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# Abkhazia

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries**

**Аԥсны**  
**აფხაზეთი**  
**Абхазия**  
***Apsny / Arkhazeti / Abhazia***  
**Abkhazia**



Location of Abkhazia (dark green, circled)  
within Georgia (lighter green)

**Area**

- Total 8,432 km<sup>2</sup>  
3,256 sq mi
- Water (%) negligible

**Population**

- 2006 estimate 157,000-190,000 ( International Crisis Group)

	177,000 (Encyclopædia Britannica)
- 2003 census	216,000 (disputed)
- Density	29/km <sup>2</sup> 75.1/sq mi
<b>Time zone</b>	MSK ( UTC+3)

<b>Republic of Abkhazia</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> " <i>Aiaaira</i> " (English "Victory")	
<b>Capital</b>	Sukhumi
<b>Official languages</b>	Abkhaz, Russian <sup>1</sup>
<b>Government</b>	
- President	Sergei Bagapsh
- Prime Minister	Alexander Ankvab
<b><i>De facto</i> independence from Georgia</b>	
- Declared	23 July 1992
- Recognition	none
<b>Currency</b>	Russian ruble ( RUB)
<sup>1</sup> Russian has co-official status and widespread use by government and other institutions.	

**Abkhazia** (pronounced /æbˈkɪrzə/ or /æbˈkɑːziə/, Abkhaz: Аԥсны *Apsny*, Georgian: აფხაზეთი *Apkhazeti* or *Abkhazeti*, Russian: Абха́зия *Abhazia*) is a region in Georgia that is a *de facto* independent republic, with no international recognition. It is located within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia on the eastern coast of the Black Sea and borders the Russian Federation to the north. Under Georgia's official subdivision, it is an autonomous republic ( Georgian: აფხაზეთის ავტონომიური რესპუბლიკა, Abkhaz: Аԥснытәи Автономтәи Республика), with Sukhumi as its capital, bordering the region of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti to the east.

A secessionist movement of the Abkhaz ethnic minority in the region led to the declaration of independence from Georgia in 1992 and the Georgian-Abkhaz armed conflict from 1992 to 1993 which resulted in the Georgian military defeat and the mass exodus and ethnic cleansing of Georgian population from Abkhazia. In spite of the 1994 ceasefire accord and the ongoing UN-monitored and Russian-dominated CIS peacekeeping operation, the sovereignty dispute has not yet been resolved and the region remains divided between the two rival authorities, with over 83 percent of its territory governed by the Russian-backed Sukhumi-based separatist government and about 17 percent governed by the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, recognized by Georgia as the legal authority of Abkhazia, located in the Kodori Valley, part of Georgian-controlled Upper Abkhazia. This dispute remains a source of serious tension between Georgia and Russia.

## Political status

The international organizations such as United Nations ( 28 Security Council Resolutions), EU, OSCE, NATO, WTO, Council of the European Union, CIS as well as most sovereign states recognize Abkhazia as an integral part of Georgia and support its territorial integrity according to the principles of the international law. The United Nations are urging both sides to settle the dispute through diplomatic dialogue and ratifying the final status of Abkhazia in the Georgian constitution. However, the Abkhaz de-facto government considers Abkhazia a sovereign country, even though it is not recognized by any party in the world and is still populated with ethnic Georgians (who live in the Gali District and the Kodori Gorge). In early 2000, then-U.N. Special Representative of the Secretary General Dieter Boden and the Group of Friends of Georgia, consisting of the representatives of Russia, the United States, Britain, France, and Germany, drafted and informally presented a document to the parties outlining a possible distribution of competencies between the Abkhaz and Georgian authorities, based on a core respect for Georgian territorial integrity. The Abkhaz side, however, has never accepted the paper as a basis for negotiations. Eventually, Russia also withdrew its approval of the document. In 2005 and 2008, the Georgian government offered Abkhazia a high degree of autonomy and possible federal structure

<b>Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> " თავისუფლება" "Freedom"	
	
Location of Abkhazia within Georgia	
<b>Capital</b>	Sukhumi ( <i>de jure</i> ) Chkhalta ( <i>de facto</i> )
<b>Official languages</b>	Abkhaz, Georgian
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chairman, Cabinet of Ministers</li> <li>- Chairman, Supreme Council</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Malkhaz Akishbaia Temur Mzhavia</p>
<b>Autonomous republic of Georgia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Georgian independence from the Soviet Union</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">9 April 1991 25 December 1991</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Declared Recognised</p>

within the borders and jurisdiction of Georgia.

<b>Currency</b>	Georgian lari ( GEL)
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However, the Russian State Duma is urging to take into consideration the appeal made by the Abkhaz Republic of Abkhazia which calls for recognition of its independence, and the Russian state media has produced numerous materials in support of the unrecognized state. During the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, Russian authorities and military supplied logistical and military aid to the separatist side. Today, Russia still maintains a strong political and military influence over separatist rule in Abkhazia. Russia has also issued passports for the citizens of Abkhazia since 2000 (as the Abkhazian passports cannot be used for international travel) and subsequently paid retirement pensions and other monetary benefits. More than 80% of the Abkhazian population received Russian citizenship by 2006; however, Abkhazians do not pay Russian taxes, or serve in the Russian Army. About 53,000 Abkhazian passports have been issued as of May 2007.

On October 18, 2006, the People's Assembly of Abkhazia passed a resolution, calling upon Russia, international organizations, and the rest of the international community to recognize Abkhaz independence on the basis that Abkhazia possesses all the properties of an independent state. The United Nations has reaffirmed "the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders" and outlined the basic principles of conflict resolution which call for immediate return of all displaced persons and for non-resumption of hostilities. Of about 200,000-240,000, some 60,000 Georgian refugees spontaneously returned to Abkhazia's Gali district between 1994 and 1998, but tens of thousands were displaced again when fighting resumed in the Gali district in 1998. Nevertheless from 40,000 to 60,000 refugees have returned to the Gali district since 1998, including persons commuting daily across the ceasefire line and those migrating seasonally in accordance with agricultural cycles. The human rights situation remains precarious in the Georgian-populated areas of the Gali district. The United Nations and other international organizations have been fruitlessly urging the Abkhaz de facto authorities "to refrain from adopting measures incompatible with the right to return and with international human rights standards, such as discriminatory legislation... [and] to cooperate in the establishment of a permanent international human rights office in Gali and to admit United Nations civilian police without further delay." Key officials of the Gali district are virtually all ethnic Abkhaz, though their support staff are ethnic Georgian.

Georgia accuses the Abkhaz secessionists of having conducted a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing, a claim supported by the OSCE (Budapest, Lisbon and Istanbul declaration), United Nations (General Assembly Resolution 10708) and many Western governments. The UN Security Council has avoided use of the term "ethnic cleansing" but has affirmed "the unacceptability of the demographic changes resulting from the conflict". On May 15, 2008 United Nations General Assembly adopted a non-binding resolution recognising the right of all refugees (including victims of reported "ethnic cleansing") to return to Abkhazia and their property rights. It "regretted" the attempts to alter pre-war demographic composition and called for the "rapid development of a timetable to ensure the prompt voluntary return of all refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes."

On March 28, 2008, the President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili unveiled his government's new proposals to Abkhazia: the broadest possible autonomy within the framework of a Georgian state, a joint free economic zone, representation in the central authorities including the post of vice-president with the right to veto Abkhaz-related decisions. The Abkhaz leader Sergei Bagapsh rejected these new initiatives as "propaganda", leading to Georgia's complaints that this skepticism was "triggered by Russia, rather than by real mood of the Abkhaz people."

Moscow, at certain times, had hinted that it might recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia when the Western countries recognized the independence of Kosovo suggesting it created a precedent. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence the Russian parliament released a joint statement reading: "Now that the situation in Kosovo has become an international precedent, Russia should take into account the Kosovo scenario...when considering ongoing territorial

conflicts." So far Russia has not recognised either of these republics. On April 16, 2008, the outgoing Russian president Vladimir Putin instructed his government to establish official ties with counterpart agencies in breakaway South Ossetia and Abkhazia, leading to Georgia's condemnation of what is described an attempt at "de facto annexation" and criticism from the European Union, NATO, and several Western governments.

