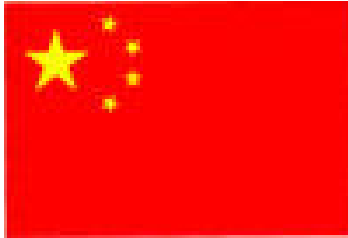


## **Cultural Field Guide for Military Operations**

### **People's Republic of China**



*Flag of the People's Republic of China*

#### **Summary**

- Most Chinese take immense pride in their country's long history. They believe their history, even the early periods, has had a profound effect on their current society. They frequently refer to ancient events and personages, often to show similarities to current events. They also have significantly preserved ancient cultural practice and thought.
- Chinese today call the period from the Qing Dynasty's decline until the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) the "Century of Humiliation" in reference to an extremely violent and emotionally charged period that continues to influence China's culture and politics today.
- Han Chinese are living in a period of immense transition, and are uncertain about the future. Although socialism destroyed much of the traditional Han way of life, it did not replace it with lasting values, a more beneficial lifestyle, or progressive culture. Therefore, Chinese culture is composed of a conflicting mixture of traditional, socialist, and Western influences.
- Despite the fact that followers were persecuted for much of PRC's history, Daoism and Buddhism are extremely popular among Han Chinese. The violence of past political movements, especially those of the Cultural Revolution, and the famines caused by faulty economic policies have caused many Han to lose faith in Mao Zedong and communism. The reverence toward Mao practiced in the past is rarely seen today.
- Chinese culture is a mixture of local customs and countrywide Han-influenced practices. While many of these nationwide customs are observed, different regions have their own version of what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Generally, Chinese courtesy is informed by Confucianism, which emphasizes hierarchy, respect, decorum, and maintaining relationships.
- "Face" is the most significant aspect of Chinese culture for a foreigner to understand. A person loses face by making a mistake, failing to live up to others' expectations, demonstrating ignorance, or losing one's composure. One gains respect by remaining dignified and giving face to others. This is done by showing care for guests, spending time with others, arriving early or on time for meetings,

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praising someone in front of that person's superior, and ignoring others' mistakes in public.

- Lifestyles vary throughout the country because different areas, families, and even individuals receive often-conflicting influences. Rural areas are characterized by their more traditional lifestyle, poverty, and difficulty in obtaining proper nourishment and medical care. Most middle-aged and young people in urban areas are attracted by Western culture and, in general, have a better quality of life.

## Ethnic Description

### Physical Appearance

Due to centuries of intermixing, Chinese people display a wide range of physical features. Although their eye and hair color are almost exclusively black, the variety of facial features make distinguishing between Chinese ethnic groups difficult, even for other Chinese.



*Chinese features*

### Cultural History

Official Chinese history focuses almost entirely on the majority Han people and their emperors. Other ethnic groups who did not accept Han rule and culture were considered barbarians up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Only in the last few decades have historians examined these groups seriously. Because of the emphasis placed on Han culture, today many of these ethnic groups study and associate themselves with Han history. Educated Chinese are likely to know this history in detail; most Chinese feel pride in their country's long history and believe that it has had a profound effect on their current society.

China was ruled for thousands of years by a long string of emperors who founded many dynasties. Most of these dynasties rose and fell either from outside attack or internal rebellion. The last dynasty fell in the revolution of 1911. The Republic of China (ROC) was founded shortly afterward, but in the chaos of the times it was never able to gain full control of the country. The ROC was seriously challenged by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the 1930s, but the two groups united to fight the Japanese invasion during World War II. After the war, the ROC and CCP forces fought a 4-year civil war that resulted in the founding of the communist People's Republic of China (PRC). The ROC retreated to the island of Taiwan.

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*Left to right to: a rickshaw in 1930s Shanghai; a rally against Party enemies in the 1960s; a rock concert in the 1980s; people browsing the wide variety of books now available.*

The CCP leader, Chairman Mao, is a controversial figure. Today, the official line is that he was “70 percent right and 30 percent wrong.” During Mao’s rule from 1949 to 1976, his authoritarian policies led to more than 30 million deaths from mass imprisonments in labor camps, starvation from poor economic policies, and violence from public political campaigns.

The most devastating of these political movements was the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. During this period China was closed to most foreign markets and influences and the standard of living was poor. At the same time, Mao brought stability to the previously war-torn Chinese society, raised the quality of life in some impoverished areas, and increased China’s prestige internationally.

Leaders after Mao, especially Chairman Deng Xiaoping, attempted to raise the standard of living by opening markets and relaxing some political and social policies. The result was a period of inflation and social change due to exposure to foreign, especially Western, ideas in the 1980s. During this period, protests for greater political and economic change began to occur, especially on college campuses. A large protest was held in and around Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in the summer of 1989. Nervous at the size of the protest, the leadership responded with a military crackdown on June 4, 1989, killing an unknown number of students, laborers, and other Beijing citizens.

