massacre) in the city of Nanjing alone during the Japanese occupation.[[67]](#cite_note-67) During the war, China, along with the UK, the US and the Soviet Union, were referred to as "trusteeship of the powerful" <ref name = Justus>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> and were recognized as the Allied "[Big Four](/wiki/Four_Policemen)" in the [Declaration by United Nations](/wiki/Declaration_by_United_Nations).[[68]](#cite_note-68)[[69]](#cite_note-69) Along with the other three great powers, China was one of the four major [Allies of World War II](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II), and was later considered one of the primary victors in the war.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[[71]](#cite_note-71) After the [surrender of Japan](/wiki/Surrender_of_Japan) in 1945, Taiwan, including the [Pescadores](/wiki/Pescadores), was returned to Chinese control. 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. In 1947, constitutional rule was established, but because of the ongoing unrest, many provisions of the [ROC constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Republic_of_China) were never implemented in mainland China.[[72]](#cite_note-72)

### People's Republic of China (1949–present)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Mao_proclaiming_the_establishment_of_the_PRC_in_1949.jpg)[Mao Zedong](/wiki/Mao_Zedong) proclaiming the establishment of the PRC in 1949

Major combat in the [Chinese Civil War](/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War) ended in 1949 with the Communist Party in control of most of [mainland China](/wiki/Mainland_China), and the Kuomintang retreating offshore, reducing the ROC's territory to only [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan_(island)), [Hainan](/wiki/Hainan), and their surrounding islands. On 1 October 1949, [Communist Party Chairman](/wiki/Chairman_of_the_Communist_Party_of_China) [Mao Zedong](/wiki/Mao_Zedong) proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China.[[73]](#cite_note-73) In 1950, the [People's Liberation Army](/wiki/People's_Liberation_Army) succeeded in [capturing Hainan](/wiki/Landing_Operation_on_Hainan_Island) from the ROC[[74]](#cite_note-74) and [incorporating Tibet](/wiki/Incorporation_of_Tibet_into_the_People's_Republic_of_China).[[75]](#cite_note-75) However, remaining Nationalist forces continued to wage [an insurgency in western China](/wiki/Kuomintang_Islamic_insurgency_in_China_(1950–58)) throughout the 1950s.[[76]](#cite_note-76) Mao's regime consolidated its popularity among the peasants through the land reform with between 1 and 2 million [landlords](/wiki/Landlord) executed.[[77]](#cite_note-77) Under its leadership, China developed an independent industrial system and its own nuclear weapons.[[78]](#cite_note-78) The Chinese population almost doubled from around 550 million to over 900 million.[[79]](#cite_note-79) However, Mao's [Great Leap Forward](/wiki/Great_Leap_Forward), a large-scale economic and social reform project, resulted in [an estimated 45 million deaths](/wiki/Great_Chinese_Famine) between 1958 and 1961, mostly from starvation.[[80]](#cite_note-80) In 1966, Mao and his allies launched the [Cultural Revolution](/wiki/Cultural_Revolution), sparking a decade of political recrimination and social upheaval which lasted until Mao's death in 1976. In October 1971, the PRC [replaced the Republic of China](/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_2758) in the United Nations, and took its seat as a permanent member of the Security Council.[[81]](#cite_note-81) In 1976, Mao died. The [Gang of Four](/wiki/Gang_of_Four) was quickly arrested and held responsible for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. In 1978 [Deng Xiaoping](/wiki/Deng_Xiaoping) took power and instituted significant [economic reforms](/wiki/Chinese_economic_reform). The Communist Party loosened governmental control over citizens' personal lives, and the [communes](/wiki/People's_commune) were gradually disbanded in favour of private land leases. This marked China's transition from a planned economy to a mixed economy with an [increasingly open market environment](/wiki/Socialism_with_Chinese_characteristics).[[82]](#cite_note-82) China adopted its current [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) on 4 December 1982. In 1989, the [violent suppression](/wiki/People's_Liberation_Army_at_Tiananmen_Square_protests_of_1989) of [student protests in Tiananmen Square](/wiki/Tiananmen_Square_protests_of_1989) brought condemnation and sanctions against the Chinese government from various countries.[[83]](#cite_note-83) [Jiang Zemin](/wiki/Jiang_Zemin), [Li Peng](/wiki/Li_Peng) and [Zhu Rongji](/wiki/Zhu_Rongji) led the nation in the 1990s. Under their administration, China's economic performance pulled an estimated 150 million peasants out of poverty and sustained an average annual gross domestic product growth rate of 11.2%.[[84]](#cite_note-84)[[85]](#cite_note-85) The country formally joined the [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) in 2001, and maintained its high rate of economic growth under [Hu Jintao](/wiki/Hu_Jintao) and [Wen Jiabao's](/wiki/Wen_Jiabao) leadership in the 2000s. However, rapid growth also severely impacted the country's resources and environment,[[86]](#cite_note-86)[[87]](#cite_note-87) and caused [major social displacement](/wiki/Protest_and_dissent_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China).[[88]](#cite_note-88)[[89]](#cite_note-89) Living standards continued to improve rapidly despite the [late-2000s recession](/wiki/Late-2000s_recession), but centralized political control remained tight.[[90]](#cite_note-90) Preparations for a decadal Communist Party leadership change in 2012 were marked by [factional disputes and political scandals](/wiki/Wang_Lijun_incident).[[91]](#cite_note-91) During China's [18th National Communist Party Congress](/wiki/18th_National_Congress_of_the_Communist_Party_of_China) in November 2012, Hu Jintao was replaced as [General Secretary of the Communist Party](/wiki/General_Secretary_of_the_Communist_Party_of_China) by [Xi Jinping](/wiki/Xi_Jinping).[[92]](#cite_note-92)[[93]](#cite_note-93) Under Xi, the Chinese government began large-scale efforts to reform its economy,[[94]](#cite_note-94)[[95]](#cite_note-95) which has suffered from structural instabilities and slowing growth.[[96]](#cite_note-96)[[97]](#cite_note-97)[[98]](#cite_note-98)[[99]](#cite_note-99) The [Xi–Li Administration](/wiki/Xi–Li_Administration) also announced major reforms to the [one-child policy](/wiki/One-child_policy) and prison system.<ref name=SlateChina2013/>

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image) [thumb|300px|China map of Köppen climate classification.](/wiki/File:China_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg)

### Political geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The People's Republic of China is the [second-largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_land_area) country in the world by land area[[100]](#cite_note-100) after [Russia](/wiki/Russia), and is either the [third- or fourth-largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_total_area) by total area, after Russia, Canada and, depending on the definition of total area, the United States.[Template:Efn](/wiki/Template:Efn) China's total area is generally stated as being approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[101]](#cite_note-101) Specific area figures range from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) according to the [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](/wiki/Encyclopædia_Britannica),[[102]](#cite_note-102) [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) according to the UN Demographic Yearbook,[[103]](#cite_note-103) to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) according to the [CIA World Factbook](/wiki/CIA_World_Factbook).[[104]](#cite_note-104) China has the [longest combined land border in the world](/wiki/List_of_land_border_lengths), measuring [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) from the mouth of the [Yalu River](/wiki/Yalu_River) to the [Gulf of Tonkin](/wiki/Gulf_of_Tonkin).[[104]](#cite_note-104) China [borders 14 nations](/wiki/Borders_of_China), [more than any other country](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_neighbouring_countries) except Russia, which also borders 14.[[105]](#cite_note-105) China extends across much of East Asia, bordering [Vietnam](/wiki/Vietnam), [Laos](/wiki/Laos), and [Myanmar (Burma)](/wiki/Myanmar) in Southeast Asia; [India](/wiki/India), [Bhutan](/wiki/Bhutan), [Nepal](/wiki/Nepal) and [Pakistan](/wiki/Pakistan)[Template:Efn](/wiki/Template:Efn) in South Asia; [Afghanistan](/wiki/Afghanistan), [Tajikistan](/wiki/Tajikistan), [Kyrgyzstan](/wiki/Kyrgyzstan) and [Kazakhstan](/wiki/Kazakhstan) in Central Asia; and [Russia](/wiki/Russia), [Mongolia](/wiki/Mongolia), and [North Korea](/wiki/North_Korea) in [Inner Asia](/wiki/Inner_Asia) and [Northeast Asia](/wiki/Northeast_Asia). Additionally, China shares maritime boundaries with [South Korea](/wiki/South_Korea), Japan, Vietnam, and the [Philippines](/wiki/Philippines).

### Landscape and climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

The territory of China lies between [latitudes](/wiki/Latitude) [18°](/wiki/18th_parallel_north) and [54° N](/wiki/54th_parallel_north), and [longitudes](/wiki/Longitude) [73°](/wiki/73rd_meridian_east) and [135° E](/wiki/135th_meridian_east). China's landscapes vary significantly across its vast width. In the east, along the shores of the [Yellow Sea](/wiki/Yellow_Sea) and the [East China Sea](/wiki/East_China_Sea), there are extensive and densely populated [alluvial plains](/wiki/Alluvium), while on the edges of the Inner Mongolian plateau in the north, broad [grasslands](/wiki/Grassland) predominate. Southern China is dominated by hills and low mountain ranges, while the central-east hosts the [deltas](/wiki/River_delta) of China's two major rivers, the [Yellow River](/wiki/Yellow_River) and the [Yangtze River](/wiki/Yangtze_River). Other major rivers include the [Xi](/wiki/Xi_River), [Mekong](/wiki/Mekong), [Brahmaputra](/wiki/Brahmaputra_River) and [Amur](/wiki/Amur_River). To the west sit major mountain ranges, most notably the Himalayas. High [plateaus](/wiki/Plateau) feature among the more arid landscapes of the north, such as the [Taklamakan](/wiki/Taklamakan_Desert) and the [Gobi Desert](/wiki/Gobi_Desert). The world's highest point, [Mount Everest](/wiki/Mount_Everest) (8,848m), lies on the Sino-Nepalese border.[[106]](#cite_note-106) The country's lowest point, and the world's third-lowest, is the dried lake bed of [Ayding Lake](/wiki/Ayding_Lake) (−154m) in the [Turpan Depression](/wiki/Turpan_Depression).[[107]](#cite_note-107) China's climate is mainly dominated by [dry seasons](/wiki/Dry_season) and wet [monsoons](/wiki/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.[[108]](#cite_note-108) The climate in China differs from region to region because of the country's highly complex [topography](/wiki/Topography).