Later in April 2008, Russia accused Georgia of trying to exploit the NATO support to solve the Abkhazia problem by force, and announced it would increase its military in the region, pledging to retaliate militarily to Georgia's efforts. The Georgian Prime Minister Lado Gurgенidze has said Georgia will to treat any additional troops in Abkhazia as aggressors.

On July 3, 2008, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly passed a resolution at its annual session in Astana, expressing concern over Russia's recent moves in breakaway Abkhazia. The resolution calls on the Russian authorities to refrain from maintaining ties with the breakaway regions "in any manner that would constitute a challenge to the sovereignty of Georgia" and also urges Russia "to abide by OSCE standards and generally accepted international norms with respect to the threat or use of force to resolve conflicts in relations with other participating States."

## Geography and climate



View from Pitsunda cape.

Abkhazia covers an area of about 8,600 km<sup>2</sup> at the western end of Georgia. The Caucasus Mountains to the north and the northeast divide Abkhazia from the Russian Federation. To the east and southeast, Abkhazia is bounded by the Georgian region of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti; and on the south and southwest by the Black Sea.

Abkhazia is extremely mountainous. The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range runs along the region's northern border, with its spurs – the Gagra, Bzyb and Kodori ranges – dividing the area into a number of deep, well-watered valleys. The highest peaks of Abkhazia are in the northeast and east and several exceed 4,000 meters (13,120 ft) above sea level. The landscapes of Abkhazia range from coastal forests and citrus plantations, to eternal snows and glaciers to the north of the region. Although Abkhazia's complex topographic setting has spared most of the territory from significant human development, its cultivated fertile lands produce tea, tobacco, wine and fruits, a mainstay of the local agricultural sector.



Abkhazia is richly irrigated by small rivers originating in the Caucasus Mountains. Chief of these are: Kodori, Bzyb, Ghalidzga, and Gumista. The Psou River separates the region from Russia, and the Inguri serves as a boundary between Abkhazia and Georgia proper. There are several periglacial and crater lakes in mountainous Abkhazia. Lake Ritsa is the most important of them.

Because of Abkhazia's proximity to the Black Sea and the shield of the Caucasus Mountains, the region's climate is very mild. The coastal areas of the republic have a subtropical climate, where the average annual temperature in most regions is around 15 degrees Celsius. The climate at higher elevations varies from maritime mountainous to cold and summerless. Abkhazia receives high amounts of precipitation, but its unique micro-climate (transitional from subtropical to mountain) along most of its coast causes lower levels of humidity. The annual precipitation vacillates from 1,100-1,500 mm (43-59 inches) along the coast to 1,700-3,500 mm (67-138 in.) in the higher mountainous areas. The mountains of Abkhazia receive significant amounts of snow.

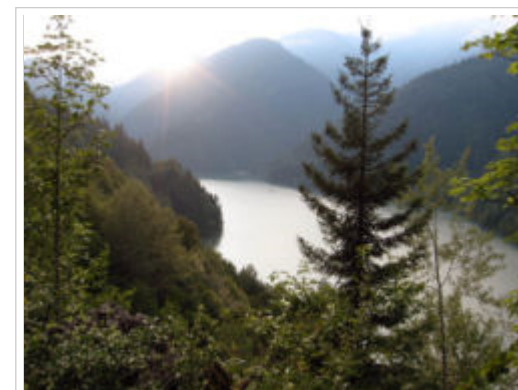
There are two border crossings into Abkhazia. The southern border crossing is at the Inguri bridge, a short distance from the Georgian city of Zugdidi. The northern crossing ("Psou") is in the town of Gyachrypsh. Owing to the ongoing security situation, many foreign governments advise their citizens against travelling to Abkhazia.

## Administrative division

In Soviet times Abkhaz ASSR was divided into 6 raions named after their centres: Gagra, Gudauta, Sukhumi, Ochamchira, Gulripsh and Gali. The *de jure* division of Abkhazian Autonomous Republic of Georgia remained the same (see here).

The administrative division of the unrecognised Republic of Abkhazia is the same with one exception - a new Tkvarcheli raion was carved from the Ochamchire and Gali raions in 1995.

## Economy



Lake Ritsa

The economy of Abkhazia is heavily integrated with Russia and uses the Russian ruble as its currency. Tourism is a key industry and the Abkhaz de facto authorities claim that the organized tourists (mainly from Russia) numbered more than 100,000 in recent years, compared to about 200,000 in the 1990 before the war. The number of visitors in 2006 was estimated by Abkhazian authorities to have been approximately 1.5 million. Although Russia has established a visa regime with Georgia, Russian passport-holders do not require a visa to enter Abkhazia. Holders of European Union passports require an Entry Permit Letter issued by the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sukhumi, against which a visa will be issued upon presentation of the Letter to the MFA.

Abkhazia's fertile land and abundance of agricultural products, including tea, tobacco, wine and fruits (especially tangerines), have secured a relative stability in the sector. Electricity is largely supplied by the Inguri hydroelectric power station located on the Inguri River between Abkhazia and Georgia proper and operated jointly by Abkhaz and Georgians.

The exports and imports in 2006 were 627.2 and 3270.2 mln. rubles respectively (appx. 22 and 117 mln. US dollars) according to the Abkhazian authorities.

Many Russian entrepreneurs and some Russian municipalities have invested or plan to invest in Abkhazia. This includes the Moscow municipality after the Mayor of Moscow, Yury Luzhkov, signed an agreement on economic cooperation between Moscow and Abkhazia. Both Abkhaz and Russian officials have announced their intentions to exploit Abkhazia's facilities and resources for the Olympic construction projects in Sochi, as the city will host the 2014 Winter Olympics. The Government of Georgia has warned against such actions, however, and has threatened to ask foreign banks to close accounts of Russian companies and individuals that buy assets in Abkhazia.

According to the U.S.-based organization Freedom House, the region continues to suffer considerable economic problems owing to widespread corruption, the control by criminal organizations of large segments of the economy, and the continuing effects of the war.

The CIS economic sanctions imposed on Abkhazia in 1996 are still formally in force although Russia announced on March 6, 2008 that it would no longer participate in them, declaring them "outdated, impeding the socio-economic development of the region, and causing unjustified hardship for the people of Abkhazia". Russia also called on other CIS members to undertake similar steps, but met with protests from Tbilisi and lack of support from the other CIS countries.

The European Union has allocated more than €20 mln. to Abkhazia since 1997 for various humanitarian projects, including the support of civil society, economic rehabilitation, help to the most vulnerable households and confidence building measures. The single largest EU's project is the repair and reconstruction of the Inguri power station.

## Demographics

According to the Family Lists compiled in 1886 (published 1893 in Tbilisi) the Sukhumi District's population was 68,773, of which 30,640 were



Georgian Lari depicting Sukhumi in Georgian and Abkhaz languages

Samurzaq'anoans, 28,323 Abkhaz, 3,558 Mingrelians, 2,149 Greeks, 1,090 Armenians, 1,090 Russians and 608 Georgians (including Imeretians and Gurians). Samurzaq'ano is a present-day Gali district of Abkhazia. Most of the Samurzaq'anians must be thought to have been Mingrelians, and a minority Abkhaz.

According to the 1897 census there were 58,697 people in Abkhazia who listed Abkhaz as their mother tongue. The population of the Sukhumi district (Abkhazia) was about 100,000 at that time. Greeks, Russians and Armenians composed 3.5%, 2% and 1.5% of the district's population.

According to the 1917 agricultural census organized by the Russian Provisional Government, Georgians and Abkhaz composed 41.7% (54,760) and 30,4% (39,915) of the rural population of Abkhazia respectively. At that time Gagra and its vicinity weren't part of Abkhazia.

The following table summarises the results of the other censuses carried out in Abkhazia. The Russian, Armenian and Georgian population grew faster than Abkhaz, due to the large-scale migration enforced especially during the rule of Stalin and Lavrenty Beria, who himself was a Georgian born in Abkhazia.