Chinese have become less interested in politics over the past few years, due in part to the government’s pleas for unity and its show of force in 1989, but also because of the increased flow of money into the economy. Chinese today are living in a period of immense transition, and are uncertain about the future. Although socialism destroyed the traditional Han way of life, it did not replace it with lasting values, a beneficial lifestyle, or progressive culture. Chinese culture today is composed of a conflicting mix of traditional, socialist, and Western influences.

### **Population**

China’s 2000 census showed a population of 1,275,215,000. About 36 percent lives in cities, and 64 percent in the countryside. This is merely an estimate, as many people

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have no fixed residence and remain uncounted. True population figures are probably much higher. Han people constitute 92 percent of the Chinese population.

***Age Breakdown***

The majority of the population is young or middle-aged; there are relatively few people over the age of 60. China has a large population of adults of childbearing age—approximately 60 percent of the population.

***Influence on Culture***

Since the 1980s the government has enacted a population policy that restricts the number of children each couple may have. Called the One-Child Policy, this law allows one child for each urban couple and two children for each rural couple. More children are permitted only in special cases, although enforcement of this policy varies by region. Many couples from minority ethnic groups are permitted to have two or more children.

**Regional Differences**

Many regional differences disappeared in the Mao era due to cultural homogenization efforts that improved distribution systems, nationwide propaganda campaigns, and political control systems. During the past 20 years of reform and opening, however, regional differences have become more pronounced due to decentralization of the political system, the growth of local economies, and regional pride. Regional cultural and political centers are emerging and, though many believe it unlikely, some believe these regional forces could destroy Chinese unity in the future.

**Religion**

***Divisions***

Most Han today consider Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism to be Chinese belief systems. Islam and Christianity are thought to be non-Chinese religions. All five are practiced in China today, along with several newer beliefs.

***Geographic Differences***

Years of war and totalitarian rule broke down traditional values and beliefs, so that they persist in their ancient forms, primarily in remote areas. In many ways, Chinese communism under Mao functioned as a belief system, replacing religious practices from 1950 to 1980. Today Maoist communism is a discredited belief system. Because of the 30-year period during which traditional religious practices were forbidden and the current influence of foreign ideas and materialism, many Chinese have no firm beliefs at all. Most of China practices varied beliefs piecemealed from the traditional religions.

***Major Tenets***

Daoism and Buddhism, the two most popular religions in China, are polytheist, with gods who are recognized throughout China, as well as local gods who are tied to specific places. In addition, Daoism emphasizes ancestor worship and shamanism, in which individuals perform rituals and give advice, often to cure sickness or bring good fortune. Buddhism teaches that after death souls are reborn into humans, animals, or plants, and that they receive a better or worse situation according to their behavior in their past life. The cycle of death and rebirth continues until one acquires merit by doing good works,

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such as helping the poor, meditating, or chanting scripture, at which time the person may gain immortality.

Christianity and Islam are monotheistic religions. Adherents believe in the idea of an immortal soul and that a person's actions in this life affect his or her afterlife.



*Buddhist temple and Catholic church*

With the popular search for spiritual meaning that emerged in the 1980s, several new religions based on traditional beliefs appeared. Especially popular has been *qigong* (pronounced “chee gong”), a practice founded in the 1950s based on Daoism. Advocates claim that practicing meditation and certain exercises strengthen a person's *qi*, or life energy, allowing *qigong* masters to perform supernatural feats such as flying. *Falun Gong* (also called *Falun Dafa*), a religion based on *qigong*, has several million followers. Since the government banned it in 1999, many have been arrested and sent to labor reform camps, where some have been tortured and killed. Today many Chinese see it as a dangerous cult, though an unknown number continue to practice it in secret.

### **Cultural Influence on Religion**

It is often difficult to codify Chinese ritual into a religion. Ritual is in itself a habitual way of doing things that requires no belief system; it is often a rote behavior that does not demand that one believe in it to work. Therefore it can often be a pointless exercise to classify Chinese individuals as following one religion or another. Many Han Chinese hold beliefs that cross boundaries, and the majority practice a mixture of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Christianity and Islam have a negative connotation as foreign faiths. Despite this stigma, Catholicism and Protestantism are gaining converts due to the activities of African, European, and American missionaries who are active in underground or house churches. Islam is the main religion of several ethnic groups, especially those in Xinjiang Province. Han families who practice Islam are usually put into the Hui minority group. Han Chinese may convert to Islam without officially changing their ethnicity, but members of certain ethnic groups, such as the Hui, are defined by their Islamic faith.

### **Role in Government and Politics**

While the government is now tolerant of religious activity within the five recognized faiths, it continues to discourage nonorganized religious practices such as fortune telling,

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which it terms “superstition.” Party members are forbidden to take part in religious activities, though some may participate nonetheless. The state does not allow foreigners to control religious institutions, therefore, the Chinese government established a Catholic Church that is independent of the Pope.