A major environmental issue in China is the continued [expansion of its deserts](/wiki/Desertification), particularly the Gobi Desert.[[109]](#cite_note-109)[[110]](#cite_note-110) Although barrier tree lines planted since the 1970s have reduced the frequency of [sandstorms](/wiki/Sandstorms), prolonged drought and poor agricultural practices have resulted in [dust storms](/wiki/Asian_dust) plaguing northern China each spring, which then spread to other parts of east Asia, including Korea and Japan. China's environmental watchdog, [SEPA](/wiki/Ministry_of_Environmental_Protection_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China), stated in 2007 that China is losing a million acres (4,000 km²) per year to desertification.[[111]](#cite_note-111) Water quality, [erosion](/wiki/Erosion), and [pollution control](/wiki/Pollution_in_China) have become important issues in China's relations with other countries. Melting [glaciers](/wiki/Glaciers) in the Himalayas could potentially lead to [water shortages](/wiki/Water_shortage) for hundreds of millions of people.[[112]](#cite_note-112)

### Biodiversity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|A](/wiki/File:Giant_Panda_Eating.jpg) [giant panda](/wiki/Giant_panda), China's most famous [endangered](/wiki/List_of_endangered_and_protected_species_of_China) and [endemic](/wiki/Endemic) species, at the [Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding](/wiki/Chengdu_Research_Base_of_Giant_Panda_Breeding) in [Sichuan](/wiki/Sichuan) China is one of 17 [megadiverse countries](/wiki/Megadiverse_countries),[[113]](#cite_note-113) lying in two of the world's major [ecozones](/wiki/Ecozone): the [Palearctic](/wiki/Palearctic) and the [Indomalaya](/wiki/Indomalaya). 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](/wiki/Brazil) and [Colombia](/wiki/Colombia).[[114]](#cite_note-114) The country signed the [Rio de Janeiro](/wiki/Rio_de_Janeiro) [Convention on Biological Diversity](/wiki/Convention_on_Biological_Diversity) on 11 June 1992, and became a party to the convention on 5 January 1993.[[115]](#cite_note-115) It later produced a [National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan](/wiki/Biodiversity_action_plan), with one revision that was received by the convention on 21 September 2010.[[116]](#cite_note-116) China is home to at least 551 species of [mammals](/wiki/List_of_mammals_of_China) (the third-highest such number in the world),[[117]](#cite_note-117) 1,221 species of birds (eighth),[[118]](#cite_note-118) 424 species of reptiles (seventh)[[119]](#cite_note-119) and 333 species of amphibians (seventh).[[120]](#cite_note-120) China is the most biodiverse country in each category outside the tropics. Wildlife in China share habitat with and bear acute pressure from the world's largest population of [*homo sapiens*](/wiki/Homo_sapiens). At least 840 [animal species are threatened, vulnerable or in danger of local extinction](/wiki/List_of_endangered_and_protected_species_of_China) in China, due mainly to human activity such as habitat destruction, pollution and poaching for food, fur and ingredients for [traditional Chinese medicine](/wiki/Traditional_Chinese_medicine).[[121]](#cite_note-121) Endangered wildlife is protected by law, and [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), the country has over 2,349 [nature reserves](/wiki/Protected_areas_of_China), covering a total area of 149.95 million hectares, 15 percent of China's total land area.[[122]](#cite_note-122) China has over 32,000 species of vascular plants,[[123]](#cite_note-123) and is home to a variety of forest types. Cold [coniferous](/wiki/Coniferous) forests predominate in the north of the country, supporting animal species such as [moose](/wiki/Moose) and [Asian black bear](/wiki/Asian_black_bear), along with over 120 bird species.[[124]](#cite_note-124) The understorey of moist [conifer](/wiki/Conifer) forests may contain thickets of [bamboo](/wiki/Bamboo). In higher montane stands of [juniper](/wiki/Juniper) and [yew](/wiki/Taxus), the bamboo is replaced by [rhododendrons](/wiki/Rhododendron). [Subtropical](/wiki/Subtropical) forests, which are predominate in central and southern China, support as many as 146,000 species of flora.[[124]](#cite_note-124) Tropical and seasonal [rainforests](/wiki/Rainforest), though confined to [Yunnan](/wiki/Yunnan) and [Hainan Island](/wiki/Hainan_Island), contain a quarter of all the animal and plant species found in China.[[124]](#cite_note-124) China has over 10,000 recorded species of [fungi](/wiki/Fungi),[[125]](#cite_note-125) and of them, nearly 6,000 are [higher fungi](/wiki/Higher_fungi).[[126]](#cite_note-126)

### Environmental issues[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Wind_power_plants_in_Xinjiang,_China.jpg)[Wind turbines](/wiki/Wind_turbine) in [Xinjiang](/wiki/Xinjiang). The [Dabancheng](/wiki/Dabancheng) project is one of Asia's largest [wind farms](/wiki/Wind_farms)

In recent decades, China has suffered from [severe environmental deterioration and pollution](/wiki/Environmental_issues_in_China).[[127]](#cite_note-127)[[128]](#cite_note-128) While regulations such as the 1979 Environmental Protection Law are fairly stringent, they are poorly enforced, as they are frequently disregarded by local communities and government officials in favour of rapid economic development.[[129]](#cite_note-129) Urban air pollution is a severe health issue in the country; the [World Bank](/wiki/World_Bank) estimated in 2013 that 16 of the world's 20 most-polluted cities are located in China.[[130]](#cite_note-130) China is the world's largest [carbon dioxide](/wiki/Carbon_dioxide) emitter.[[131]](#cite_note-131) The country also has significant [water pollution](/wiki/Water_pollution) problems: 40% of China's rivers had been polluted by industrial and agricultural waste by late 2011.[[132]](#cite_note-132) This crisis is compounded by increasingly severe water shortages, particularly in the north-east of the country.[[133]](#cite_note-133)[[134]](#cite_note-134) However, China is the world's leading investor in [renewable energy commercialization](/wiki/Renewable_energy_commercialization), with [$](/wiki/US$)52 billion invested in 2011 alone;[[135]](#cite_note-135)[[136]](#cite_note-136)[[137]](#cite_note-137) it is a major manufacturer of renewable energy technologies and invests heavily in local-scale renewable energy projects.[[138]](#cite_note-138)[[139]](#cite_note-139) By 2009, over 17% of China's energy was derived from renewable sources – most notably [hydroelectric power](/wiki/Hydroelectric_power) plants, of which China has a total installed capacity of 197 GW.[[140]](#cite_note-140) In 2011, the Chinese government announced plans to invest four trillion yuan (US$618.55 billion) in water infrastructure and [desalination](/wiki/Desalination) projects over a ten-year period, and to complete construction of a flood prevention and anti-drought system by 2020.[[133]](#cite_note-133)[[141]](#cite_note-141) In 2013, China began a five-year, US$277-billion effort to reduce air pollution, particularly in the north of the country.[[142]](#cite_note-142)

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:ForbiddenCity_MaoZedongPortrait_(pixinn.net).jpg)[Tiananmen](/wiki/Tiananmen) with a portrait of Mao Zedong [China's constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) states that The People's Republic of China "is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants," and that the state organs "apply the principle of democratic centralism." [[143]](#cite_note-143) The PRC is one of the world's few remaining [socialist states openly endorsing communism](/wiki/Socialist_state) (see [Ideology of the Communist Party of China](/wiki/Ideology_of_the_Communist_Party_of_China)). The Chinese government has been variously described as communist and socialist, but also as authoritarian and [corporatist](/wiki/Corporatism),[[144]](#cite_note-144) with heavy restrictions in many areas, most notably against [free access to the Internet](/wiki/Internet_censorship_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China), [freedom of the press](/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press), [freedom of assembly](/wiki/Freedom_of_assembly), [the right to have children](/wiki/Reproductive_rights), [free formation of social organizations](/wiki/NGO) and [freedom of religion](/wiki/Freedom_of_religion).[[145]](#cite_note-145) Its current political, ideological and economic system has been termed by its leaders as the "[people's democratic dictatorship](/wiki/People's_democratic_dictatorship)", "[socialism with Chinese characteristics](/wiki/Socialism_with_Chinese_characteristics)" (which is [Marxism](/wiki/Marxism) adapted to Chinese circumstances) and the "[socialist market economy](/wiki/Socialist_market_economy)" respectively.[[146]](#cite_note-146)

### Communist Party[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[China's constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) declares that the country is ruled "under the leadership" of the [Communist Party of China](/wiki/Communist_Party_of_China) (CPC).[[147]](#cite_note-147) The [electoral system](/wiki/Elections_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China) is pyramidal. Local People's Congresses are [directly elected](/wiki/Direct_election), and higher levels of People's Congresses up to the [National People's Congress](/wiki/National_People's_Congress) (NPC) are [indirectly elected](/wiki/Indirect_election) by the People's Congress of the level immediately below.[[148]](#cite_note-148) The political system is decentralized, and provincial and sub-provincial leaders have a significant amount of autonomy.[[149]](#cite_note-149) [Other political parties](/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China), referred to as democratic parties, have representatives in the National People's Congress and the [Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference](/wiki/Chinese_People's_Political_Consultative_Conference) (CPPCC).[[150]](#cite_note-150) [thumb|left|The](/wiki/File:Great_Hall_Of_The_People_At_Night.JPG) [Great Hall of the People](/wiki/Great_Hall_of_the_People) in Beijing, where the [National People's Congress](/wiki/National_People's_Congress) convenes Compared to its closed-door policies until the mid-1970s, the administrative climate is less restrictive than before. China supports the Leninist principle of "[democratic centralism](/wiki/Democratic_centralism)",[[151]](#cite_note-151) but critics describe the elected National People's Congress as a "[rubber stamp](/wiki/Rubber_stamp_(politics))" body.[[152]](#cite_note-152)