Year	Total	Georgians	Abkhaz	Russians	Armenians	Greeks
1926 Census	186,004	67,494	55,918	12,553	25,677	14,045
1939 Census	311,885	91,967	56,197	60,201	49,705	34,621
1959 Census	404,738	158,221	61,193	86,715	64,425	9,101
1970 Census	486,959	199,596	77,276	92,889	74,850	13,114
1979 Census	486,082	213,322	83,087	79,730	73,350	13,642
1989 Census	525,061	239,872	93,267	74,913	76,541	14,664
2003 Census <sup>1</sup>	215,972	45,953	94,606	23,420	44,870	1,486

<sup>1</sup> - Georgian authorities did not acknowledge the results of this census and consider it illegitimate. Several international sources also consider these figures unrealistically high. The International Crisis Group (2006) estimates Abkhazia's total population to be between 157,000 and 190,000 (or between 180,000 and 220,000 as estimated by UNDP in 1998), while Encyclopædia Britannica puts it at 177,000 (2006 est.). The State Department of Statistics of Georgia estimated, in 2005, Abkhazia's population to be approximately 178,000. About 2,000 people (predominantly Svans, a subethnic group of the Georgian people) live in Georgia-controlled Upper Abkhazia.

## History

### Early history

In the 9th–6th centuries BC, the territory of modern Abkhazia became a part of the ancient Georgian kingdom of Colchis (*Kolkha*), which was absorbed in 63

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BC into the Kingdom of Egrisi. Greek traders established ports along the Black Sea shoreline. One of those ports, Dioscurias, eventually developed into modern Sukhumi, Abkhazia's traditional capital.

The Roman Empire conquered Egrisi in the 1st century AD and ruled it until the 4th century, following which it regained a measure of independence, but remained within the Byzantine Empire's sphere of influence. Although the exact time when the population of Abkhazia was converted to Christianity is not determined, it is known that the Metropolitan of Pitius participated in the First Œcumenical Council in 325 in Nicea. Abkhazia was made an autonomous principality of the Byzantine Empire in the 7th century — a status it retained until the 9th century, when it was united with the province of Imereti and became known as the Abkhazian Kingdom. In 9th–10th centuries the Georgian kings tried to unify all the Georgian provinces and in 1001 King Bagrat III Bagrationi became the first king of the unified Georgian Kingdom.

In the 16th century, after the break-up of the united Georgian Kingdom, the area was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, during this time some Abkhazians converted to Islam. The Ottomans were pushed out by the Georgians, who established an autonomous Principality of Abkhazia (*abxazetis samtavro* in Georgian), ruled by the Shervashidze dynasty (aka Sharvashidze, or Chachba).

### Abkhazia within the Russian Empire and Soviet Union

The expansion of the Russian Empire into the Caucasus region led to small-scale but regular conflicts between Russian colonists and the indigenous Caucasian tribes. Eventually the Caucasian War erupted, which ended with Russian conquest of the North and Western Caucasus. Various Georgian principalities were annexed to the empire between 1801 and 1864. The Russians acquired possession of Abkhazia in a piecemeal fashion between 1829 and 1842; but their power was not firmly established until 1864, when they managed to abolish the local principality which was still under Shervashidze rule. Large numbers of Muslim Abkhazians — said to have constituted as much as 60% of the Abkhazian population, although contemporary census reports were not very trustworthy — emigrated to the Ottoman Empire between 1864 and 1878 together with other Muslim population of Caucasus in the process known as *Muhajirism*.

Modern Abkhazian historians maintain that large areas of the region were left uninhabited, and that many Armenians, Georgians and Russians (all Christians) subsequently migrated to Abkhazia, resettling much of the vacated territory. This version of events is strongly contested by some Georgian historians who argue that Georgian tribes (Mingrelians and Svans) had populated Abkhazia since the time of the Colchis kingdom. According to these scholars, the Abkhaz are the descendants of North Caucasian tribes ( Adygey, Apsua), who migrated to Abkhazia from the north of the Caucasus Mountains and merged there with the existing Georgian population. This theory has little support though among Georgian academics.



Flag of Abkhazia in 1925.



Flag of Abkhazia in 1978.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 led to the creation of an independent Georgia (which included Abkhazia) in 1918. Georgia's Menshevik government had problems with the area through most of its existence despite a limited autonomy being granted to the region. In 1921, the Bolshevik Red Army invaded Georgia and ended its short-lived independence. Abkhazia was made a Soviet republic with the ambiguous status of *Union Republic* associated with the Georgian SSR.

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In 1931, Stalin made it an autonomous republic within Soviet Georgia. Despite its nominal autonomy, it was subjected to strong central rule from central Soviet authorities. Georgian became the official language. Purportedly, Lavrenty Beria encouraged Georgian migration to Abkhazia, and many took up the offer and resettled there. Russians also moved into Abkhazia in great numbers. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, Vazgen I and the Armenian church encouraged and funded the migration of Armenians to Abkhazia. Currently, Armenians are the largest minority group in Abkhazia.

The repression of the Abkhaz was ended after Stalin's death and Beria's execution, and Abkhaz were given a greater role in the governance of the republic. As in most of the smaller autonomous republics, the Soviet government encouraged the development of culture and particularly of literature. Ethnic quotas were established for certain bureaucratic posts, giving the Abkhaz a degree of political power that was disproportionate to their minority status in the republic. This was interpreted by some as a "divide and rule" policy whereby local elites were given a share in power in exchange for support for the Soviet regime. In Abkhazia as elsewhere, it led to other ethnic groups - in this case, the Georgians - resenting what they saw as unfair discrimination, thereby stoking ethnic discord in the republic.

## The Abkhazian War

As the Soviet Union began to disintegrate at the end of the 1980s, ethnic tensions grew between the Abkhaz and Georgians over Georgia's moves towards independence. Many Abkhaz opposed this, fearing that an independent Georgia would lead to the elimination of their autonomy, and argued instead for the establishment of Abkhazia as a separate Soviet republic in its own right. The dispute turned violent on July 16, 1989 in Sukhumi. Sixteen Georgians are said to have been killed and another 137 injured when they tried to enrol in a Georgian University instead of an Abkhaz one. After several days of violence, Soviet troops restored order in the city and blamed rival nationalist paramilitaries for provoking confrontations.



Flag of the Abkhazian SSR in 1989.

The Republic of Georgia boycotted the March 17, 1991 all-Union referendum on the renewal of the Soviet Union called by Mikhail Gorbachev - but 52.3% of the Abkhazia's population (virtually all the ethnic non-Georgians) took part in the referendum and voted by an overwhelming majority (98.6%) to preserve the Union. Most ethnic non-Georgians later boycotted a March 31 referendum on Georgia's independence, which was supported by a huge majority of Georgia's population. Within weeks, Georgia declared independence on 9 April 1991, under former Soviet dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Under Gamsakhurdia, the situation was relatively calm in Abkhazia and a power-sharing agreement was soon reached between the Abkhaz and Georgian factions, granting to the Abkhaz a certain overrepresentation in the local legislature.

Gamsakhurdia's rule was soon challenged by the armed opposition groups which, under the command of Tengiz Kitovani, forced him to flee the country in a military coup in January 1992. Former Soviet foreign minister and architect of the disintegration of the USSR Eduard Shevardnadze replaced Gamsakhurdia as president, inheriting a government dominated by hardline Georgian nationalists. He was not an ethnic nationalist but did little to avoid being seen as supporting his administration's dominant figures and the leaders of the coup that swept him to power.

On 21 February 1992, Georgia's ruling Military Council announced that it was abolishing the Soviet-era constitution and restoring the 1921 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. Many Abkhaz interpreted this as an abolition of their autonomous status although the constitution did provide a provision for the region's autonomy. On 23 July 1992, the Abkhaz faction in the republic's Supreme Council declared effective independence from Georgia,

although the session was boycotted by ethnic Georgian deputies and the gesture went unrecognised by any other country. The Abkhaz leadership launched a campaign of ousting Georgian officials from their offices, a process which was accompanied by violence. In the meantime, the Abkhaz leader Ardzinba intensified his ties with the hardliner Russian politicians and military elite and declared he was ready for a war with Georgia.