### Role in Society

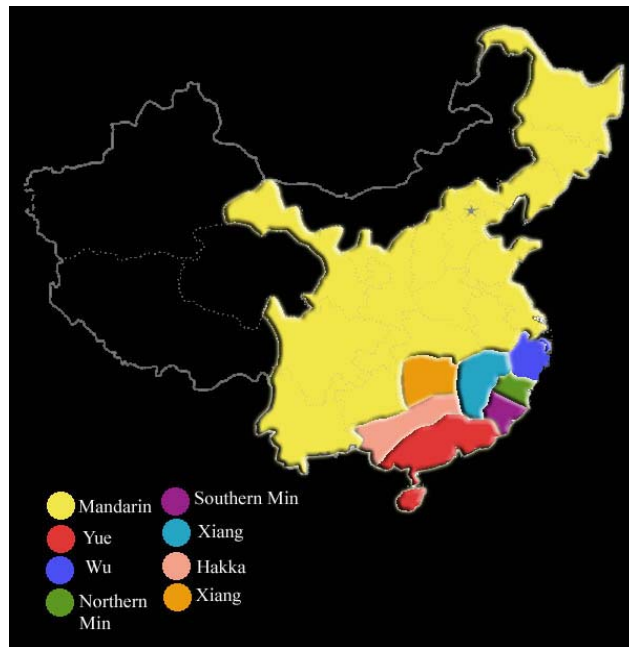
Buddhism and Daoism and, to a lesser extent, Islam and Christianity, are popular among Chinese. Although these religions were persecuted for much of PRC history, they are now being revived. Many temples have opened, especially those in large cities such as Beijing, and are now popular because of both tourism and renewed worship.

### Language

Mandarin Chinese, the national language, is spoken by all educated Chinese. Mandarin Chinese has four tones and is written with characters, each of which is unique, rather than with an alphabet.

### Dialects

In addition to Mandarin, most people also speak a native language or dialect. For example, even though the people in the north and northwest of China speak a version of Mandarin, their word pronunciation varies by region and even by village. Some differences are significant, creating a new language, while others are minor, resulting in a dialect. The languages spoken by most Chinese ethnic groups can be categorized into eight major language groups, each of which has several dialects.



Source: John De Francis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*, p. 35.

The ethnic groups in western China speak other languages that are unrelated to Chinese, such as Tibetan. Muslim groups, such as the Uighurs, speak languages that come from Turkic, Arabic, or Persian language families. These groups have their own writing

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systems. Because Mandarin Chinese is the official national language, however, educated people in all ethnic groups and from all regions are able to communicate.

### **Geographic Differences**

Mandarin speakers, especially those from Beijing, are proud that their language is the national language. While it is true that most people learn at least some Mandarin in school and use Mandarin to communicate with Chinese from other areas, today pride in local languages is increasing as well. Although the government promoted Mandarin during the Mao era, today its withdrawal from everyday life has allowed local languages to become more common. In Guangzhou, for example, almost all popular radio, film, and television programs are in Cantonese. In many areas thick accents and lack of practice in Mandarin make inter-regional communications difficult. Some people dislike speaking the national language, and prefer to use their mother tongue instead.

### **Customs**

Chinese culture is a mixture of local, ethnic customs and nationwide Han-influenced practices. While many of these nationwide customs should be observed, different areas may have their own version of what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Generally, Chinese courtesy is informed by Confucianism, which emphasizes respect, decorum, and maintaining relationships. Although many Han Chinese will forgive foreigners for simple mistakes, the best way to be taken seriously by Chinese is to carefully observe the concept of face, a kind of ritualized respect that is expressed through careful observance of etiquette.

### **Greetings**

Most Chinese shake hands when meeting a foreigner. It is polite when meeting a professional acquaintance to present one's business card with both hands to every person in the room; it is impolite to leave someone out or to present the card with only one hand. When receiving another person's card, one should take it with both hands and make a show of looking at it before carefully putting it away. It is rude to treat another person's business card with disrespect. For example, one should not fold another's business card, take notes on, or tear it. Titles are extremely significant in China. If one is not sure how to address an acquaintance, it is polite to ask. In a business relationship, the Chinese say the person's surname or full name followed by his or her title.

### **Gestures**

Chinese people may smile or laugh when they are embarrassed, nervous, or worried. They will often point with their middle fingers, as it is rude to point with the index finger. Chinese point to the nose when pointing to themselves, not the chest. Waving all fingers with the palm down means "come here," while waving the hand from side to side horizontally with the fingers pointed upward means "no." The "thumbs up," "thumbs down," "peace," and "OK" hand signs are used exactly as they are in the United States.