### Government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The [President of China](/wiki/President_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) is the titular [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state), serving as the ceremonial [figurehead](/wiki/Figurehead) under [National People's Congress](/wiki/National_People's_Congress). The [Premier of China](/wiki/Premier_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) is the [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government), presiding over the [State Council](/wiki/State_Council_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) composed of four vice premiers and the heads of ministries and commissions. The incumbent president is [Xi Jinping](/wiki/Xi_Jinping), who is also the [General Secretary of the Communist Party of China](/wiki/General_Secretary_of_the_Communist_Party_of_China) and the [Chairman of the Central Military Commission](/wiki/Chairman_of_the_Central_Military_Commission), making him China's [paramount leader](/wiki/Paramount_leader).[[92]](#cite_note-92) The incumbent premier is [Li Keqiang](/wiki/Li_Keqiang), who is also a senior member of the [CPC Politburo Standing Committee](/wiki/CPC_Politburo_Standing_Committee), China's *de facto* top decision-making body.[[153]](#cite_note-153) There have been some moves toward political liberalization, in that open contested elections are now held at the village and town levels.[[154]](#cite_note-154)[[155]](#cite_note-155) However, the Party retains effective control over government appointments: in the absence of meaningful opposition, the CPC wins by default most of the time. Political concerns in China include the growing gap between rich and poor and government corruption.[[156]](#cite_note-156)[[157]](#cite_note-157) Nonetheless, the level of public support for the government and its management of the nation is high, with 80–95% of Chinese citizens expressing satisfaction with the central government, according to a 2011 survey.[[158]](#cite_note-158)

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) The People's Republic of China has administrative control over 22 [provinces](/wiki/Provinces_of_China) and considers [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan) to be [its 23rd province](/wiki/Taiwan_Province,_People's_Republic_of_China), although [Taiwan](/wiki/Taiwan_Province,_People's_Republic_of_China) is currently and independently governed by the Republic of China, which disputes the PRC's claim.[[159]](#cite_note-159) China also has five subdivisions officially termed [autonomous regions](/wiki/Autonomous_regions_of_China), each with a designated minority group; four [municipalities](/wiki/Direct-controlled_municipality_of_China); and two [Special Administrative Regions](/wiki/Special_Administrative_Region) (SARs), which enjoy a degree of political autonomy. These 22 provinces, five autonomous regions, and four municipalities can be collectively referred to as "[mainland China](/wiki/Mainland_China)", a term which usually excludes the SARs of [Hong Kong](/wiki/Hong_Kong) and [Macau](/wiki/Macau). None of these divisions are recognized by the ROC government, which claims the entirety of the PRC's territory.

[Template:PRC provinces small imagemap/province list](/wiki/Template:PRC_provinces_small_imagemap/province_list) [Template:PRC provinces big imagemap alt](/wiki/Template:PRC_provinces_big_imagemap_alt)

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Chinese President](/wiki/File:BRICS_heads_of_state_and_government_hold_hands_ahead_of_the_2014_G-20_summit_in_Brisbane,_Australia.jpeg) [Xi Jinping](/wiki/Xi_Jinping) holds hands with fellow [BRICS](/wiki/BRICS) leaders at the [2014 G20 Brisbane summit](/wiki/2014_G20_Brisbane_summit) in Australia The PRC has diplomatic relations with 171 countries and maintains [embassies in 162](/wiki/List_of_diplomatic_missions_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China).[[160]](#cite_note-160) Its [legitimacy](/wiki/Legitimacy_(political)) is disputed by the Republic of China and a few other countries; it is thus the largest and most populous [state with limited recognition](/wiki/List_of_states_with_limited_recognition). In 1971, the PRC replaced the Republic of China as the sole representative of China in the United Nations and as one of the five permanent members of the [United Nations Security Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council).[[161]](#cite_note-161) China was also a former member and leader of the [Non-Aligned Movement](/wiki/Non-Aligned_Movement), and still considers itself an advocate for [developing countries](/wiki/Developing_countries).[[162]](#cite_note-162) Along with Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa, China is a member of the [BRICS](/wiki/BRICS) group of emerging major economies and hosted the group's [third official summit](/wiki/2011_BRICS_summit) at [Sanya](/wiki/Sanya), [Hainan](/wiki/Hainan) in April 2011.[[163]](#cite_note-163) Under its interpretation of the [One-China policy](/wiki/One-China_policy), Beijing has made it a precondition to establishing diplomatic relations that the other country acknowledges its claim to Taiwan and severs official ties with the government of the Republic of China. Chinese officials have protested on numerous occasions when foreign countries have made diplomatic overtures to Taiwan,[[164]](#cite_note-164) especially in the matter of armament sales.[[165]](#cite_note-165) Much of current Chinese foreign policy is reportedly based on Premier [Zhou Enlai's](/wiki/Zhou_Enlai) [Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence](/wiki/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.[[166]](#cite_note-166) This policy may have led China to support states that are [regarded as dangerous](/wiki/Rogue_state) or repressive by Western nations, such as [Zimbabwe](/wiki/Zimbabwe), North Korea and [Iran](/wiki/Iran).[[167]](#cite_note-167) China has a close economic and military relationship with Russia,[[168]](#cite_note-168) and the two states often vote in unison in the UN Security Council.[[169]](#cite_note-169)[[170]](#cite_note-170)[[171]](#cite_note-171)[thumb|right|A meeting of](/wiki/File:G5_meeting_in_Germany.jpg) [G5](/wiki/Group_of_Five) leaders in 2007, with China's [Hu Jintao](/wiki/Hu_Jintao) second from right

#### Trade relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

In recent decades, China has played an increasing role in calling for [free trade areas](/wiki/Free_trade_area) and security pacts amongst its Asia-Pacific neighbours. In 2004, it proposed an entirely new [East Asia Summit](/wiki/East_Asia_Summit) (EAS) framework as a forum for regional security issues.[[172]](#cite_note-172) The EAS, which includes [ASEAN Plus Three](/wiki/ASEAN_Plus_Three), India, Australia and New Zealand, held its inaugural summit in 2005. China is also a founding member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), along with Russia and the Central Asian republics. China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on 11 December 2001.

In 2000, the [United States Congress](/wiki/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.[[173]](#cite_note-173) China has a significant [trade surplus](/wiki/Trade_surplus) with the United States, its most important export market.[[174]](#cite_note-174) In the early 2010s, US politicians argued that the [Chinese yuan](/wiki/Chinese_yuan) was significantly undervalued, giving China an unfair trade advantage.[[175]](#cite_note-175)[[176]](#cite_note-176)[[177]](#cite_note-177) In recent decades, China has followed a policy of [engaging with African nations](/wiki/Involvement_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China_in_Africa) for trade and bilateral co-operation;[[178]](#cite_note-178)[[179]](#cite_note-179)[[180]](#cite_note-180) in 2012, Sino-African trade totalled over US$160 billion.[[181]](#cite_note-181) China has furthermore strengthened its ties with major South American economies, becoming the largest trading partner of Brazil and building strategic links with [Argentina](/wiki/Argentina).[[182]](#cite_note-182)[[183]](#cite_note-183)

#### Territorial disputes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[thumb|Map depicting territorial disputes between the PRC and neighbouring states. For a larger map,](/wiki/File:China_administrative.png) [see here](/wiki/Template:PRC_provinces_big_imagemap) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

Ever since its establishment after the second [Chinese Civil War](/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War), the PRC has been claiming [the territories](/wiki/Free_area_of_the_Republic_of_China) governed by the [Republic of China](/wiki/Republic_of_China) (ROC), a separate political entity today commonly known as Taiwan, as a part of its territory, which includes the [island of Taiwan](/wiki/Island_of_Taiwan) as [Taiwan Province](/wiki/Taiwan_Province,_People's_Republic_of_China), [Kinmen](/wiki/Kinmen) and [Matsu](/wiki/Matsu_Islands) as a part of [Fujian Province](/wiki/Fujian_Province) and islands the ROC controls in the [South China Sea](/wiki/South_China_Sea) as a part of [Hainan Province](/wiki/Hainan_Province) and [Guangdong Province](/wiki/Guangdong_Province). These claims are controversial because of the complicated [Cross-Strait relations](/wiki/Cross-Strait_relations), and has been [one of the most important principles](/wiki/One-China_policy) in Chinese diplomacy.[[184]](#cite_note-184) In addition to Taiwan, China is also involved in other international territorial disputes. Since the 1990s, China has been involved in negotiations to resolve its disputed land borders, including a [disputed border with India](/wiki/Sino-Indian_border_dispute) and an undefined border with [Bhutan](/wiki/Bhutan). China is additionally involved in multilateral disputes over the ownership of several small islands in the East and South China Seas, such as the [Senkaku Islands](/wiki/Senkaku_Islands_dispute) and the [Scarborough Shoal](/wiki/Scarborough_Shoal_standoff).[[185]](#cite_note-185)[[186]](#cite_note-186) On 21 May 2014 President Xi, speaking at a conference in Shanghai, pledged to settle China's territorial disputes peacefully. "China stays committed to seeking peaceful settlement of disputes with other countries over territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests", he said.[[187]](#cite_note-187)

#### Emerging superpower status[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

China is regularly hailed as a [potential new superpower](/wiki/Potential_superpowers), with certain commentators citing its rapid economic progress, growing military might, very large population, and increasing international influence as signs that it will play a [prominent global role](/wiki/Chinese_Century) in the 21st century.[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[188]](#cite_note-188) Others, however, warn that [economic bubbles](/wiki/Economic_bubbles) and demographic imbalances could slow or even halt China's growth as the century progresses.[[189]](#cite_note-189)[[190]](#cite_note-190)Some authors also question the definition of "superpower", arguing that China's large economy alone would not qualify it as a superpower, and noting that it lacks the military and cultural influence of the United States.[[191]](#cite_note-191)