In August 1992, the Georgian government accused Gamsakhurdia's supporters of kidnapping Georgia's interior minister and holding him captive in Abkhazia. The Georgian government dispatched 3,000 troops to the region, ostensibly to restore order. The Abkhaz were relatively unarmed at this time and the Georgian troops were able to march into Sukhumi with relatively little resistance and subsequently engaged in ethnically based pillage and looting. The Abkhaz units were forced to retreat to Gudauta and Tkvarcheli.

The Abkhaz military defeat was met with a hostile response by the self-styled Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, an umbrella group uniting a number of pro-Russian movements in the North Caucasus, including Circassians, Abazas, Chechens, Cossacks, Ossetians and hundreds of volunteer paramilitaries from Russia, including the then little-known Shamil Basayev, later a leader of the anti-Moscow Chechen secession, sided with the Abkhaz separatists to fight the Georgian government. Regular Russian forces also reportedly sided with the secessionists. In September, the Abkhaz and Russian paramilitaries mounted a major offensive against Gagra after breaking a cease-fire, which drove the Georgian forces out of large swathes of the republic. Shevardnadze's government accused Russia of giving covert military support to the rebels with the aim of "detaching from Georgia its native territory and the Georgia-Russian frontier land". The year 1992 ended with the rebels in control of much of Abkhazia northwest of Sukhumi. The conflict remained in stalemate until July 1993, when Abkhaz separatist militias launched an abortive attack on Georgian-held Sukhumi. They surrounded and heavily shelled the capital, where Shevardnadze was trapped. The warring sides declared a truce at the end of July, but it collapsed in mid-September 1993 after a renewed Abkhaz attack. After ten days of heavy fighting, Sukhumi fell on 27 September 1993. Shevardnadze narrowly escaped death, after vowing to stay in the city no matter what. He was forced to flee when separatist snipers fired on the hotel where he was staying. Abkhaz, North Caucasian militants and their allies committed numerous atrocities against the city's remaining ethnic Georgians, in what has been dubbed the Sukhumi Massacre. The mass killings and destruction continued for two weeks, leaving thousands dead and missing.

The Abkhaz forces quickly overran the rest of Abkhazia as the Georgian government faced a second threat: an uprising by the supporters of the deposed Zviad Gamsakhurdia in the region of Mingrelia (Samegrelo). In the chaotic aftermath of defeat almost all ethnic Georgians fled the region, escaping an ethnic cleansing initiated by the victors. Many thousands died — it is estimated that between 10,000-30,000 ethnic Georgians and 3,000 ethnic Abkhaz may have perished — and some 250,000 people (mostly Georgians) were forced into exile.

During the war, gross human rights violations were reported on the both sides (see Human Rights Watch report). In the first phase of the war, Georgian troops have been accused of looting while Georgia blames the Abkhaz forces and their allies for an intentional ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Abkhazia, which has also been recognized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Summits in Budapest (1994), Lisbon (1996) and Istanbul (1999).

## Politics

Much of the politics in Abkhazia is dominated by the territorial dispute with Georgia, from which the territory seceded, and by the fight over the presidency in 2004/2005.

On 3 October 2004 presidential elections were held in Abkhazia. In the elections, Russia evidently supported Raul Khajimba, the prime minister backed by the ailing outgoing separatist President Vladislav Ardzinba. Posters of Russia's President Vladimir Putin together with Khajimba, who like Putin had worked as a KGB official, were everywhere in Sukhumi. Deputies of Russia's parliament and Russian singers, led by Joseph Kobzon, a deputy and a popular singer, came to Abkhazia campaigning for Khajimba.

However Raul Khajimba lost the elections to Sergey Bagapsh. The tense situation in the republic led to the cancellation of the election results by the Supreme Court. After that a deal was struck between former rivals to run jointly — Bagapsh as a presidential candidate and Khajimba as a vice presidential candidate. They received more than 90% of the votes in the new election.

The President appoints districts' heads from those elected to the districts assemblies. There are elected village assemblies whose heads are appointed by the districts heads.

The People's Assembly, consisting of 35 elected members, is vested with legislative powers. The last parliamentary elections were held on March 4, 2007. The ethnicities other than Abkhaz (Armenians, Russians and Georgians) are believed to be under-represented in the Assembly as the number of the parliamentarians of these ethnicities is less than their share in the republic population.

About 250,000 ethnic Georgian residents of Abkhazia are restricted from settling in the region by the Abkhazian separatist regime and cannot participate in the elections.

## Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia

The Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, formerly known as The Council of Ministers of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic, is the only government that Georgia recognizes as the legal government of **Abkhazia**. After the Kodori crisis of 2006, the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, along with its ministers, relocated to the north-eastern part of Abkhazia (known as Upper Abkhazia) in Chkhalta.

The Council of Ministers of the autonomous republic was created during the Soviet period which included the Presidium where representatives (elected) from all regions in Abkhazia governed the affairs of the republic. The members of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Presidium included ethnic Georgians, Abkhaz and Armenians.

Zhiuli Shartava was elected as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers just before the outbreak of the war. When the hostilities reached their climax in 1992, the separatist wing of the government left the Presidium and moved to Gudauta. From Gudauta they started to arm militia groups (allegedly supplied by the Russian military base in Gudauta) which were used during the conflict.



Zhiuli Shartava in Sukhumi, day before he was killed by the militants on September 27, 1993.

The Council of Ministers remaining in Sukhumi still maintained its ethnic Abkhaz representatives, who rejected the separatist call for secession. Two of them, leading Abkhaz politician Raul Eshba and Sumbat Saakian, a representative of the ethnic Armenian Diaspora, refused to leave Sukhumi and stayed along with Zhiuli Shartava, Guram Gabiskiria and other members of the government in Sukhumi until the tragic events of September 27th 1993, when Shartava, Eshba, Gabiskiria, Saakian and other members of the government were tortured and killed by the separatists and their allies (see Sukhumi massacre). The remaining survivors of the government fled to the capital Tbilisi where they organized the headquarters of the Abkhaz government in exile headed by Tamaz Nadareishvili (great grandson of Abkhaz Prince Shervashidze). In 1998, Georgians in the Gali district (populated mainly by ethnic Georgians) of Abkhazia launched partisan activities against the de facto authorities in Sukhumi. The Abkhaz government in exile allegedly supported the rebel movement known as The White Legion. However, as a result of this insurrection, the Abkhaz separatist authorities launched a full scale attack on the Gali region, killing and expelling its ethnic Georgian inhabitants. In 2004, Nadareishvili died leaving the government in a disorganized state. After the Rose Revolution and Kodori events of 2006, the *de jure* Abkhaz government was revived and reorganized. Malkhaz Akishbaia, a Western-educated Abkhaz politician was elected in April 2006 and is the current head of the *de jure* Government of Abkhazia. Akishbaia appointed ethnic Abkhaz ministers Temur Mzhavia and Ada Marshania to key positions and included former members of Council of Ministers in his government. The government moved to Upper Abkhazia (within the administrative borders of the autonomous republic) with its headquarters in Chkhalta. On September 27, 2006 President Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II and others members of the central government visited Kodori Valley and officially changed the name and designated the area as "Upper Abkhazia".

The NGO the International Crisis Group has urged Georgia to lower the Abkhaz government in exile's profile in the Kodori Gorge significantly and refrain from holding alternative elections for local government or parliamentary representatives in Abkhazia.

## International involvement

The UN has played various roles during the conflict and peace process: a military role through its observer mission ( UNOMIG); dual diplomatic roles through the Security Council and the appointment of a Special Envoy, succeeded by a Special Representative to the Secretary-General; a humanitarian role ( UNHCR and UNOCHA); a development role ( UNDP); a human rights role ( UNCHR); and a low-key capacity and confidence-building role ( UNV). The UN's position has been that there will be no forcible change in international borders. Any settlement must be freely negotiated and based on autonomy for Abkhazia legitimized by referendum under international observation once the multi-ethnic population has returned. According to Western interpretations the intervention did not contravene international law since Georgia, as a sovereign state, had the right to secure order on its territory and protect its territorial integrity.