### **Visiting**

The most important protocol to follow when visiting is the guest's arrival and departure. A good host will greet the visitor at the point of arrival—at the airport or train station if the person is from out of town or at the threshold of the house or office. When the visitor leaves, the host will send him or her off from the same place. In some homes, guests

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should remove their shoes before entering. It is polite for guests to bring a gift to the host, usually fruit, candy, alcohol, or a bouquet of flowers.

### **Negotiations**

Before formal negotiations both sides usually meet at a banquet, at which they may or may not discuss business. The negotiation meetings usually start with easy topics and a few concessions to show generosity and cultivate trust in the relationship. One should strive to establish mutual respect for mutual benefit. Begin with the points both sides can agree with easily and then work slowly toward more difficult issues. It is important to leave room for compromise and concession.

### **Shopping style**

Bargaining is almost considered a sport in China. Except in large stores where prices are listed on each item, bargaining is expected. Especially at roadside stands and outdoor markets, one should assume that the price may be lowered.



*Shopping at a local market*

### **Conflict Resolution**

Chinese culture emphasizes conflict avoidance. When disagreements occur between family, friends, or coworkers, both parties will seek a compromise quickly. Only rarely will they allow a conflict to come out into the open. Instead the parties will discuss it in an indirect fashion. With the influence of Western rule of law and business practices, formal mediation processes have gained acceptance among urban professionals. Communist Party officials or other local authorities may mediate between individuals in both rural and urban areas.

### **Displays of Affection**

It is difficult to tell a Chinese person's real feelings because they often hide their emotions for the sake of being polite. Friendship is maintained through reciprocity, such as taking turns paying for meals, giving gifts, and doing favors.

### **Business Style**

Maintaining good relationships with one's counterparts and always treating others with respect are fundamental business practices. Many Chinese businesspeople consider a



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good relationship a better guarantee than a contract or laws because the trust and common ground gained from a relationship indicates a commitment to work together.

The Chinese pay attention to hierarchy. It is important for a person of equal status to meet and send off visitors; sending someone of lower rank is a sign of disrespect. Chinese courtesy specifies that interrupting others; demonstrating anger, impatience, or confusion; or saying “no” are a loss of face. Flattery is a part of the business relationship. Foreigners should expect their Chinese counterparts to complement them, especially in the initial stages of the relationship, and should show modesty by politely refusing compliments. Chinese instructions to their subordinates are often vague and indirect, but still carry authority.

### **Sense of Time**

The Han in urban areas are meticulous about arriving on time because arriving late shows serious disrespect. In rural areas, time is more flexible because traveling conditions are often poor.

### **View on Dying**

The Chinese take a practical view of death as a natural part of life. Many believe that the soul continues to exist in some form after death.

### **Unique Cultural Traits**

Chinese courtesy is connected to the concept of face, or showing respect, and maintaining relationships. Face, which is similar to the American concept of protocol, is the most significant aspect of Chinese culture for a foreigner to understand. A person loses face by making a mistake, failing to live up to others’ expectations, demonstrating ignorance, or losing one’s composure. One gains face by remaining dignified and by giving face to others. This is done by showing care for guests, spending time with others, arriving early or on time to meetings, praising someone in front of that person’s superior, and ignoring others’ mistakes in public. Many Chinese view face as more significant than truth; given the option of one over the other, many Chinese will choose to save their own face or that of the person to whom they are speaking rather than tell the complete truth.

Connections, called *guanxi*, are extremely significant in China. The term refers to both familial and friendship ties and also to useful connections that one cultivates, such as those with powerful businesspeople or Party cadres. To have a trusting professional or private relationship with a Chinese person it is important to cultivate a connection. One may build relationships by giving face and by doing and then asking for favors to create a feeling of indebtedness.

### **Hygiene**

Conditions in China are generally more unsanitary than they are in the United States, and many Chinese throw their trash onto the street. Most Chinese try to keep their own homes clean.

### **Hand Signs**

The “thumbs up,” “thumbs down,” “peace,” and “OK” hand signs are used exactly the same as they are in the United States. To point to oneself, Chinese point to the nose.

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Waving the hand from side to side horizontally with the fingers pointed upward means “no,” while waving the fingers with the palm to the ground means “come here.” Most Chinese point to inanimate objects with their middle fingers because this is the longest finger. Displaying the middle finger is not considered an insulting gesture.



*The Chinese use a simple sign language to express numbers when bargaining. Numbers 1 through 5 are generally expressed as in the United States. Numbers 6 through 10 are expressed as shown above.*

### **Gifts**

It is polite to bring a gift to one’s host, whether eating at another person’s home or visiting an organization. One may either give a gift to the group, which is presented to the host at a banquet, or to everyone one present at a group meeting. It is best to notify one’s counterparts in advance that one will bring a gift, as they may wish to offer a gift as well. If the host is taken by surprise and does not have a present prepared to give in exchange, he or she may feel embarrassed and lose face.