### Sociopolitical issues, human rights, and reform[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|Protests in support of](/wiki/File:2010-07-25_Guangzhou_mass_assembly.jpg) [Cantonese](/wiki/Cantonese) media localization in Guangzhou, 2010 The [Chinese democracy movement](/wiki/Chinese_democracy_movement), social activists, and some members of the Communist Party of China have all identified the need for social and political reform. While economic and social controls have been significantly relaxed in China since the 1970s, [political freedom](/wiki/Political_freedom) is still tightly restricted. The [Constitution of the People's Republic of China](/wiki/Constitution_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) states that the "fundamental rights" of citizens include [freedom of speech](/wiki/Freedom_of_speech), [freedom of the press](/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press), the [right to a fair trial](/wiki/Right_to_a_fair_trial), [freedom of religion](/wiki/Freedom_of_religion), [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage), and [property rights](/wiki/Property). However, in practice, these provisions do not afford significant protection against criminal prosecution by the state.[[192]](#cite_note-192)[[193]](#cite_note-193) Although some criticisms of government policies and the ruling [Communist Party](/wiki/Chinese_Communist_Party) are tolerated, censorship of political speech and information, most notably on the Internet,[[194]](#cite_note-194)[[195]](#cite_note-195) are routinely used to prevent collective action.[[196]](#cite_note-196) In 2005, [Reporters Without Borders](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders) ranked China 159th out of 167 states in its Annual World Press Freedom Index, indicating a very low level of press freedom.[[197]](#cite_note-197) In 2014, China ranked 175th out of 180 countries.[[198]](#cite_note-198) Rural migrants to China's cities often find themselves treated as [second-class citizens](/wiki/Second-class_citizen) by the *hukou* [household registration](/wiki/Hukou_system) system, which controls access to [state benefits](/wiki/Welfare_state).[[199]](#cite_note-199)[[200]](#cite_note-200) Property rights are often poorly protected,[[199]](#cite_note-199) and taxation disproportionately affects poorer citizens.[[200]](#cite_note-200) However, a number of rural taxes have been reduced or abolished since the early 2000s, and additional social services provided to rural dwellers.[[201]](#cite_note-201)[[202]](#cite_note-202) A number of foreign governments, foreign press agencies and [NGOs](/wiki/NGO) also routinely criticize [China's human rights record](/wiki/Human_rights_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China), alleging widespread [civil rights](/wiki/Civil_rights) violations such as detention without trial, [forced abortions](/wiki/Forced_abortions),[[203]](#cite_note-203) forced confessions, [torture](/wiki/Torture), restrictions of fundamental rights,[[145]](#cite_note-145)[[204]](#cite_note-204) and [excessive use of the death penalty](/wiki/Capital_punishment_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China).[[205]](#cite_note-205)[[206]](#cite_note-206) The government has suppressed popular protests and demonstrations that it considers a potential threat to "social stability", as was the case with the [Tiananmen Square protests of 1989](/wiki/Tiananmen_Square_protests_of_1989).

[Falun Gong](/wiki/Falun_Gong) was first taught publicly in 1992. In 1999, when there were 70 million practitioners,<ref name=Faison>Seth Faison, ["In Beijing: A Roar of Silent Protestors"](http://partners.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/042799china-protest.html), [New York Times](/wiki/New_York_Times), 27 April 1999</ref> the [persecution of Falun Gong](/wiki/Persecution_of_Falun_Gong) began, resulting in mass arrests, extralegal detention, and reports of torture and deaths in custody.<ref name=Amnesty2013>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>[[207]](#cite_note-207) The Chinese state is regularly accused of large-scale repression and human rights abuses in [Tibet](/wiki/Tibet) and [Xinjiang](/wiki/Xinjiang), including violent police crackdowns and [religious suppression](/wiki/Religious_suppression).[[208]](#cite_note-208)[[209]](#cite_note-209) The Chinese government has responded to foreign criticism by arguing that the right to subsistence and economic development is a prerequisite to other types of human rights, and that the notion of human rights should take into account a country's present level of [economic development](/wiki/Economic_development).[[210]](#cite_note-210) It emphasizes the rise in the Chinese [standard of living](/wiki/Standard_of_living), [literacy rate](/wiki/Literacy_rate) and average [life expectancy](/wiki/Life_expectancy) since the 1970s, as well as improvements in workplace safety and efforts to combat natural disasters such as the perennial [Yangtze River](/wiki/Yangtze_River) floods.[[210]](#cite_note-210)[[211]](#cite_note-211)[[212]](#cite_note-212) Furthermore, some Chinese politicians have spoken out in support of democratization, although [others remain more conservative](/wiki/Chinese_skepticism_of_democracy).[[213]](#cite_note-213) Some major reform efforts have been conducted; for an instance in November 2013, the government announced plans to relax the one-child policy and abolish the much-criticized [re-education through labour](/wiki/Re-education_through_labour) program,<ref name=SlateChina2013>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> though human rights groups note that reforms to the latter have been largely cosmetic.<ref name=Amnesty2013/> During the 2000s and early 2010s, the Chinese government was increasingly tolerant of NGOs that offer practical, efficient solutions to social problems, but such "third sector" activity remained heavily regulated.[[214]](#cite_note-214)

## Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|A](/wiki/File:J-10a_zhas.png) [PLAAF](/wiki/People's_Liberation_Army_Air_Force) [Chengdu J-10](/wiki/Chengdu_J-10) fighter aircraft [thumb|The *Lanzhou* (DDG170), a](/wiki/File:Luyang_II_(Type_052C)_Class_Destroyer.JPG) [Type 052C destroyer](/wiki/Type_052C_destroyer) of the PLAN With 2.3 million active troops, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the largest standing military force in the world, commanded by the [Central Military Commission](/wiki/Central_Military_Commission_(People's_Republic_of_China)) (CMC).[[215]](#cite_note-215) The PLA consists of the [Ground Force](/wiki/People's_Liberation_Army_Ground_Force) (PLAGF), the [Navy](/wiki/People's_Liberation_Army_Navy) (PLAN), the [Air Force](/wiki/People's_Liberation_Army_Air_Force) (PLAAF), and the [People's Liberation Army Rocket Force](/wiki/People's_Liberation_Army_Rocket_Force) (PLARF). According to the Chinese government, China's military budget for 2014 totalled US$132 billion, constituting the [world's second-largest military budget](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures).<ref name=SIPRI2014/> However, many authorities – including [SIPRI](/wiki/SIPRI) and the U.S. [Office of the Secretary of Defense](/wiki/Office_of_the_Secretary_of_Defense) – argue that China does not report its real level of military spending, which is allegedly much higher than the official budget.<ref name=SIPRI2014>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[216]](#cite_note-216) As a recognized [nuclear weapons](/wiki/Nuclear_weapons) state, China is considered both a major regional military power and a [potential military superpower](/wiki/Potential_superpowers).[[217]](#cite_note-217) According to a 2013 report by the [US Department of Defense](/wiki/US_Department_of_Defense), China fields between 50 and 75 nuclear [ICBMs](/wiki/ICBM), along with a number of [SRBMs](/wiki/Short-range_ballistic_missile).[[6]](#cite_note-6) However, compared with the other four [UN Security Council](/wiki/UN_Security_Council) Permanent Members, China has relatively limited [power projection](/wiki/Military_power_projection) capabilities.[[218]](#cite_note-218) To offset this, it has developed numerous power projection assets since the early 2000s – its [first aircraft carrier](/wiki/Chinese_aircraft_carrier_Liaoning) entered service in 2012,[[219]](#cite_note-219)[[220]](#cite_note-220)[[221]](#cite_note-221) and it maintains a substantial fleet of [submarines](/wiki/Submarines), including several [nuclear-powered](/wiki/Nuclear_submarine) [attack](/wiki/Nuclear_attack_submarine) and [ballistic missile](/wiki/Ballistic_missile_submarine) submarines.[[222]](#cite_note-222) China has furthermore established a [network of foreign military relationships along critical sea lanes](/wiki/String_of_Pearls_(China)).[[223]](#cite_note-223) China has made significant progress in modernising its air force in recent decades, purchasing Russian fighter jets such as the [Sukhoi Su-30](/wiki/Sukhoi_Su-30), and also manufacturing its own modern fighters, most notably the [Chengdu J-10](/wiki/Chengdu_J-10), [J-20](/wiki/Chengdu_J-20) and the [Shenyang J-11](/wiki/Shenyang_J-11), [J-15](/wiki/Shenyang_J-15), [J-16](/wiki/J-16), and [J-31](/wiki/Shenyang_J-31).[[219]](#cite_note-219)[[224]](#cite_note-224) China is furthermore engaged in developing an indigenous [stealth aircraft](/wiki/Stealth_aircraft) and numerous [combat drones](/wiki/Unmanned_aerial_vehicle).[[225]](#cite_note-225)[[226]](#cite_note-226)[[227]](#cite_note-227) [Air](/wiki/Air_supremacy) and [Sea denial](/wiki/Sea_denial) weaponry advances have increased the regional threat from the perspective of Japan as well as Washington.[[228]](#cite_note-228)[[229]](#cite_note-229) China has also updated its ground forces, replacing its ageing [Soviet](/wiki/Soviet_Union)-derived [tank](/wiki/Main_battle_tank) inventory with numerous variants of the modern [Type 99 tank](/wiki/Type_99_tank), and upgrading its battlefield [C3I](/wiki/C4ISTAR) and [C4I](/wiki/C4I) systems to enhance its [network-centric warfare](/wiki/Network-centric_warfare) capabilities.[[230]](#cite_note-230) In addition, China has developed or acquired numerous advanced missile systems,[[231]](#cite_note-231)[[232]](#cite_note-232) including [anti-satellite missiles](/wiki/2007_Chinese_anti-satellite_missile_test),[[233]](#cite_note-233) [cruise missiles](/wiki/Cruise_missile)[[234]](#cite_note-234) and submarine-launched nuclear ICBMs.[[235]](#cite_note-235) According to the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's](/wiki/Stockholm_International_Peace_Research_Institute) data, China became the world's third largest exporter of major arms in 2010–14, an increase of 143 per cent from the period 2005–09.[[236]](#cite_note-236)[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|325px|China and other major developing economies by](/wiki/File:Graph_of_Major_Developing_Economies_by_Real_GDP_per_capita_at_PPP_1990-2013.png) [GDP per capita at purchasing-power parity](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita), 1990–2013. The rapid economic growth of China (red) is readily apparent.[[237]](#cite_note-237) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Shanghaistockexchange.jpg) [Shanghai Stock Exchange](/wiki/Shanghai_Stock_Exchange) building in [Shanghai's](/wiki/Shanghai) [Lujiazui](/wiki/Lujiazui) financial district. Shanghai has the [25th-largest city GDP](/wiki/List_of_cities_by_GDP) in the world, totalling US$304 billion in 2011[[238]](#cite_note-238) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), China has [the world's second-largest economy](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) in terms of nominal GDP, totalling approximately US$10.380 trillion according to the [International Monetary Fund](/wiki/International_Monetary_Fund).[[239]](#cite_note-239) If [purchasing power parity](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity) (PPP) is taken into account, China's economy is the largest in the world, with a 2014 PPP GDP of US$17.617 trillion.[[239]](#cite_note-239) In 2013, its PPP GDP per capita was US$12,880, while its nominal GDP per capita was US$7,589. Both cases put China [behind around eighty countries](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita) (out of 183 countries on the IMF list) in global GDP per capita rankings.<ref name=imf2>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