OSCE has increasingly engaged in dialogue with officials and civil society representatives in Abkhazia, especially from NGOs and the media, regarding human dimension standards and is considering a presence in Gali. OSCE expressed concern and condemnation over ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Abkhazia during the 1994 Budapest Summit Decision and later at the Lisbon Summit Declaration in 1996.

The USA rejects the unilateral secession of Abkhazia and urges its integration into Georgia as an autonomous unit. In 1998 the USA announced its readiness to allocate up to \$15 million for rehabilitation of infrastructure in the Gali region if substantial progress is made in the peace process. USAID has already funded some humanitarian initiatives for Abkhazia. The USA has in recent years significantly increased its military support to the Georgian armed forces but has stated that it would not condone any moves towards peace enforcement in Abkhazia.



On August 22, 2006, Senator Richard Lugar, then visiting Georgia's capital Tbilisi, joined the Georgian politicians in criticism of the Russian peacekeeping mission, stating that "the U.S. administration supports the Georgian government's insistence on the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from the conflict zones in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali district."

On October 5, 2006, Javier Solana, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, ruled out the possibility of replacing the Russian peacekeepers with the EU force." On October 10, 2006, EU South Caucasus envoy Peter Semneby noted that "Russia's actions in the Georgia spy row have damaged its credibility as a neutral peacekeeper in the EU's Black Sea neighbourhood."

On October 13, 2006, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution, based on a Group of Friends of the Secretary-General draft, extending the UNOMIG mission until April 15, 2007. Acknowledging that the "new and tense situation" resulted, at least in part, from the Georgian special forces operation in the upper Kodori Valley, urged the country to ensure that no troops unauthorized by the Moscow ceasefire agreement were present in that area. It urged the leadership of the Abkhaz side to address seriously the need for a dignified, secure return of refugees and internally displaced persons and to reassure the local population in the Gali district that their residency rights and identity will be respected. The Georgian side is "once again urged to address seriously legitimate Abkhaz security concerns, to avoid steps which could be seen as threatening and to refrain from militant rhetoric and provocative actions, especially in upper Kodori Valley". Calling on both parties to follow up on dialogue initiatives, it further urged them to comply fully with all previous agreements regarding non-violence and confidence-building, in particular those concerning the separation of forces. Regarding the disputed role of the peacekeepers from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Council stressed the importance of close, effective cooperation between UNOMIG and that force and looked to all sides to continue to extend the necessary cooperation to them. At the same time, the document reaffirmed the "commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders."

The HALO Trust, an international non-profit organisation that specialises in the removal of the debris of war, has been active in Abkhazia since 1999 and has completed the removal of land-mines in Sukhumi and Gali districts. It plans to finish its operations in 2007/2008 and to declare Abkhazia a "mine impact free" territory.

## Religion

The population (including all ethnic groups) of Abkhazia are majority Orthodox Christians (approx. 75%) and Sunni Muslims (approx. 10%). Most of the ethnic Armenians living in Abkhazia belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church. However, most of the people who declare themselves Christian or Muslim do not attend religious services. There is also a very small number of Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses and the followers of new religions. The Jehovah's Witnesses organization has officially been banned since 1995, though the decree is not currently enforced.

According to the constitutions of Georgia, Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and de facto Republic of Abkhazia the adherents of all religions (as well as atheists) have equal rights before the law.

Abkhazia is recognized by the Eastern Orthodox world as a canonical territory of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which has been unable to operate in the region since the War in Abkhazia. Currently, the religious affairs of local Orthodox Christian community is run by the self-imposed "Eparchy of Abkhazia"

under significant influence of the Russian Orthodox Church.

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# Afghanistan

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**Afghanistan**, officially the **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan** ( Persian: *جمهوری اسلامی افغانستان*, Pashto: *د افغانستان اسلامي جمهوریت* ), is a landlocked country that is located approximately in the centre of Asia. It is variously designated as geographically located within Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. It has religious, ethno-linguistic, and geographic links with most of its neighboring states. It is bordered by Pakistan in the south and east, Iran in the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north, and China in the far northeast. The name Afghanistan means the "*Land of Afghans*." During the Cold War Afghanistan bordered the Soviet Union.

Ariana was the original name of Afghanistan back in the 1700s. Afghanistan is a culturally mixed nation, a crossroads between the East and the West, and has been an ancient focal point of trade and migration. It has an important geostrategical location, connecting South, Central and Southwest Asia. During its long history, the land has seen various invaders and conquerors, while on the other hand, local entities invaded the surrounding vast regions to form their own empires. Ahmad Shah Durrani created the Durrani Empire in 1747, with its capital at Kandahar. Subsequently, the capital was shifted to Kabul and most of its territories ceded to former neighboring countries. In the 19th century, Afghanistan became a buffer state in "The Great Game" played between the British Indian Empire and Russian Empire. On August 19, 1919, following the third Anglo-Afghan war, the country regained full independence from the United Kingdom over its foreign affairs.

Since the late 1970s Afghanistan has suffered continuous and brutal civil war, which included foreign interventions in the form of the 1979 Soviet invasion and the recent 2001 US-led invasion that toppled the Taliban government. In late 2001 the United Nations Security Council authorized the creation of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). This force is composed of NATO troops that are involved in assisting the government of President Hamid Karzai in establishing the writ of law as well as rebuilding key infrastructures in the nation. In 2005, the United States and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement committing both nations to a long-term relationship. In the meantime, multi-billion US dollars have also been provided by the international community for the reconstruction of the country.

## Etymology

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<p>جمهوری اسلامی افغانستان <i>Jamhūrī-ye Islāmī-ye Afġānistān</i> <b>Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</b></p>	
	
Flag	Emblem
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Milli Tharana</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Kabul
<b>Official languages</b>	Pashto, Dari
Recognised regional languages	Balochi, Pashto, Uzbek, Turkmen, Hazaragi, Farsi, Nuristani, Pashai, Tajik, Kyrgyz
<b>Demonym</b>	Afghan (most common)
<b>Government</b>	Islamic republic

The name *Afghānistān* translates to the "*Land of Afghans*." Its modern usage derives from the word *Afghan*.

### Origin of the word "Afghan"

There are different theories about the origin of the word Afghan, its age, and its meaning. Some believe that "Afghan" is formed from *ʾApagān*. The Pashtuns began using the term *Afghan* as a name for themselves from at least the Islamic period and onwards. According to W. K. Frazier Tyler, M. C. Gillet and several other scholars, *The word Afghan first appears in history in the Hudud-al-Alam in 982 AD.*

In this regard the *Encyclopædia Iranica* states:

From a more limited, ethnological point of view, "Afghān" is the term by which the Persian-speakers of Afghanistan (and the non-Paštō-speaking ethnic groups generally) designate the Paštūn. The equation [of] *Afghan* [and] *Paštūn* has been propagated all the more, both in and beyond Afghanistan, because the Paštūn tribal confederation is by far the most important in the country, numerically and politically.

It further explains:

The term "Afghān" has probably designated the Paštūn since ancient times. Under the form *Avagānā*, this ethnic group is first mentioned by the Indian astronomer Varāha Mihira in the beginning of the 6th century CE in his *Brihat-samhita*.

### Meaning and origin of the name "Afghanistan"

The last part of the name, *-stān*, is an Iranian suffix for "place", prominent in many languages of the region.

The term "*Afghanistan*," meaning the "*Land of Afghans*," was mentioned by the sixteenth century Mughal Emperor Babur in his memoirs, referring to the territories south of Kabul that were inhabited by Pashtuns (called *Afghans* by Babur).