### **Cultural Dos and Don’ts**

Don’t place chopsticks upright in a bowl of food—this indicates ritual sacrifice to one’s ancestors or gods and is disrespectful when done in other circumstances.

Don’t write in red ink, as this an official color and considered unlucky when used for ordinary documents.

### **Lifestyle**

#### **Rural Versus Urban**

It is difficult to characterize rural and urban life because of the variety of experiences found throughout the country. Urban areas in general are modern and have a better quality of life. Food and products are more readily available and jobs tend to pay better and be more intellectually stimulating. Rural areas are characterized by more traditional lifestyles, poverty, and difficulty obtaining proper nourishment and medical care. Most rural dwellers are farmers or entrepreneurs or employed in collective village industries. Some rural dwellers have become wealthy through their entrepreneurial skills.

#### **Role of Family**

The family is the center of Chinese culture. It is the most significant aspect of Chinese life and demands strong loyalty. It is difficult to describe the Chinese family in general terms because there are a lot of variations. Traditionally, most Chinese considered the father’s relatives to be family because daughters left the family marriage. This view is changing in urban areas. The central aspect of family that does not vary throughout Chinese society is the mutual obligation between parent and child, as children must return the care their parents gave them when their parents grow old.

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*Han Chinese family*

### **Education**

Han culture has placed a premium on education for centuries. Education in poor rural areas is inferior to that found in urban areas, and extremely poor families often have no choice but to take their children out of school because they cannot pay tuition.

### **Role of Women**

Women in China participate alongside men in the workforce, but are rarely placed in leadership positions. At the same time, the majority of women take their role as wife and mother seriously.

### **Role of Men**

Men are considered the head of the household, and are believed to be stronger and more intelligent than women.

### **Dating and Marriage**

Dating among school-age children is rare. Most marriages occur between people in their late 20s and early 30s. It is expected that everyone will marry and have a child, especially a son. Today, young couples are able to move out of their parents' house soon after marriage. Many parents of married children are beginning to prefer living alone and enjoy their independence. In urban areas, and in some rural areas, divorce is accepted..

### **Role of Children**

In many parts of China, especially rural areas, children must obey their parents at all times. These rules generally have disappeared in urban areas, however, where parents and children have less strict and more emotionally based relationships. Because most families are only allowed to have one child, children are under pressure to do well.

### **Role of 18-35**

Most young people age 18 to 30 are working in factories, attending university, or employed in a private business. This generation is defined by its often unquestioning nationalism and its desire to make money. They hate the Japanese and are the generation most likely to show anger at U.S. policy.

### **Role of Elders**

Elderly people in rural areas are highly respected, though this isn't always the case in the cities.

### **Sports and Leisure Activities**

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In urban areas, there are many ways to spend leisure time. Particularly popular are ballroom dancing, traditional fan dancing, *taji quan* (called *taichi* or shadow boxing in the West), *qigong* exercises, *wushu* (martial arts), basketball, and ping-pong. Board games, such as Chinese chess, are popular among older Chinese, and young urban Chinese enjoy video games and Internet chatrooms.



*Martial arts practice*

## Health Care

The Chinese health care system relies on preventive medicine, such as inoculations and vitamins, but does not pay for the care of most serious diseases or pain medications. Conditions in most hospitals are poor.

### Styles of Medical Care

Chinese doctors practice Western or traditional medicine, and many Chinese go to both Western and traditional doctors. Traditional doctors perform a diagnosis by observing the patient and by interpreting the pulse. The doctor may prescribe an herbal remedy or a treatment such as acupuncture, which uses needles to redirect energy flows.

### Pharmacies and Medicine

Chinese pharmacies sell both Chinese medicines and brand-name Western pharmaceuticals. Traditional Chinese medicines most frequently come in the form of dried herbs that the patient steeps into a bitter tea.

## Clothing

### Headwear

Muslims cover their heads; men wear a cap and women wear veils or kerchiefs.

### Clothing

Most Chinese today wear Western-style clothing. Because appearance is significant in Chinese culture, most people who can afford to do so take care to wear good quality clothing. Many young people pay attention to fashion. Appearing disheveled or dirty is a sign of low class.

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*Clothing varies widely.*

### **Footwear**

Most Chinese wear Western shoes.

### **Urban Versus Rural**

Because many rural workers are poor and cannot afford or do not have access to fashionable clothing, men and women usually wear simple pants and shirts.

### **Clothing as Ethnic Descriptor**

Various ethnic costumes are typically worn on festival days or for the benefit of tourists. In extremely remote regions, or in areas where one ethnicity is dominant, such as Xinjiang Province, ethnic groups may wear their traditional dress daily.

### **Effect on Culture**

Free choice in clothing has led to an explosion in styles and the use of clothing as status symbols.

