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**China – The Middle Kingdom**

**By Josiah William**

China the most populous country of the world, is officially known as the People's Republic of China

(with the exception of the other state known as the Republic of China which currently governs the island of Taiwan). In economic or business contexts, "the Greater China region" informally means Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. The region has been home to a long–standing civilization comprising successive states and cultures dating back more than 6,000 years. Imperial China was one of the world's most technologically advanced civilizations for centuries. It is home to the four greatest inventions of the human civilization— paper, compass, gunpowder and printing — which eventually spread to the rest of the world.

Until the 20th century, China largely remained a coherent empire governed by scholar–officials. In 1912, the last Chinese dynasty, the Qing, fell to the nationalists under the charismatic leadership of Sun Yat–sen. In 1949 the communists declared the People's Republic.

China's overall population exceeds 1.3 billion, which is more than a fifth of the world's population. Officially 56 ethnic groups exist in China, of which the largest is the Han Chinese. The speakers of the various spoken varieties of Chinese all use a common written standard, "Vernacular Chinese" or "baihua", which is based on Standard Mandarin, the standard spoken language. Other than Standard Mandarin, Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien–Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka, minority languages spoken variants are usually not written; the exception is Standard Cantonese, which is sometimes written as written Cantonese in informal contexts.

Although the People's Republic of China is officially secular and atheist, it allows personal religion or supervised religious organization. The major religions of China are: Confucianism [majority], Taoism and ancestor worship [majority], Buddhism [8 to 15%], Islam – Approximately 150 Million adherents(6% – 8%), Christianity – 5% to 8%.

China is composed of a vast variety of highly different landscapes. Principal rivers flow from west to east, since plateaus and mountains lie in the west, and lower lands on the east. The prominent rivers include Yangtze, the Huang He, and the Amur, Pearl River, Mekong River, and Brahmaputra. most Chinese rivers empty into the Pacific Ocean.

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In the east, along the shores of the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea are found alluvial plains. The shore of the South China Sea is more mountainous which part is dominated by hill country and lower mountain ranges. To the west, the north has a great alluvial plain, and the south has a vast calcareous tableland traversed by hill ranges of moderate elevation, with the Himalayas, containing the highest point Mount Everest. The northwest also has high plateaus such as the Takla–Makan and the Gobi Desert. During many dynasties, the southwestern border of China has been the high mountains and deep valleys of Yunnan, which separate modern China from Burma, Laos and Vietnam.

The climate of China varies greatly. The northern zone (which includes Beijing) has a climate with winters of Arctic severity. The central zone (which includes Shanghai) has a generally temperate climate. The southern zone (which includes Guangzhou and other southern provinces) has a generally subtropical climate.

The culture of China is one of the world's oldest and most complex. China boasts a history rich in over 5,000 years of artistic, philosophical, and political advancement. Though regional differences provide a sense of diversity, commonalities in language and religion connect a culture distinguished by such universally significant contributions as Confucianism and Taoism. The mastery of Confucian texts provided the primary criterion for entry into the imperial bureaucracy.

Plan a visit to China and explore the culture. For communication needs, there are Several prepaid calling card and phone card companies are available to call both to and from China.

Josiah William works in marketing for

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<http://www.ecellular.com>

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### **Investing In China: The "china Fallacy"?**

**By David Carnes**

China has long been an entrepreneur's daydream - "If I could sell one pair of underwear each to a billion Chinese...". Now, after almost 25 years of opening its gates to the outside world, how well are

things working?

In practice, there have always been two clearly separate strategies for taking advantage of China's 1.3 billion people – (1) to use China's low labor costs to produce cheaply and then export to more affluent markets for a higher mark-up, and (2) to sell products to Chinese people. There is no debate over the fact that up until now, strategy (1) has worked better - over most of the last 25 years the average Chinese consumer hasn't had enough disposable income to buy Western products in any significant quantities. But all that is changing. China's emerging middle class is now estimated to be larger than the entire population of the United States (although their purchasing power is nowhere near that of the American middle class). So are foreign investors raking in their long dreamed-of windfall products by selling their products to the middle class? Well, not exactly...

Information on corporate profits broken down for affiliates in China is surprisingly hard to come by, and thus opinions are divided on this issue. While almost everyone in the know agrees that corporate profits from China operations have been on the upswing in recent years, the pessimists insist that overall profitability lags far behind that of some of America's less-acclaimed trading partners like Mexico, and even further behind if you measure on a per capita basis rather than total population. The optimists (using different sources of data) maintain that profitability in China has been consistently high and point out that the proper comparison between the profitability of investments in different nations is not between China's 1.3 billion people and the population of some smaller trading partner, but between the amount of investment in each country - the US, for example, has invested nearly twice as much money in Mexico as it has in China. Both sides agree on two things, though: (1) foreign investment in China (particularly from the US) is not nearly as much as has been supposed, and (2) corporate profits in China look to increase over the near to medium term due to the increase in disposable income among China's middle class.

In light of this, what would a good strategy be for a prospective foreign investor? The current conventional wisdom seems to be to hedge your bets - produce partly for export and partly for the domestic market, leaving some flexibility in your plans to allow for the unexpected. It would also be a good idea to factor in the likelihood that sales in the China market are likely to increase over time. Of course, that's what people have been saying for the last 25 years, but there is a growing chorus of voices predicting that now it's different, that the timing is right, that the China profit train is poised to finally take off. I for one believe them.

David A. Carnes is a California attorney currently working as a legal advisor for California Industrial City (Zhengzhou) Development Co., Ltd. in Zhengzhou, China. His website is

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