### Economic history and growth[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) From its founding in 1949 until late 1978, the People's Republic of China was a Soviet-style centrally [planned economy](/wiki/Planned_economy). Following Mao's death in 1976 and the consequent end of the [Cultural Revolution](/wiki/Cultural_Revolution), [Deng Xiaoping](/wiki/Deng_Xiaoping) and the new Chinese leadership began to [reform the economy](/wiki/Economic_reform_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China) and move towards a more market-oriented [mixed economy](/wiki/Mixed_economy) under one-party rule. [Agricultural collectivization](/wiki/Collective_farming) was dismantled and farmlands privatized, while foreign trade became a major new focus, leading to the creation of [Special Economic Zones](/wiki/Special_Economic_Zone) (SEZs). Inefficient [state-owned enterprises](/wiki/Government-owned_corporation) (SOEs) were restructured and unprofitable ones were closed outright, resulting in massive job losses. Modern-day China is mainly characterized as having a market economy based on private property ownership,[[240]](#cite_note-240) and is one of the leading examples of [state capitalism](/wiki/State_capitalism).[[241]](#cite_note-241)[[242]](#cite_note-242) The state still dominates in strategic "pillar" sectors such as energy production and [heavy industries](/wiki/Heavy_industry), but private enterprise has expanded enormously, with around 30 million private businesses recorded in 2008.[[243]](#cite_note-243)[[244]](#cite_note-244)[[245]](#cite_note-245)[[246]](#cite_note-246) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Shanghai_-_Nanjing_Road.jpeg)[Nanjing Road](/wiki/Nanjing_Road_(Shanghai)), a major shopping street in Shanghai

Since economic liberalization began in 1978, China has been among the world's fastest-growing economies,[[247]](#cite_note-247) relying largely on investment- and export-led growth.[[248]](#cite_note-248) According to the IMF, China's [annual average GDP growth](/wiki/Annual_average_GDP_growth) between 2001 and 2010 was 10.5%. Between 2007 and 2011, China's economic growth rate was equivalent to all of the [G7](/wiki/G7) countries' growth combined.[[249]](#cite_note-249) According to the [Global Growth Generators](/wiki/3G_(countries)) index announced by [Citigroup](/wiki/Citigroup) in February 2011, China has a very high 3G growth rating.[[250]](#cite_note-250) Its high productivity, low labour costs and relatively good infrastructure have made it a global leader in manufacturing. However, the Chinese economy is highly energy-intensive and inefficient;[[251]](#cite_note-251) China became the world's largest [energy consumer](/wiki/World_energy_resources_and_consumption) in 2010,[[252]](#cite_note-252) relies on coal to supply over 70% of its energy needs, and surpassed the US to become the world's largest oil importer in September 2013.[[253]](#cite_note-253)[[254]](#cite_note-254) In the early 2010s, China's economic growth rate began to slow amid domestic credit troubles, weakening international demand for Chinese exports and fragility in the global economy.[[255]](#cite_note-255)[[256]](#cite_note-256)[[257]](#cite_note-257) In the online realm, China's [e-commerce](/wiki/E-commerce) industry has grown more slowly than the EU and the US, with a significant period of development occurring from around 2009 onwards. According to [Credit Suisse](/wiki/Credit_Suisse), the total value of online transactions in China grew from an insignificant size in 2008 to around RMB 4 trillion (US$660 billion) in 2012. The Chinese online payment market is dominated by major firms such as [Alipay](/wiki/Alipay_(payment_platform)), [Tenpay](/wiki/Tencent#TenPay) and [China UnionPay](/wiki/China_UnionPay).[[258]](#cite_note-258)

### China in the global economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

China is a member of the [WTO](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) and is the world's largest trading power, with a total international trade value of US$3.87 trillion in 2012.[[5]](#cite_note-5) [Its foreign exchange reserves](/wiki/Foreign_exchange_reserves_of_the_People's_Republic_of_China) reached US$2.85 trillion by the end of 2010, an increase of 18.7% over the previous year, making its reserves by far the world's largest.[[259]](#cite_note-259)[[260]](#cite_note-260) In 2012, China was the world's largest recipient of inward [foreign direct investment](/wiki/Foreign_direct_investment) (FDI), attracting $253 billion.[[261]](#cite_note-261) In 2014, China's foreign exchange remittances were $US64 billion making it the second largest recipient of remittances in the world.[[262]](#cite_note-262) China also invests abroad, with a total outward FDI of $62.4 billion in 2012,[[261]](#cite_note-261) and a number of major takeovers of foreign firms by Chinese companies.[[263]](#cite_note-263) In 2009, China owned an estimated $1.6 trillion of US [securities](/wiki/Security_(finance)),[[264]](#cite_note-264) and was also the largest foreign holder of [US public debt](/wiki/US_public_debt), owning over $1.16 trillion in US [Treasury bonds](/wiki/Treasury_bond).[[265]](#cite_note-265)[[266]](#cite_note-266) China's undervalued exchange rate has caused friction with other major economies,[[176]](#cite_note-176)[[267]](#cite_note-267)[[268]](#cite_note-268) and it has also been widely criticized for manufacturing large quantities of [counterfeit](/wiki/Counterfeit) goods.[[269]](#cite_note-269)[[270]](#cite_note-270) According to consulting firm [McKinsey](/wiki/McKinsey_&_Company), total outstanding debt in China increased from $7.4 trillion in 2007 to $28.2 trillion in 2014, which reflects 228% of China's GDP, a percentage higher than that of some G20 nations.[[271]](#cite_note-271)

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| <timeline> ImageSize = width:300 height:140 PlotArea = left:60 bottom:20 top:10 right:0 AlignBars = justify DateFormat = yyyy Period = from:0 till:20000 TimeAxis = orientation:horizontal  Colors =  id:gray value:gray(0.5)  id:line1 value:gray(0.9)  id:line2 value:gray(0.7)  ScaleMajor = unit:year increment:5000 start:0 gridcolor:line2 ScaleMinor = unit:year increment:1000 start:0 gridcolor:line1  BarData =  bar:USA text:USA  bar:China text:China  bar:Japan text:Japan  bar:Germany text:Germany  bar:France text:France  PlotData=  color:tan1 width:10  bar:USA from:start till:17416 text:17,416  color:yellow width:10  bar:China from:start till:10355 text:10,355  color:tan1 width:10  bar:Japan from:start till:4769 text:4,769  bar:Germany from:start till:3908 text:3,908  bar:France from:start till:2902 text:2,902  TextData =  pos:(5,1) textcolor:gray fontsize:S text:US$ bn  </timeline> |
| Graph comparing the 2014 nominal GDPs of major economies in US$ billions, according to [IMF](/wiki/International_Monetary_Fund) data[[272]](#cite_note-272) |

China ranked 29th in the [Global Competitiveness Index](/wiki/Global_Competitiveness_Index) in 2009,[[273]](#cite_note-273) although it is only ranked 136th among the 179 countries measured in the 2011 [Index of Economic Freedom](/wiki/Index_of_Economic_Freedom).[[274]](#cite_note-274) In 2014, *Fortune****s*** [***Global 500***](/wiki/Fortune_Global_500) ***list of the world's largest corporations included*** [***95 Chinese companies***](/wiki/List_of_largest_Chinese_companies)***, with combined revenues of*** [***US$***](/wiki/US_dollar)***5.8 trillion.<ref name=Fortune500>***[***Template:Cite web***](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)***</ref> The same year,*** [***Forbes***](/wiki/Forbes) ***reported that five of the world's ten largest*** [***public companies***](/wiki/Public_companies) ***were Chinese, including the*** [***world's largest bank by total assets***](/wiki/List_of_largest_banks)***, the*** [***Industrial and Commercial Bank of China***](/wiki/Industrial_and_Commercial_Bank_of_China)***.***[***[275]***](#cite_note-275)

### Class and income equality[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) China's middle-class population (if defined as those with annual income of between US$10,000 and US$60,000) had reached more than 300 million by 2012.[[276]](#cite_note-276) According to the [Hurun Report](/wiki/Hurun_Report), the number of US dollar billionaires in China increased from 130 in 2009 to 251 in 2012, giving China the world's second-highest number of billionaires.[[277]](#cite_note-277)[[278]](#cite_note-278) China's domestic retail market was worth over 20 trillion yuan (US$3.2 trillion) in 2012[[279]](#cite_note-279) and is growing at over 12% annually [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of),[[280]](#cite_note-280) while the country's luxury goods market has expanded immensely, with 27.5% of the global share.[[281]](#cite_note-281) However, in recent years, China's rapid economic growth has contributed to severe consumer inflation,[[282]](#cite_note-282)[[283]](#cite_note-283) leading to increased government regulation.[[284]](#cite_note-284) China has a high level of economic inequality,[[285]](#cite_note-285) which has increased in the past few decades.[[286]](#cite_note-286) In 2012, China's [Gini coefficient](/wiki/Gini_coefficient) was 0.474.<ref name=gini>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