### **Diet**

#### **Type**

The Chinese diet is varied. It is based on staples of rice, wheat, and corn, but also includes every type of meat and vegetable. Chinese in the south are reputed to “eat anything with four legs, except tables.”

There are several significant regional cuisines in China. The southern region is known for its seafood and *dim sum*, or small dishes of food; the central region, especially Hunan and Sichuan Provinces, is known for spicy food; the eastern region specializes in seafood and vegetarian food; and the northeast region is famous for its noodles and dumplings, Beijing Duck, and Mongolian food.

The Chinese refuse to eat any raw food, except for fruit, which is usually peeled. They eat with chopsticks and spoons, although Western-style restaurants provide forks and table knives. Tea and plain boiled water are the main drinks, although soda and beer are also popular and at banquets guests are expected to consume liquor.

### **Influence on Culture**

Chinese take mealtimes seriously, and will rarely skip or postpone meals.

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**Alcohol/Drugs**

Chinese often pressure their guests to drink large quantities of alcohol at banquets. Because drinking is a sign of virility, men who do not match others' drinking, especially in the north, risk losing the respect of their fellow diners. Drugs are not prevalent among Han Chinese and are not used openly, although their use is becoming more common in urban areas. Nearly all men in China smoke, frequently at the table, and many are unaware that this could cause others discomfort. Many women smoke as well, but usually not in public because it is considered unfeminine.

**Eating Style/ Etiquette**

Chinese serve food family style, with the large platters in the center of the table shared by everyone. Most Chinese hosts place the best food in their guests' bowls and claim that the food they have prepared or bought is poor. In return, guests must praise the food and be sure to leave a little rice in their bowls when finished to show they are full.



*Communal dining*

**Dwelling Type**

Some dwellings are specific to their region, but the most common traditional home is a structure that houses a single family. It is usually one story, contains an internal courtyard, and is surrounded by walls. The increase in population density, however, has made high-rise apartment buildings more common.



*Private and city dwellings*

**Societal Framework**

**Self**

Chinese society is focused on the individual. Each person is defined by his or her own unique group of family members, friends, and colleagues. The individual must maintain these relationships, however, by fulfilling obligations. This requires each person to set aside his or her own wishes for the sake of the relationship. Individuals usually keep

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their emotions and desires to themselves when in the presence of others, especially members of the opposite sex.

**Group/Tribe/Clan**

The most basic group in Chinese society is the family. Kinship is more important than friendship for most Chinese. Families are connected by lineages, in which several families with the same surname in a community claim kinship through descent from a common ancestor. A group of lineages—all the people who share a common surname—is a clan. Another basis for Chinese group identity is the ancestral home. This identity is inherited: it is one's father's place of birth, rather than one's own place of birth or current place of residence. When people move they create networks based on their origins, and then use these networks to build business partnerships and contacts.

**Conformity**

Despite an explosion of individuality and nonconformity, there is still societal pressure to repress one's own personal feelings in public, such as anger and pride, and to maintain a calm and patient exterior.

**Modern Nation State**

Many Chinese, especially urban youth, are nationalistic and sensitive to perceived slights to China's honor. There has been a rise in regionalism in recent years, however, especially in the south. Many Cantonese speakers in Guangzhou Province do not feel connected to the Beijing leadership, though the people there are not seriously contemplating succession.

Individual members of some ethnic groups, especially among the Uygurs and the Tibetans, refuse to recognize the Chinese state and would like to succeed from the PRC. To demonstrate their will, they sometimes perform terrorist acts. The state takes these challenges seriously, often brutally eliminating rebel factions as they appear.

**Other Centers of Authority**

Today many leaders are emerging that threaten the government's supremacy. There is significant corruption throughout the Chinese government. Nongovernment figures, especially religious leaders such as Falun Gong founder Li Hongzhi, have gathered followers; some successful businesses have gained power; and corruption has allowed gangs, who often smuggle drugs, to gain considerable power in the southern region. Although the central government has launched campaigns and enacted laws to curb these trends, it has less control than it did 20 years ago, and corruption permeates the system.

Ethnic groups with a majority presence in counties and provinces are permitted to rule their areas under the central government's supervision.

**Rule of Law**

Many reformers are attempting to enact the rule of law in China, but this is complicated by traditional Chinese rule, often referred to as "rule of man." Lawyers are relatively new in China and still have not gained a place of respect in Chinese society. They are perceived as people who challenge social stability.

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Today the government and many educated Chinese are interested in the rule of law because of the corruption that permeates Chinese society. Because China does not have a strong legal system and its bureaucracy is large and inefficient, it is important for individuals cultivate connections with powerful people. Using personal connections to obtain a good or service is called “going through the back door” and is common in Chinese culture. Even for Chinese it is difficult to draw the line between personal connections and corruption.