Until the 19th century the name was only used for the traditional lands of the Pashtuns, while the kingdom as a whole was known as the *Kingdom of Kabul*, as mentioned by the British statesman and historian Mountstuart Elphinstone. Other parts of the country were at certain periods recognized as independent kingdoms, such as the *Kingdom of Balkh* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

With the expansion and centralization of the country, Afghan authorities adopted and extended the name "Afghanistan" to the entire kingdom, after its English

- President	Hamid Karzai
- Vice President	Ahmad Zia Massoud
- Vice President	Karim Khalili
<b>Independence</b>	from the United Kingdom
- Declared	August 8, 1919
- Recognized	August 19, 1919
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	647,500 km <sup>2</sup> ( 41st) 251,772 sq mi
- Water (%)	0
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	31,889,923 ( 37th)
- 1979 census	13,051,358
- Density	46/km <sup>2</sup> ( 150th) 119/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$32.4 billion ( 92nd)
- Per capita	\$1,490 ( 158th)
<b>HDI (1993)</b>	0.229 (n/a) ( unranked)
<b>Currency</b>	Afghani ( ₰)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+4:30)
- Summer ( DST)	( UTC+4:30)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.af
<b>Calling code</b>	+93

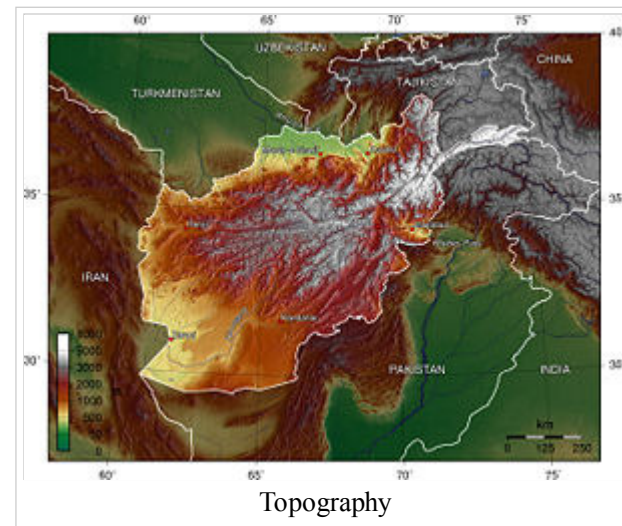
translation, "Afghanland", had already appeared in various treaties between British Raj and Qajarid Persia, referring to the lands that were subject to the Pashtun Barakzai Dynasty of Kabul. "Afghanistan" as the name for the entire kingdom was mentioned in 1857 by Frederick Engels. It became the official name when the country was recognized by the world community in 1919, after regaining its full independence from the British, and was confirmed as such in the nation's 1923 constitution.

## Geography

Afghanistan is a landlocked and mountainous country in South- Central Asia, with plains in the north and southwest. The highest point is Nowshak, at 7,485 m (24,557 ft) above sea level. Large parts of the country are dry, and fresh water supplies are limited. The endorheic Sistan Basin is one of the driest regions in the world. Afghanistan has a continental climate with hot summers and cold winters. The country is frequently subject to minor earthquakes, mainly in the northeast of Hindu Kush mountain areas. Some 125 villages were damaged and 4000 people killed by the May 30, 1998 earthquake.

At 249,984 sq mi (647,500 km<sup>2</sup>), Afghanistan is the world's 41st-largest country (after Myanmar). Comparatively, it is slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Texas.

The country's natural resources include gold, silver, copper, zinc and iron ore in southeastern areas; precious and semi-precious stones such as lapis, emerald and azure in the north-east; and potentially significant petroleum and natural gas reserves in the north. The country also has uranium, coal, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, and salt. However, these significant mineral and energy resources remain largely untapped due to the effects of the Soviet invasion and the subsequent civil war. Plans are underway to begin extracting them in the near future.



## History

Though the modern state of Afghanistan was founded or created in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani, the land has an ancient history and various timelines of different civilizations. Excavation of prehistoric sites by Louis Dupree, the University of Pennsylvania, the Smithsonian Institution and others suggests that humans were living in what is now Afghanistan at least 50,000 years ago, and that farming communities of the area were among the earliest in the world.

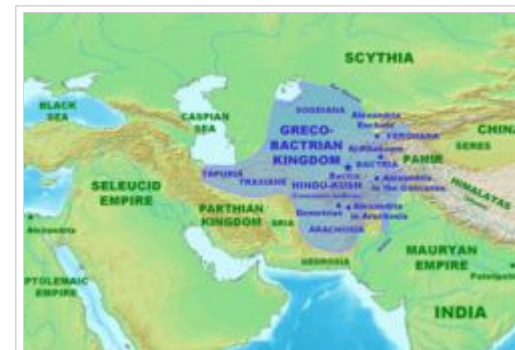
Afghanistan is a country at a unique nexus point where numerous Indo-European civilizations have interacted and often fought, and was an important site of early historical activity. Through the ages, the region has been home to various people, among them the Aryan ( Indo-Iranian) tribes, such as the Kambojas, Bactrians, Persians, etc. It also has been conquered by a host of people, including the Median and Persian Empires, Alexander the Great, Kushans, Hephthalites, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols. In recent times, invasions from the British, Soviets, and most recently by the Americans and their allies have taken place. On the other hand, native entities have invaded surrounding regions in Iranian plateau and Indian subcontinent to form empires of their own.

Between 2000 and 1200 BC, Indo-European-speaking Aryans are thought to have been in the region of northern Afghanistan. It is unlikely that the Aryans themselves originated in Afghanistan although they did migrate from there south towards India and west towards Persia, but they also migrated into Europe via north of the Caspian. These Aryans set up a nation that during the rule of Medes and Achaemenid Persians which became known as Aryānām Xšaθra or Airyānem Vāejah. Original homelands of the Aryans have been proposed as Anatolia, Central Asia, Iran, or Northern India, with the directions of the historical migration varying accordingly. Later, during the rule of Ashkanian, Sasanian and after, it was called Erānshahr ( Persian: **ایران‌شهر** - *Īrānšahr*) meaning "Dominion of the Aryans."

It has been speculated that Zoroastrianism might have originated in what is now Afghanistan between 1800 to 800 BC, as Zoroaster lived and died in Balkh.. Ancient Eastern Iranian languages, such as Avestan, may have been spoken in this region around the time of the rise of Zoroastrianism. By the middle of the sixth century BC, the Persian Empire of the Achaemenids supplanted the Median Empire and incorporated what was known as Persia to the Greeks within its boundaries; and by 330 BC, Alexander the Great invaded Afghanistan and conquered the surrounding regions. Following Alexander's brief occupation, the Hellenistic successor states of the Seleucids and Greco-Bactrians controlled the area, while the Mauryas from India annexed the southeast for a time and introduced Buddhism to the region until the area returned to the Bactrian rule.



The region that is now Afghanistan was for much of its history part of various Persian dynasties, such as the Achaemenid dynasty of the Persian Empire (559–330 BCE)



The Greco-Bactrian Kingdom at its maximum extent, circa 180 BCE

During the first century AD, the Kushans created a vast empire centered in modern Afghanistan and were patrons of Buddhist culture. The Kushans were defeated by the Sassanids in the third century. Although various rulers calling themselves Kushans (and generally known as *Kushano-Sasanians*) continued to rule at least parts of the region, they were probably more or less subject to the Sassanids. The late Kushans were followed by the Kidarite Huns who, in turn, were replaced by the short-lived but powerful Hephthalites, as rulers of the region in the first half of the fifth century. The Hephthalites were defeated by the Sasanian king Khosrau I in AD 557, who re-established Sasanian power in Persia. However, the successors of Kushans and Hephthalites established a small dynasty in Kabulistan called Kushano-Hephthalites or Kabul-Shahan/ Shahi and were later defeated by the Muslim armies.

## Islamic conquest

In the Middle Ages, up to the nineteenth century, the region was known as Khorasan. Several important centers of Khorāsān are thus located in modern Afghanistan, such as Balkh, Herat, Ghazni and Kabul. It was during this period of time when Islam was introduced and spread in the area.

The region of Afghanistan became the centre of various important empires, including that of the Samanids (875–999), Ghaznavids (977–1187), Seljukids (1037–1194), Ghurids (1149–1212), and Timurids (1370–1506). Among them, the periods of Ghaznavids of Ghazni, and Timurids of Herat are considered as some of the most brilliant eras of Afghanistan's history.