### Internationalization of the renminbi[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

Since 2008 global financial crisis, China realized the dependency of US Dollar and the weakness of the international monetary system.[[287]](#cite_note-287) The RMB Internationalization accelerated in 2009 when China established dim sum bond market and expanded the Cross-Border Trade RMB Settlement Pilot Project, which helps establish pools of offshore RMB liquidity.[[288]](#cite_note-288)[[289]](#cite_note-289) In November 2010, Russia began using the [Chinese renminbi](/wiki/Chinese_renminbi) in its bilateral trade with China.[[290]](#cite_note-290) This was soon followed by [Japan](/wiki/Japan),[[291]](#cite_note-291) [Australia](/wiki/Australia),[[292]](#cite_note-292) [Singapore](/wiki/Singapore),[[293]](#cite_note-293) the [United Kingdom](/wiki/United_Kingdom),[[294]](#cite_note-294) and [Canada](/wiki/Canada).[[295]](#cite_note-295) As a result of the rapid internationalization of the renminbi, it became the eighth-most-traded currency in the world in 2013.[[296]](#cite_note-296)

## Science and technology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:History of science and technology in China](/wiki/Template:History_of_science_and_technology_in_China)

### Historical[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

China was a world leader in science and technology until the [Ming Dynasty](/wiki/Ming_Dynasty). Ancient [Chinese discoveries](/wiki/List_of_Chinese_discoveries) and [inventions](/wiki/List_of_Chinese_inventions), such as [papermaking](/wiki/Papermaking), [printing](/wiki/History_of_typography_in_East_Asia), the [compass](/wiki/Compass), and [gunpowder](/wiki/Gunpowder) (the [Four Great Inventions](/wiki/Four_Great_Inventions)), later became widespread in Asia and Europe. Chinese mathematicians were the first to use [negative numbers](/wiki/Negative_numbers#History).[[297]](#cite_note-297)[[298]](#cite_note-298) However, by the 17th century, the Western world had surpassed China in scientific and technological development.[[299]](#cite_note-299) The causes of this [Great Divergence](/wiki/Great_Divergence) continue to be debated.[[300]](#cite_note-300) After repeated military defeats by Western nations in the 19th century, Chinese reformers began promoting modern science and technology as part of the [Self-Strengthening Movement](/wiki/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](/wiki/Soviet_Union), in which scientific research was part of central planning.[[301]](#cite_note-301) After Mao's death in 1976, science and technology was established as one of the [Four Modernizations](/wiki/Four_Modernizations),[[302]](#cite_note-302) and the Soviet-inspired academic system was gradually reformed.[[303]](#cite_note-303)

### Modern era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, China has made significant investments in scientific research,<ref name=CWRD>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> with $163 billion spent on scientific research and development in 2012.[[304]](#cite_note-304) Science and technology are seen as vital for achieving China's economic and political goals, and are held as a source of national pride to a degree sometimes described as "techno-nationalism".[[305]](#cite_note-305) Nonetheless, China's investment in basic and applied scientific research remains behind that of leading technological powers such as the United States and Japan.[[306]](#cite_note-306)[[307]](#cite_note-307) Chinese-born scientists have won the [Nobel Prize in Physics](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Physics) four times, the [Nobel Prize in Chemistry](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Chemistry) and [Physiology or Medicine](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Physiology_or_Medicine) once respectively, though most of these scientists conducted their Nobel-winning research in western nations.[Template:Efn](/wiki/Template:Efn)

[thumb|upright|right|The launch of a Chinese](/wiki/File:The_Launch_of_Long_March_3B_Rocket.jpg) [Long March 3B](/wiki/Long_March_3B) rocket

China is rapidly developing its education system with an emphasis on [science, mathematics and engineering](/wiki/STEM_fields); in 2009, it produced over 10,000 Ph.D. engineering graduates, and as many as 500,000 [BSc](/wiki/BSc) graduates, more than any other country.[[308]](#cite_note-308) China is also the world's second-largest publisher of [scientific papers](/wiki/Academic_publishing_in_China), producing 121,500 in 2010 alone, including 5,200 in leading international scientific journals.[[309]](#cite_note-309) Chinese technology companies such as [Huawei](/wiki/Huawei) and [Lenovo](/wiki/Lenovo) have become world leaders in telecommunications and personal computing,[[310]](#cite_note-310)[[311]](#cite_note-311)[[312]](#cite_note-312) and Chinese [supercomputers](/wiki/Supercomputer) are consistently ranked among the [world's most powerful](/wiki/TOP500).[[313]](#cite_note-313)[[314]](#cite_note-314) China is furthermore experiencing a significant growth in the use of industrial [robots](/wiki/Robot); from 2008 to 2011, the installation of multi-role robots in Chinese factories rose by 136 percent.[[315]](#cite_note-315) The [Chinese space program](/wiki/Chinese_space_program) is one of the world's most active, and is a major source of national pride.[[316]](#cite_note-316)[[317]](#cite_note-317) In 1970, China launched its first satellite, [Dong Fang Hong I](/wiki/Dong_Fang_Hong_I), becoming the fifth country to do so independently.[[318]](#cite_note-318) In 2003, China became the third country to independently send humans into space, with [Yang Liwei's](/wiki/Yang_Liwei) spaceflight aboard [Shenzhou 5](/wiki/Shenzhou_5); [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), [ten Chinese nationals](/wiki/List_of_Chinese_astronauts) have journeyed into space, including two women. In 2011, China's first space station module, [Tiangong-1](/wiki/Tiangong-1), was launched, marking the first step in a project to assemble [a large manned station](/wiki/Chinese_space_station) by the early 2020s.[[319]](#cite_note-319) In 2013, China successfully landed the [Chang'e 3](/wiki/Chang'e_3) probe and [Yutu](/wiki/Yutu_(rover)) rover onto the Moon; China plans to collect lunar soil samples by 2017.[[320]](#cite_note-320)

## Infrastructure[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

### Telecommunications[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) China currently has the [largest number of active cellphones](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_mobile_phones_in_use) of any country in the world, with over 1 billion users by February 2012.[[321]](#cite_note-321) It also has the world's largest number of [internet](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_Internet_users) and [broadband users](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_broadband_Internet_users),[[322]](#cite_note-322) with over 688 million internet users [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), equivalent to around half of its population.[[323]](#cite_note-323) The national average broadband connection speed is 9.46 MB/s, ranking China 91st in the world in terms of internet speed.[[323]](#cite_note-323) As of July 2013, China accounts for 24% of the world's internet-connected devices.[[324]](#cite_note-324) Since 2011 China is the nation with the most installed telecommunication bandwidth in the world. By 2014, China hosts more than twice as much national bandwidth potential than the U.S., the historical leader in terms of installed telecommunication bandwidth (China: 29% versus US:13% of the global total).[[325]](#cite_note-325)[[371]](#cite_note-371) It is estimated that China's urban population will reach one billion by 2030, potentially equivalent to one-eighth of the world population.[[370]](#cite_note-370)<ref name=ChinasUrbanFuture/> [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), there are more than 262 million [migrant workers](/wiki/Migrant_worker) in China, mostly rural migrants seeking work in cities.[[372]](#cite_note-372) China has over 160 cities with a population of over one million,[[373]](#cite_note-373) including the seven [megacities](/wiki/Megacity) (cities with a population of over 10 million) of Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Shenzhen, and Wuhan.[[374]](#cite_note-374)[[375]](#cite_note-375)[[376]](#cite_note-376) By 2025, it is estimated that the country will be home to 221 cities with over a million inhabitants.[[370]](#cite_note-370) The figures in the table below are from the 2010 census,<ref name=census>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> 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](/wiki/Floating_population)" of migrant workers make conducting censuses in urban areas difficult;[[377]](#cite_note-377) the figures below include only long-term residents. [Template:Largest cities of China](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_China)

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Beijing's](/wiki/File:Tsinghua_University_-_Grand_auditorium.JPG) [Tsinghua University](/wiki/Tsinghua_University), one of the [top-ranked universities in China](/wiki/Chinese_university_ranking_(Wu_Shulian))[[378]](#cite_note-378)

Since 1986, compulsory education in China comprises [primary](/wiki/Primary_school) and [junior secondary school](/wiki/Middle_school), which together last for nine years.[[379]](#cite_note-379) In 2010, about 82.5 percent of students continued their education at a three-year senior secondary school.[[380]](#cite_note-380) The [Gaokao](/wiki/Gaokao), China's national university entrance exam, is a prerequisite for entrance into most higher education institutions. In 2010, 27 percent of secondary school graduates are enrolled in higher education.[[381]](#cite_note-381) Vocational education is available to students at the secondary and [tertiary](/wiki/Tertiary_education) level.[[382]](#cite_note-382) In February 2006, the government pledged to provide completely free nine-year education, including textbooks and fees.[[383]](#cite_note-383) Annual education investment went from less than US$50 billion in 2003 to more than US$250 billion in 2011.[[384]](#cite_note-384) 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](/wiki/Guizhou), one of the [poorest provinces in China](/wiki/List_of_Chinese_administrative_divisions_by_GDP_per_capita), only totalled ¥3,204.[[385]](#cite_note-385) Free compulsory education in China consists of primary school and junior secondary school between the ages of 6 and 15. In 2011, around 81.4% of Chinese have received secondary education.[[386]](#cite_note-386) By 2007, there were 396,567 primary schools, 94,116 secondary schools, and 2,236 higher education institutions in China.[[387]](#cite_note-387) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), 94% of the population over age 15 are literate,[[388]](#cite_note-388) compared to only 20% in 1950.[[389]](#cite_note-389) In 2009, Chinese students from Shanghai achieved the world's best results in mathematics, science and literacy, as tested by the [Programme for International Student Assessment](/wiki/Programme_for_International_Student_Assessment) (PISA), a worldwide evaluation of 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance.[[390]](#cite_note-390) Despite the high results, Chinese education has also faced [both native and international criticism](/wiki/Education_in_China#Criticism) for its emphasis on rote memorization and its gap in quality from rural to urban areas.

### Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|right|Chart showing the rise of China's](/wiki/File:China_Human_Dev_SVG.svg) [Human Development Index](/wiki/Human_Development_Index) from 1970 to 2010 The [National Health and Family Planning Commission](/wiki/National_Health_and_Family_Planning_Commission), together with its counterparts in the local commissions, oversees the health needs of the Chinese population.[[391]](#cite_note-391) 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](/wiki/Patriotic_Health_Campaign), which was aimed at improving sanitation and hygiene, as well as treating and preventing several diseases. Diseases such as [cholera](/wiki/Cholera), [typhoid](/wiki/Typhoid) and [scarlet fever](/wiki/Scarlet_fever), which were previously rife in China, were nearly eradicated by the campaign. 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](/wiki/Private_healthcare), and experienced a significant rise in quality. In 2009, the government began a 3-year large-scale healthcare provision initiative worth US$124 billion.[[392]](#cite_note-392) By 2011, the campaign resulted in 95% of China's population having basic health insurance coverage.[[393]](#cite_note-393) In 2011, China was estimated to be the world's third-largest supplier of [pharmaceuticals](/wiki/Pharmaceuticals), but its population has suffered from the development and distribution of [counterfeit medications](/wiki/Counterfeit_medications).[[394]](#cite_note-394) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), the average life expectancy at birth in China is 75 years,[[395]](#cite_note-395) and the [infant mortality](/wiki/Infant_mortality) rate is 12 per thousand.[[396]](#cite_note-396) Both have improved significantly since the 1950s.[Template:Efn](/wiki/Template:Efn) Rates of [stunting](/wiki/Stunted_growth), a condition caused by [malnutrition](/wiki/Malnutrition), have declined from 33.1% in 1990 to 9.9% in 2010.[[397]](#cite_note-397) 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](/wiki/Air_pollution_in_China),[[398]](#cite_note-398) hundreds of millions of [cigarette smokers](/wiki/Tobacco_smoking),[[399]](#cite_note-399) and an increase in [obesity](/wiki/Obesity) among urban youths.[[400]](#cite_note-400)[[401]](#cite_note-401) China's large population and densely populated cities have led to serious disease outbreaks in recent years, such as the 2003 outbreak of [SARS](/wiki/Severe_acute_respiratory_syndrome), although this has since been largely contained.[[402]](#cite_note-402) In 2010, air pollution caused 1.2 million premature deaths in China.[[403]](#cite_note-403)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Pie chart](/wiki/Template:Pie_chart)

Over the millennia, Chinese civilization has been influenced by various religious movements. The "[three teachings](/wiki/Three_teachings)", including [Confucianism](/wiki/Confucianism),[Template:Efn](/wiki/Template:Efn) [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism), and [Taoism](/wiki/Taoism), historically have a significant role in shaping Chinese culture.[[404]](#cite_note-404)[[405]](#cite_note-405) Elements of these three belief systems are often incorporated into [popular or folk religious traditions](/wiki/Chinese_folk_religion).[[406]](#cite_note-406) [Freedom of religion](/wiki/Freedom_of_religion) is guaranteed by China's constitution, although religious organizations that lack official approval can be subject to state persecution.[[204]](#cite_note-204)[[407]](#cite_note-407) Demographically, the most widespread religious tradition is the Chinese folk religion, which overlaps with Taoism, and describes the worship of the [*shen*](/wiki/Shen_(Chinese_religion)) (神), a character that signifies the "energies of generation". The *shen* comprises [deities](/wiki/Deity) of the natural environment, gods representing specific concepts or groups, [heroes and ancestors](/wiki/Ancestor_veneration_in_China), and figures from [Chinese mythology](/wiki/Chinese_mythology).[[408]](#cite_note-408) Among the most popular [folk cults](/wiki/Cult_(religious_practice)) are those of [Mazu](/wiki/Mazu_(goddess)) (goddess of the seas),[[409]](#cite_note-409)[[410]](#cite_note-410) [Yellow Emperor](/wiki/Yellow_Emperor) (one of the two [divine patriarchs](/wiki/Yan_Huang_Zisun) of the Chinese race),[[409]](#cite_note-409)[[411]](#cite_note-411) [Guandi](/wiki/Guandi) (god of war and business), [Caishen](/wiki/Caishen) (god of prosperity and richness), [Pangu](/wiki/Pangu) and many others. China is home to many of the [world's tallest religious statues](/wiki/List_of_statues_by_height), including the tallest of all, the [Spring Temple Buddha](/wiki/Spring_Temple_Buddha) in [Henan](/wiki/Henan).

The government of the People's Republic of China is officially [atheist](/wiki/Atheist). Religious affairs and issues in the country are overseen by the [State Administration for Religious Affairs](/wiki/State_Administration_for_Religious_Affairs).[[412]](#cite_note-412) A 2015 poll conducted by [Gallup International](/wiki/WIN/GIA) found that 61% of Chinese people self-identified as "convinced atheist."[[413]](#cite_note-413) Scholars have noted that in China there is no clear boundary between religions, especially Buddhism, Taoism and local folk religious practice.[[404]](#cite_note-404) According to the [most recent demographic analyses](/wiki/Religion_in_China#Statistics), an average 30—80% of the Chinese population practice some form of Chinese folk religions and Taoism. Approximately 10—16% are Buddhists, 2—4% are Christians, and 1—2% are Muslims. In addition to Han people's local religious practices, there are also various [ethnic minority groups in China](/wiki/Ethnic_minorities_in_China) who maintain their [traditional autochthone religions](/wiki/Religion_in_China#Ethnic_minorities'_indigenous_religions). Various sects of indigenous origin comprise 2—3% of the population, while Confucianism as a religious self-designation is popular among intellectuals. Significant faiths specifically connected to certain ethnic groups include [Tibetan Buddhism](/wiki/Tibetan_Buddhism) and the [Islamic religion](/wiki/Islam_in_China) of the [Hui](/wiki/Hui_people) and [Uyghur peoples](/wiki/Uyghur_people).

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=43)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:11_Temple_of_Heaven.jpg) [Temple of Heaven](/wiki/Temple_of_Heaven), a center of [heaven worship](/wiki/Heaven_worship) and an UNESCO World Heritage site, symbolizes the [Interactions Between Heaven and Mankind](/wiki/Interactions_Between_Heaven_and_Mankind).[[414]](#cite_note-414)

Since ancient times, Chinese culture has been heavily influenced by [Confucianism](/wiki/Confucianism) and conservative philosophies. For much of the country's dynastic era, opportunities for social advancement could be provided by high performance in the prestigious [imperial examinations](/wiki/Imperial_examination), which have their origins in the [Han Dynasty](/wiki/Han_Dynasty).[[415]](#cite_note-415) The [literary emphasis](/wiki/Chinese_literature) of the exams affected the general perception of cultural refinement in China, such as the belief that [calligraphy](/wiki/Chinese_calligraphy), [poetry](/wiki/Classical_Chinese_poetry) and [painting](/wiki/Chinese_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.[[8]](#cite_note-8) Examinations and a [culture of merit](/wiki/Meritocracy) remain greatly valued in China today.[[416]](#cite_note-416) 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](/wiki/May_Fourth_Movement) and reformist ideals. They sought to change some traditional aspects of Chinese culture, such as rural land tenure, [sexism](/wiki/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 Communist Party's rule has damaged the foundations of Chinese culture, especially through political movements such as the [Cultural Revolution](/wiki/Cultural_Revolution) of the 1960s, where many aspects of traditional culture were destroyed, having been denounced as "regressive and harmful" or "vestiges of [feudalism](/wiki/Feudalism)". Many important aspects of traditional Chinese morals and culture, such as Confucianism, art, literature, and performing arts like [Peking opera](/wiki/Peking_opera),[[417]](#cite_note-417) were altered to conform to government policies and propaganda at the time. Access to foreign media remains heavily restricted.[[418]](#cite_note-418) Today, the Chinese government has accepted numerous elements of traditional Chinese culture as being integral to Chinese society. With the rise of [Chinese nationalism](/wiki/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,[[419]](#cite_note-419)[[420]](#cite_note-420) and folk and variety art in particular have sparked interest nationally and even worldwide.[[421]](#cite_note-421) China is now the [third-most-visited country in the world](/wiki/Tourism_in_China),[[422]](#cite_note-422) with 55.7 million inbound international visitors in 2010.[[423]](#cite_note-423) It also experiences an enormous volume of [domestic tourism](/wiki/Domestic_tourism); an estimated 740 million Chinese holidaymakers travelled within the country in October 2012 alone.[[424]](#cite_note-424)

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=44)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|The stories in](/wiki/File:Pekin_przedstawienie_tradycjnego_teatru_chinskiego_7.JPG) [*Journey to the West*](/wiki/Journey_to_the_West) are common themes in [Peking opera](/wiki/Peking_opera)