### **Role of State Versus Role of Ethnic Group**

Han culture is dominant in China and the leadership is composed almost entirely of Han Chinese. Ethnic groups are admitted to the government in an affirmative action program. It is difficult to determine minority peoples’ real views on this system, but there is evidence that some dislike this preferential treatment and would rather be treated the same as the Han.

### **Impact of Technology**

China has experienced a technological boom in recent years, but its impact is felt almost exclusively in urban areas.

### **Education and Literacy**

Many Chinese college students are proficient in computer programming, while many adults take these and other technology courses at private educational institutions. Although the impact is felt primarily in urban areas, it is having a significant effect in cities throughout China.

### **Technological Sophistication/Development**

Technology is prevalent in urban areas; the majority of educated urban youth have access to computers and the internet. Televisions, radios, and cell phones are omnipresent in urban areas and, increasingly, in rural areas. Most large cities are well wired for Internet use, but connections remain slow even in the most developed areas.

### **Information Awareness**

The government restricts access to non-Chinese media. While illegal, urban Chinese may obtain news from foreign media with few risks. The majority of Chinese, however, get their news from government controlled TV, radio, print, and Internet sources. The government has blocked many foreign websites, especially those promoting human rights, democracy, and ethnic separatist movements, as well as many foreign news sites.

### **Attitudes Toward**

#### **United States**

Many Chinese view the United States in both a positive and negative manner. They see America as a clean, prosperous land where hard work can lead to success, and where there are many opportunities to become rich. At the same time, reports from the Chinese media and Hollywood movies emphasize violence and serious social problems such as drugs, teen pregnancy, crime, and a high divorce rate. The U.S. government’s emphasis on democracy and market economics over the past 20 years has given many Chinese the perception that Americans want to remake China in their own image. Chinese resent what they perceive as Americans’ condescending attitude and lack of respect for Chinese



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culture and history. Yet, many Chinese are enamored of America's culture and governance structure.

**U.S. Military**

Most Chinese have admiration for the ability of the U.S. military, which they view as a premier fighting force with the most advanced weaponry in the world. Many Chinese also believe, however, that the U.S. military could not withstand long and intense combat. Many Chinese expect that the American people will demand that troops be withdrawn if casualties become too high, which the Chinese see as a sign of cowardice.

**Democracy/Market Economy**

The Chinese government is officially enacting a market economy in China. Many Chinese prefer this form of economy because of the opportunities it presents for making money, the improved goods and services it offers, and the freedom it allows in choosing employment. Many Chinese are dissatisfied with the lack of job security and the social ills that accompany a market economy, such as crime, corruption, and extreme poverty. Although some Chinese may have nostalgia for the simpler and more secure days of the Mao era, most accept the changes required for a market-based economy.

Some educated Chinese would like to explore democracy, and the government has enacted village-level elections in some areas. The majority of Chinese, including those in power, feel that China is not yet ready for national elections.

**Other Ethnic Groups**

The Han are the dominant ethnic group in China, both in terms of population and in cultural dominance. Most Han believe their culture is superior to that of other ethnic groups. Many ethnic groups accept this view. Ethnic nationalism is growing among some minorities, however, and many of these groups would like to separate from China, especially the Tibetans and Uygurs.

**Neighboring States**

China shares a land border with 14 neighboring countries: Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), India, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgystan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, and North Korea. It is separated by a small area of water from South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Most Chinese have less interest in neighboring countries than they do the United States, although tourism in Southeast Asia and in Korea is becoming popular.

The only neighboring country for which the Chinese have strong feelings is Japan. The majority of Han Chinese, especially young people, cannot forgive the Japanese for the horrors of the Japanese occupation in the 1930s and 1940s, especially the 1938 Rape of Nanjing.

Chinese are also sensitive on the subject of Taiwan. They believe that the islands are a province of China and are offended if Taiwan is referred to as a separate country. Although many Chinese are interested in visiting Taiwan and view the people as no different from any other Chinese group, many mainland Chinese would support a war to reclaim the island.

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### Regional Powers

Regional powers include Japan, the United States, India, and Russia. Many Chinese are not concerned about regional dominance, but those who are politically motivated worry that these countries will become more powerful than China in East Asia. Generally, the Chinese dislike the United States' strong forward presence in Asia, but grudgingly see its benefit in containing Japan. Without the United States to keep it in check, many Chinese fear World War II-style Japanese aggression against China.

### Cultural economy

Many Chinese have become rich in the past 20 years, and have increased the domestic demand for luxury items. At the same time, severe differences in quality of life have emerged and abject poverty now exists amid plenty. Corruption has become a mainstay of the Chinese economy, as well: everyone from government officials to doctors demand bribes. The problem is so systemic that the government has been unable to control it, and has made a show of executing high officials caught embezzling, smuggling, and working with gangs. Many rural government officials, no longer closely watched by Beijing, are demanding high taxes or withholding paychecks from poor people, which has led to rural protests and riots.

