



# CHINA IN 2014

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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-19<sup>th</sup> 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
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 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