



CHINA IN 2014

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

China is *not* a monolith

- **Geography:**

- North: arid, lack water; staple is wheat
- South: humid, too much water; staple is rice
- Interior: more inward-looking, conservative
- Coastal: more outward looking, cosmopolitan
- Borderlands: many minority ethnicities


- **Ethnicity:**


- ca. 92% Han + 55 other official minorities
- diversity among Han as well



- **Tradition and belief:**


- Confucianism: philosophy of social order; hierarchies; everyone knows his/her place and appropriate ritualized behavior; harmony-Golden Mean; upright officials as moral exemplars; mobility through education (mastery of orthodoxy)
- Legalism: philosophy of order based on strong, brutal centralized authority
- Taoism (Daoism): philosophy of *yin-yang*, egalitarian, spontaneity, link to folk religion

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- Buddhism: (Chan/Zen): mixture of Indian Buddhism and Daoism; reincarnation; accumulation of good deeds
 - In practice, Chinese combine all of them
 - foreign religions: Christianity, Catholicism, Islam
 - **Developed and underdeveloped:**
 - cutting edge infrastructure and architecture, high-tech zones, top universities and think tanks
 - remote areas with little development or infrastructure, poor education and facilities

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- dense urban population in cities under constant renovation
 - rural population ranging from suburban farmers to extremely poor and remote settlements
 - **Inequality:**
 - emerging urban middle class but obvious extremes of very wealthy and very poor across country and within cities


Political system

- Since establishment of People's Republic on October 1, 1949, China has been a one-party state led by the Communist Party of China
 - “vanguard” party: knows what's best; manages own affairs internally
 - centralized and hierarchical; party leadership of all governmental, social, educational, cultural and major economic organizations
 - monopoly on truth and intolerance of dissent

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- Initial revolutionary goals of establishing an egalitarian system led by the CCP in the name of the proletariat (working class) now replaced by goals of modernization and national strength

Quest for wealth and power

- Mid-19th century (Opium War 1839-1842) began century+ of humiliation as China, which conceived of itself as equal to “civilization” was defeated by foreign “barbarians” of a new type from Europe and then Japan (1894-1895 War)
- Self-strengthening to defend themselves
- how to adopt western technology while retaining Chinese essence (*ti-yong* debate)?

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- Search for development model:
 - Soviet model of urban-centered, planning, heavy industry, squeeze agriculture of early 1950s
 - Great Leap Forward 1958-1960 and Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) based on experience of self-reliance and political mobilization in Yan'an during WW II
 - Post-Mao reforms (1978-present)
 - 4 Modernizations: industry, agriculture, science & technology, national defense
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- Trends:
 - plan → market
 - state-owned → diverse ownership (significant growth of private sector)
 - self-reliance → globalization
 - trade, foreign investment in and out
- “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”

Remarkable achievements in short time

- Rapid progress on road to wealth and power
- 2nd largest economy in world
- brought hundreds of millions out of poverty
- removed many barriers to innovation, individual autonomy and self-empowerment
- redressing many historical wrongs
- standing up to West and Japan and spreading model to other developing economies

- claims to engage in “Peaceful rise” (though many in region not convinced)
- “Chinese Dream:” link national rejuvenation with individual’s fulfilment of own aspirations – mutually reinforcing
- obsess with “stability” and “national unity” (i.e., anti-”separatism”, esp. as regards, Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan, with attention also to Hong Kong and Macao)
- sovereignty is sacred; do not interfere in internal affairs