Chinese literature is based on the literature of the [Zhou dynasty](/wiki/Zhou_dynasty).[[425]](#cite_note-425) Concepts covered within the [Chinese classic texts](/wiki/Chinese_classic_texts) present a wide range of [thoughts](/wiki/Hundred_Schools_of_Thought) and subjects including [calendar](/wiki/Chinese_calendar), [military](/wiki/List_of_Chinese_military_texts), [astrology](/wiki/Chinese_astrology), [herbology](/wiki/Chinese_herbology), [geography](/wiki/Chinese_geography) and many others.[[426]](#cite_note-426) Some of the most important early texts include the [*I Ching*](/wiki/I_Ching) and the [*Shujing*](/wiki/Classic_of_History) within the [Four Books and Five Classics](/wiki/Four_Books_and_Five_Classics) which served as the Confucian authoritative books for the state-sponsored curriculum in dynastic era.[[427]](#cite_note-427) Inherited from the [*Classic of Poetry*](/wiki/Classic_of_Poetry), [classical Chinese poetry](/wiki/Classical_Chinese_poetry) developed to its floruit during the Tang dynasty. [Li Bai](/wiki/Li_Bai) and [Du Fu](/wiki/Du_Fu) opened the forking ways for the poetic circles through romanticism and realism respectively.[[428]](#cite_note-428) [Chinese historiography](/wiki/Chinese_historiography) began with the [*Shiji*](/wiki/Shiji), the overall scope of the historiographical tradition in China is termed the [Twenty-Four Histories](/wiki/Twenty-Four_Histories), which set a vast stage for Chinese fictions along with [Chinese mythology](/wiki/Chinese_mythology) and [folklore](/wiki/Chinese_folklore).[[429]](#cite_note-429) Pushed by a burgeoning citizen class in the [Ming dynasty](/wiki/Ming_dynasty), Chinese classical fiction rose to a boom of the historical, town and [gods and demons fictions](/wiki/Gods_and_demons_fiction) as represented by the [Four Great Classical Novels](/wiki/Four_Great_Classical_Novels) which include [*Water Margin*](/wiki/Water_Margin), [*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*](/wiki/Romance_of_the_Three_Kingdoms), [*Journey to the West*](/wiki/Journey_to_the_West) and [*Dream of the Red Chamber*](/wiki/Dream_of_the_Red_Chamber).[[430]](#cite_note-430) Along with the [wuxia](/wiki/Wuxia) fictions of [Jin Yong](/wiki/Jin_Yong),[[431]](#cite_note-431) it remains an enduring source of popular culture in the [East Asian cultural sphere](/wiki/East_Asian_cultural_sphere).[[432]](#cite_note-432) In the wake of the [New Culture Movement](/wiki/New_Culture_Movement) after the end of the Qing dynasty, Chinese literature embarked on a new era with [written vernacular Chinese](/wiki/Written_vernacular_Chinese) for ordinary citizens. [Hu Shih](/wiki/Hu_Shih) and [Lu Xun](/wiki/Lu_Xun) were pioneers in modern literature.[[433]](#cite_note-433) Various literary genres, such as [misty poetry](/wiki/Misty_poetry), [scar literature](/wiki/Scar_literature) and the [xungen literature](/wiki/Xungen_movement), which is influenced by [magic realism](/wiki/Magic_realism),[[434]](#cite_note-434) emerged following the Cultural Revolution. [Mo Yan](/wiki/Mo_Yan), a xungen literature author, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012.[[435]](#cite_note-435)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=45)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Chinese foods originated from different regional cuisines:](/wiki/File:Chinese_foods_from_different_regional_cuisines.jpg) [la zi ji](/wiki/La_zi_ji) from Sichuan, [xiaolongbao](/wiki/Xiaolongbao) from Jiangsu, [rice noodle roll](/wiki/Rice_noodle_roll) from Cantonese and [Peking duck](/wiki/Peking_duck) from Shandong.[[436]](#cite_note-436) 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](/wiki/Sichuan_cuisine), [Cantonese](/wiki/Cantonese_cuisine), [Jiangsu](/wiki/Jiangsu_cuisine), [Shandong](/wiki/Shandong_cuisine), [Fujian](/wiki/Fujian_cuisine), [Hunan](/wiki/Hunan_cuisine), [Anhui](/wiki/Anhui_cuisine), and [Zhejiang](/wiki/Zhejiang_cuisine) cuisines.[[437]](#cite_note-437) All of them are featured by the precise skills of shaping, heating, colorway and flavoring.[[438]](#cite_note-438) Chinese cuisine is also known for its width of [cooking methods](/wiki/Chinese_cooking_techniques) and ingredients,[[439]](#cite_note-439) as well as [food therapy](/wiki/Chinese_food_therapy) that is emphasized by [traditional Chinese medicine](/wiki/Traditional_Chinese_medicine).[[440]](#cite_note-440) 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. And the bean products, such as [tofu](/wiki/Tofu) and [soy milk](/wiki/Soy_milk), remain as a popular source of protein.[[441]](#cite_note-441) Pork is now the most popular meat in China, accounting for about three-fourths of the country's total meat consumption.[[442]](#cite_note-442) While there is also a [Buddhist cuisine](/wiki/Buddhist_cuisine) and an [Islamic cuisine](/wiki/Chinese_Islamic_cuisine).[[443]](#cite_note-443) 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](/wiki/Cuisine_of_Hong_Kong#Eastern_Styles) and [American Chinese food](/wiki/American_Chinese_food), have emerged in the nations that play host to the [Chinese diaspora](/wiki/Chinese_diaspora).

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=46)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Dragon_boat_racing.jpg)[Dragon boat](/wiki/Dragon_boat) racing, a popular traditional Chinese sport China has become a prime sports destination worldwide. The country gained the hosting rights for several major global sports tournaments including the [2008 Summer Olympics](/wiki/2008_Summer_Olympics), the [2015 World Championships in Athletics](/wiki/2015_World_Championships_in_Athletics) and the upcoming [2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup](/wiki/2019_FIBA_Basketball_World_Cup).

China has one of the [oldest sporting cultures](/wiki/Sport_in_the_People's_Republic_of_China) in the world. There is evidence that archery (*shèjiàn*) was practised during the [Western Zhou Dynasty](/wiki/Western_Zhou_Dynasty). Swordplay (*jiànshù*) and [cuju](/wiki/Cuju), a sport loosely related to [association football](/wiki/Association_football)[[444]](#cite_note-444) date back to China's early dynasties as well.[[445]](#cite_note-445) [Physical fitness](/wiki/Physical_fitness) is widely emphasized in Chinese culture, with morning exercises such as [qigong](/wiki/Qigong) and [t'ai chi ch'uan](/wiki/T'ai_chi_ch'uan) widely practised,[[446]](#cite_note-446) and commercial [gyms](/wiki/Gym) and fitness clubs gaining popularity in the country.[[447]](#cite_note-447) Basketball is currently the most popular spectator sport in China.[[448]](#cite_note-448) The [Chinese Basketball Association](/wiki/Chinese_Basketball_Association) and the American [National Basketball Association](/wiki/National_Basketball_Association) have a huge following among the people, with native or ethnic Chinese players such as [Yao Ming](/wiki/Yao_Ming) and [Yi Jianlian](/wiki/Yi_Jianlian) held in high esteem.[[449]](#cite_note-449) [China's professional football league](/wiki/Chinese_Super_League) was established in 2004, it is the largest football market in Asia.[[450]](#cite_note-450) Other popular sports in the country include [martial arts](/wiki/Chinese_martial_arts), table tennis, badminton, swimming and [snooker](/wiki/Snooker). [Board games](/wiki/Board_game) such as [go](/wiki/Go_(board_game)) (known as *wéiqí* in Chinese), [xiangqi](/wiki/Xiangqi), [mahjong](/wiki/Mahjong), and more recently [chess](/wiki/Chess), are also played at a professional level.[[451]](#cite_note-451) In addition, China is home to a huge number of [cyclists](/wiki/Cycling), with an estimated 470 million bicycles [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of).[[335]](#cite_note-335) Many more traditional sports, such as [dragon boat](/wiki/Dragon_boat) racing, [Mongolian-style wrestling](/wiki/Mongolian_wrestling) and [horse racing](/wiki/Horse_racing) are also popular.[[452]](#cite_note-452) China has [participated in the Olympic Games](/wiki/China_at_the_Olympics) since 1932, although it has only participated as the PRC [since 1952](/wiki/China_at_the_1952_Summer_Olympics). China hosted the [2008 Summer Olympics](/wiki/2008_Summer_Olympics) in Beijing, where its athletes received 51 gold medals – [the highest number of gold medals](/wiki/2008_Summer_Olympics_medal_table) of any participating nation that year.[[453]](#cite_note-453) China also won the most medals of any nation at the [2012 Summer Paralympics](/wiki/2012_Summer_Paralympics), with 231 overall, including 95 gold medals.[[454]](#cite_note-454)[[455]](#cite_note-455) In 2011, [Shenzhen](/wiki/Shenzhen) in Guangdong, China hosted the [2011 Summer Universiade](/wiki/2011_Summer_Universiade). China hosted the [2013 East Asian Games](/wiki/2013_East_Asian_Games) in Tianjin and the [2014 Summer Youth Olympics](/wiki/2014_Summer_Youth_Olympics) in [Nanjing](/wiki/Nanjing).

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=47)]

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* [Index of China-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_China-related_articles)
* [International rankings of China](/wiki/International_rankings_of_China)
* [Outline of China](/wiki/Outline_of_China)

## Footnotes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=48)]

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=49)]

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## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=50)]

[Template:Refbegin](/wiki/Template:Refbegin)

* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* Farah, Paolo (2006). "Five Years of China's WTO Membership: EU and US Perspectives on China's Compliance with Transparency Commitments and the Transitional Review Mechanism". *Legal Issues of Economic Integration*. Kluwer Law International. Volume 33, Number 3. pp. 263–304. [Abstract](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=916768).
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* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=51)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

Overviews

* [China at a Glance](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/china/home.html) from [*People's Daily*](/wiki/People's_Daily)
* [BBC News – China Profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877)
* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [China, People's Republic of](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/china.htm) from *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [China](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/111803/China)'s [*Encyclopædia Britannica*](/wiki/Encyclopædia_Britannica) entry
* ["Rethinking 'Capitalist Restoration' in China"](http://www.monthlyreview.org/1105wu.htm) by Yiching Wu
* [Key Development Forecasts for China](http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=CN) from [International Futures](/wiki/International_Futures)
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Government

* [The Central People's Government of People's Republic of China](http://english.gov.cn/) [Template:Link language](/wiki/Template:Link_language)
* [China Internet Information Center](http://www.china.org.cn/) [Template:Link language](/wiki/Template:Link_language)—Authorized government portal site to China

Studies

* ["Assertive Pragmatism: China's Economic Rise and Its Impact on Chinese Foreign Policy"](http://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/proliferation-papers/assertive-pragmatism-chinas-economic-rise-and-its-impact). Minxin Pei (2006). IFRI Proliferation Papers. No. 15.

Travel

* [China National Tourist Office](http://www.cnto.org/) (CNTO)

Maps

* [Google Maps—China](http://maps.google.com/maps?q=China&ll=30.600094,103.710938&spn=64.10009,177.1875&om=1)
* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [Template:OSM relation](/wiki/Template:OSM_relation)

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