In 1219 the region was overrun by the Mongols under Genghis Khan, who devastated the land. Their rule continued with the Ilkhanates, and was extended further following the invasion of Timur Lang ("Tamerlane"), a ruler from Central Asia. In 1504, Babur, a descendant of both Timur Lang and Genghis Khan, established the Mughal Empire with its capital at Kabul. By the early 1700s, Afghanistan was controlled by several ruling groups: Uzbeks to the north, Safavids to the west and the remaining larger area by the Mughals or self-ruled by local Afghan tribes.

## Emergence of Afghan rule

### Hotaki dynasty

In 1709, Mir Wais Hotak, a local Afghan (*Pashtun*) from the Ghilzai clan, overthrew and killed Gurgin Khan, the Safavid governor of Kandahar. Mir Wais successfully defeated the Persians, who were attempting to convert the local population of Kandahar from Sunni to the Shia sect of Islam. Mir Wais held the region of Kandahar until his death in 1715 and was succeeded by his son Mir Mahmud Hotaki. In 1722, Mir Mahmud led an Afghan army to Isfahan (now in Iran), sacked the city and proclaimed himself King of Persia. However, the great majority still rejected the Afghan regime as usurping, and after the massacre of thousands of civilians in Isfahan by the Afghans – including more than three thousand religious scholars, nobles, and members of the Safavid family – the Hotaki dynasty was eventually removed from power by a new ruler, Nadir Shah of Persia.

### Durrani Empire

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Buddhas of Bamiyan were among the largest Buddha statues in the world, dating back to the first century AD.

In 1738 Nadir Shah and his army, which included four thousand Pashtuns of the Abdali clan, conquered the region of Kandahar; in the same year he occupied Ghazni, Kabul and Lahore. On June 19, 1747, Nadir Shah was assassinated, possibly planned by his nephew Ali Qoli. In the same year, one of Nadir's military commanders and personal bodyguard, Ahmad Shah Abdali, a Pashtun from the Abdali clan, called for a loya jirga following Nadir's death. The Afghans gathered at Kandahar and chose Ahmad Shah as their King. Since then, he is often regarded as the founder of modern Afghanistan. After the inauguration, he changed his title or clans' name to *Durrani*,"which derives from the Persian word *Durr*, meaning *Pearl*."

By 1751 Ahmad Shah Durrani and his Afghan army conquered the entire present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Khorasan and Kohistan provinces of Iran, along with Delhi in India. In October 1772, Ahmad Shah retired to his home in Maruf, Kandahar, where he died peacefully. He was succeeded by his son, Timur Shah Durrani, who transferred the capital from Kandahar to Kabul. Timur died in 1793 and was finally succeeded by his son Zaman Shah Durrani.

## European influence

During the nineteenth century, following the Anglo-Afghan wars (fought 1839–42, 1878–80, and lastly in 1919) and the ascension of the Barakzai dynasty, Afghanistan saw much of its territory and autonomy ceded to the United Kingdom. The UK exercised a great deal of influence, and it was not until King Amanullah Khan acceded to the throne in 1919 that Afghanistan re-gained complete independence over its foreign affairs (see " The Great Game"). During the period of British intervention in Afghanistan, ethnic Pashtun territories were divided by the Durand Line. This would lead to strained relations between Afghanistan and British India – and later the new state of Pakistan – over what came to be known as the Pashtunistan debate. The longest period of stability in Afghanistan was between 1933 and 1973, when the country was under the rule of King Zahir Shah.

However, in 1973 Zahir Shah's brother-in-law, Mohammed Daoud Khan, launched a bloodless coup and became the first President of Afghanistan. Daoud Khan and his entire family were murdered in 1978, when the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan launched a coup known as the Great Saur Revolution and took over the government. The 1978 Khalq uprising against the government of Daoud Khan was essentially a resurgence by the Ghilzai tribe of the Pashtun against the Durrani (the tribe of Daoud Khan and the previous monarchy).

## Soviet invasion and civil war

As part of a Cold War strategy, in 1979 the United States government (under President Jimmy Carter and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski) began to covertly fund and train anti-government Mujahideen forces through the Pakistani secret service known as Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). In order to bolster the local Communist forces, the Soviet Union—citing the 1978 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighborliness that had been signed between the two countries—intervened on December 24, 1979. Over 100,000 Soviet troops took part in the invasion, who were backed by another 100,000 and plus pro-communist forces of Afghanistan. The Soviet occupation resulted in the killings of at least 600,000 to 2 million Afghan civilians. Over five million Afghans fled their country to Pakistan, Iran and other parts of the world. Faced with mounting international pressure and great number of casualties on both sides, the Soviets withdrew in 1989.



Political cartoon depicting Sher Ali Khan with his "friends" Britain & Russia (1878).



The Soviet withdrawal from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was seen as an ideological victory in the US, which had backed the Mujahideen through three US presidential administrations in order to counter Soviet influence in the vicinity of the oil-rich Persian Gulf.

Following the removal of the Soviet forces, the US and its allies lost interest in Afghanistan and did little to help rebuild the war-ravaged country or influence events there. The USSR continued to support President Najibullah (former head of the Afghan secret service, *KHAD*) until 1992 when new Russian government refused to sell oil products to Najibullah regime.

Because of the fighting, a number of elites and intellectuals fled to take refuge abroad. This led to a leadership imbalance in Afghanistan. Fighting continued among the victorious Mujahideen factions, which gave rise to a state of warlordism. The most serious fighting during this period occurred in 1994, when over 10,000 people were killed in Kabul alone. It was at this time that the Taliban developed as a politico-religious force, eventually seizing Kabul in 1996. By the end of 2000 the Taliban had captured 95% of the country.

During the Taliban's seven-year rule, much of the population experienced restrictions on their freedom and violations of their human rights. Women were banned from jobs, girls forbidden to attend schools or universities. Those who resisted were punished instantly. Communists were systematically eradicated and thieves were punished by amputating one of their hands or feet. Meanwhile, the Taliban managed to nearly eradicate the majority of the opium production by 2001.

## 2001-present war in Afghanistan

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom, a military campaign to destroy the al-Qaeda terrorist training camps inside Afghanistan. The US military also threatened to overthrow the Taliban government for refusing to hand over Osama bin Laden and several al-Qaida members. The US made a common cause with the former Afghan Mujahideen to achieve its ends, including the Northern Alliance, a militia still recognized by the UN as the Afghan government.

In late 2001, US Special Forces invaded Afghanistan to aid anti-Taliban militias, backed by US air strikes against Taliban and Al Qaeda targets, culminating in the seizure of Kabul by the Northern Alliance and the overthrow of the Taliban, with many local warlords switching allegiance from the Taliban to the Northern Alliance.

In December of the same year, leaders of the former Afghan mujahideen and diaspora met in Germany, and agreed on a plan for the formulation of a new democratic government that resulted in the inauguration of Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun from the southern city of Kandahar, as Chairman of the Afghan Interim Authority.

After a nationwide *Loya Jirga* in 2002, Karzai was chosen by the representatives to assume the title as Interim President of Afghanistan. The country convened a Constitutional Loya Jirga (Council of Elders) in 2003 and a new constitution was ratified in January 2004. Following an election in October 2004, Hamid



Soviet troops withdrawing from Afghanistan in 1988. Photo by Mikhail Evstafiev

Karzai won and became the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Legislative elections were held in September 2005. The National Assembly – the first freely elected legislature in Afghanistan since 1973 – sat in December 2005, and was noteworthy for the inclusion of women as voters, candidates, and elected members.

As the country continues to rebuild and recover, it is still struggling against poverty, poor infrastructure, large concentration of land mines and other unexploded ordnance, as well as a huge illegal poppy cultivation and opium trade. Afghanistan also remains subject to occasionally violent political jockeying. The country continues to grapple with the Taliban insurgency and the threat of attacks from a few remaining al Qaeda.

At the start of 2007 reports of the Taliban's increasing presence in Afghanistan led the US to consider longer tours of duty and even an increase in troop numbers. According to a report filed by Robert Burns of Associated Press on January 16, 2007, "U.S. military officials cited new evidence that the Pakistani military, which has long-standing ties to the Taliban movement, has turned a blind eye to the incursions." Also, "The number of insurgent attacks is up 300 percent since September, 2006, when the Pakistani government put into effect a peace arrangement with tribal leaders in the north Waziristan area, along Afghanistan's eastern border, a U.S. military intelligence officer told reporters." In 2008 another 3,200 U.S. troops will be sent to Afghanistan to fight the Taliban.