Another social problem is “money worship” (*bajinzhuyi*). Many Chinese have completely abandoned socialist ideals in pursuit of acquiring wealth and entering the private economy, known as *xia hai* (literally “jumping in the sea”). While this has helped the Chinese economy and has raised many families' standard of living, many Chinese feel their society has lost its moral grounding.



*The growth of private industry has led to rapid development in urban areas*

### Holidays

The People's Republic of China recognizes 11 national holidays. In addition to these there are several folk holidays, which are significant to the Chinese people. Many of these follow the traditional Chinese calendar, which is no longer officially in use but relied on by farmers as their main method of measuring days. On the Western calendar, the dates of these holidays vary from year to year.

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**Meaning**

The most significant holiday is the Spring Festival or Chinese New Year, which falls in January or February. During this holiday people return to their family to participate in a feast on the eve of the New Year.

**Influence on Culture**

The Chinese government officially frowns on traditional beliefs that it calls “superstition,” such as the dead returning. Many Party cadres will not openly support such holiday rituals.

**Effect on U.S. Military Operations**

The main effect is that transportation channels are clogged and nonentertainment businesses are closed during the Spring Festival and, to a lesser extent, the Mid-Autumn Festival, because many people are visiting relatives or touring cultural sites.

**Military Culture**

China’s military, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), operates under mandatory 2-year minimum conscription in all services. About half of Chinese university first-year students also go through some military training. The military is becoming a more attractive form of employment.

**Cultural Style**

The PLA is based on the Soviet military model, with politics playing a central role. It also incorporates many traditional Chinese elements. Traditional Chinese military thought emphasizes the commander’s creativity and ability to adapt to the situation as the key to victory. The modern Chinese military continues this tradition by valuing the individual commander’s personal abilities. The PLA encourages service members at all levels to demonstrate creativity and flexibility in combat. The PLA also values unquestioning self-sacrifice. The military rewards soldiers who have a *gansi* (“dare to die”) attitude and who demonstrate selflessness in work and in combat.

The central tenet of the PLA is that “politics controls the gun.” The PLA operates under the political commissar system, in which military leader are paired with political leaders at every level. Military leaders do not openly question the political leadership. Most members of the PLA are fiercely nationalistic.

Protocol is extremely important within the PLA. Each list for personnel, services, service branches, military regions, and administrative organizations has a set order. Titles are significant. The person’s surname or full name is followed by his or her title. It is important for a person of equal status to meet and send off visitors; sending someone of lower rank is a sign of disrespect.

One should always be calm, friendly, and modest, and should show respect to others even if they do not deserve it. Chinese courtesy specifies that interrupting others, demonstrating anger, impatience, or confusion, and saying “no” are a loss of face. Because of strict controls on information, PLA officers who meet with foreigners are limited on what they may say. Unlike in the U.S. military, where classified information

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is strictly marked, Chinese officers must assume that all PLA information is classified unless specifically designated otherwise.

**Training Culture**

Most training time is taken up with basic maneuvers rather than with advanced and high-tech skills. This is because few recruits stay past their term, one-third to one-half of the Chinese military turns over each autumn as new, untrained soldiers enter the force.

The PLA has little money for training, especially expensive live-fire and battlefield exercises. It tends to focus on cheaper, but less effective methods, such as simulations and war games. The PLA has several other training issues, including the difficulty of integrating modern technology and the lack of joint capability.



*Due to the expense, live fire exercises are rarely conducted.*

The PLA has recently begun a noncommissioned officer program to create a more professional core of senior enlisted soldiers to guide and train conscripted soldiers.

**Conventional**

The PLA has not fought a war since 1979. For the past 20 years it has been undergoing a fundamental transition. It is reassessing its doctrine, downsizing its force, and overhauling its training structure. Therefore it is difficult for outsiders—or the PLA itself—to determine the Chinese military's current capabilities.

These changes are being made in an attempt to be more competitive with what the government sees as viable threats to its national security: the United States, Taiwan, and Japan. Available evidence points to strong feelings among servicemen that these countries are a threat. Perhaps more than the general public, members of the PLA view Japan as little changed from its World War II ambition to control China. There is a widespread belief that, were the United States to remove its forces from the island, the hordes of "dwarf" aggressors would again threaten the motherland.

**Unconventional/Tribal**

In Chinese asymmetric warfare, an inferior force takes advantage of all means available, military and civilian, to defeat a superior force. A weak nation coordinates its total power when attacking a stronger nation, finding the strengths in its own economy,

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politics, military, diplomacy, and science and technology. The weaker side, rather than attacking the superior force head-on, uses these strengths while exploiting its adversary's vulnerabilities. Every aspect of its national power becomes a weapon.