US Army in Kunar Province

## Government and politics

Politics in Afghanistan has historically consisted of power struggles, bloody coups and unstable transfers of power. With the exception of a military junta, the country has been governed by nearly every system of government over the past century, including a monarchy, republic, theocracy and communist state. The constitution ratified by the 2003 Loya jirga restructured the government as an Islamic republic consisting of three branches, ( executive, legislature and judiciary).

Afghanistan is currently led by President Hamid Karzai, who was elected in October 2004. The current parliament was elected in 2005. Among the elected officials were former mujahadeen, Taliban members, communists, reformists, and Islamic fundamentalists. 28% of the delegates elected were women, 3 points more than the 25% minimum guaranteed under the constitution. This made Afghanistan, long known under the Taliban for its oppression of women, one of the leading countries in terms of female representation. Construction for a new parliament building began on August 29, 2005.

The Supreme Court of Afghanistan is currently led by Chief Justice Abdul Salam Azimi, a former university professor who had been legal advisor to the president. The previous court, appointed during the time of the interim government, had been dominated by fundamentalist religious figures, including Chief Justice Faisal Ahmad Shinwari. The court had issued numerous questionable rulings, such as banning cable television, seeking to ban a candidate in the 2004 presidential election and limiting the rights of women, as well as overstepping its



Politicians of Afghanistan having lunch with the visiting U.S. President George W. Bush in Kabul on March 1, 2006.

constitutional authority by issuing rulings on subjects not yet brought before the court. The current court is seen as more moderate and led by more technocrats than the previous court, although it has yet to issue any rulings.

## Law enforcement and military

Afghanistan currently has more than 70,000 national police officers, with plans to recruit more so that the total number can reach 80,000. They are being trained by and through the Afghanistan Police Program. Although the police officially are responsible for maintaining civil order, sometimes local and regional military commanders continue to exercise control in the hinterland. Police have been accused of improper treatment and detention of prisoners. In 2003 the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force, now under command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was extended and expanded beyond the Kabul area. However, in some areas unoccupied by those forces, local militias maintain control. In many areas, crimes have gone uninvestigated because of insufficient police and/or communications. Troops of the Afghan National Army have been sent to quell fighting in some regions lacking police protection.

## Administrative divisions

Afghanistan is administratively divided into thirty-four (34) provinces (*welayats*), and for each province there is a capital. Each province is then divided into many provincial districts, and each district normally covers a city or several townships.

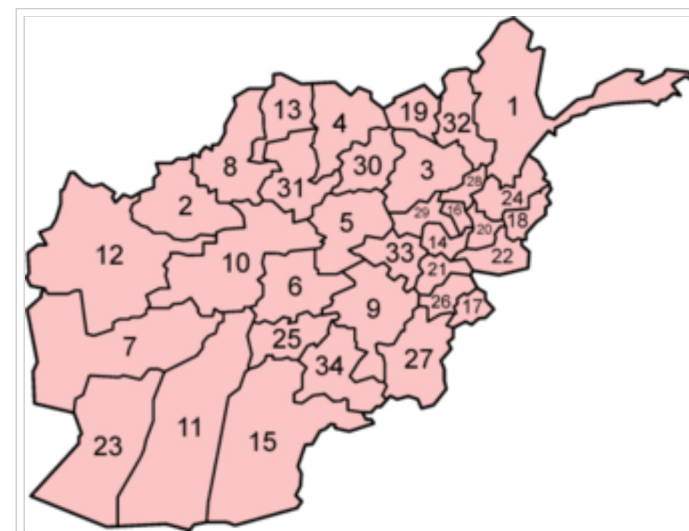
The Governor of the province is appointed by the Ministry of Interior, and the Prefects for the districts of the province will be appointed by the provincial Governor. The Governor is the representative of the central government of Afghanistan, and is responsible for all administrative and formal issues. The provincial Chief of Police is appointed by the Ministry of Interior, who works together with the Governor on law enforcement for all the cities or districts of that province.

There is an exception in the capital city (Kabul) where the Mayor is selected by the President of Afghanistan, and is completely independent from the prefecture of the Kabul Province.



First deputy vice president Ahmad Zia Massoud presents a new police officer with his diploma at the Kabul Police Academy.

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. Badakhshan | 18. Konar     |
| 2. Badghis    | 19. Kunduz    |
| 3. Baghlan    | 20. Laghman   |
| 4. Balkh      | 21. Lowgar    |
| 5. Bamyan     | 22. Nangarhar |
| 6. Daykundi   | 23. Nimruz    |
| 7. Farah      | 24. Nurestan  |
| 8. Faryab     | 25. Oruzgan   |
| 9. Ghazni     | 26. Paktia    |
| 10. Ghor      | 27. Paktika   |
| 11. Helmand   | 28. Panjshir  |
| 12. Herat     | 29. Parvan    |
| 13. Jowzjan   | 30. Samangan  |
| 14. Kabul     | 31. Sare Pol  |
| 15. Kandahar  | 32. Takhar    |
| 16. Kapisa    | 33. Wardak    |
| 17. Khost     | 34. Zabol     |



Map showing the 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

## Demography

### Largest cities

The only city in Afghanistan with over one million residents is its capital, Kabul. The other major cities in the country are, in order of population size, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Jalalabad, Ghazni and Kunduz.

### Ethnic groups

The population of Afghanistan is divided into a wide variety of ethnic groups. Because a systematic census has not been held in the country in decades, exact figures about the size and composition of the various ethnic groups are not available. Therefore most figures are approximations only.

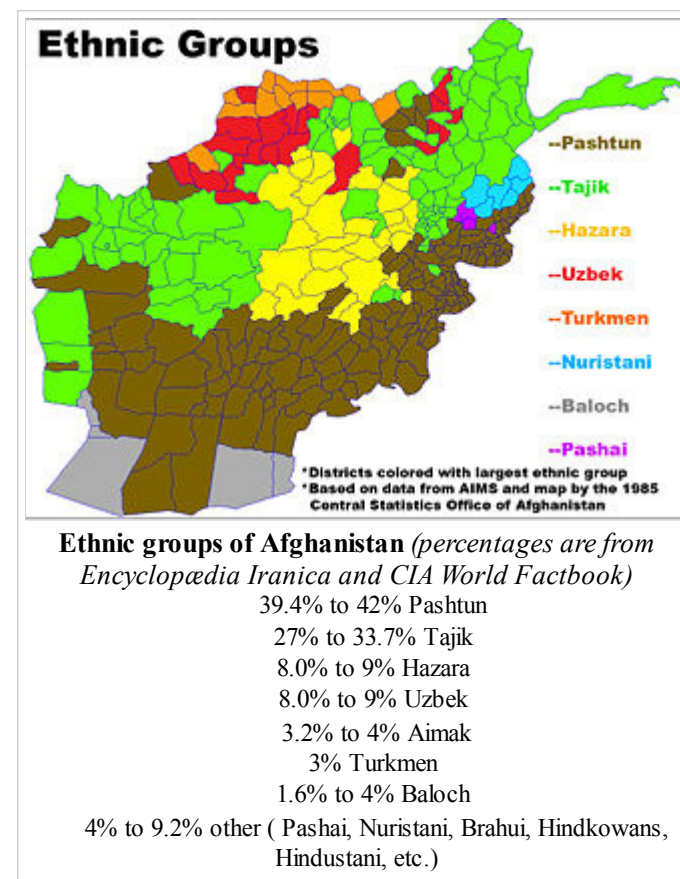
An approximate distribution of ethnic groups estimated by the CIA World Factbook is as following:

- Pashtun: 42%
- Tajik: 27%
- Hazara: 9%
- Uzbek: 9%
- Aimak: 4%
- Turkmen: 3%
- Baloch: 2%
- Other: 4%

Based on official census numbers from the 1960s to the 1980s, as well as information found in mainly scholarly sources, the Encyclopædia Iranica gives the following list:

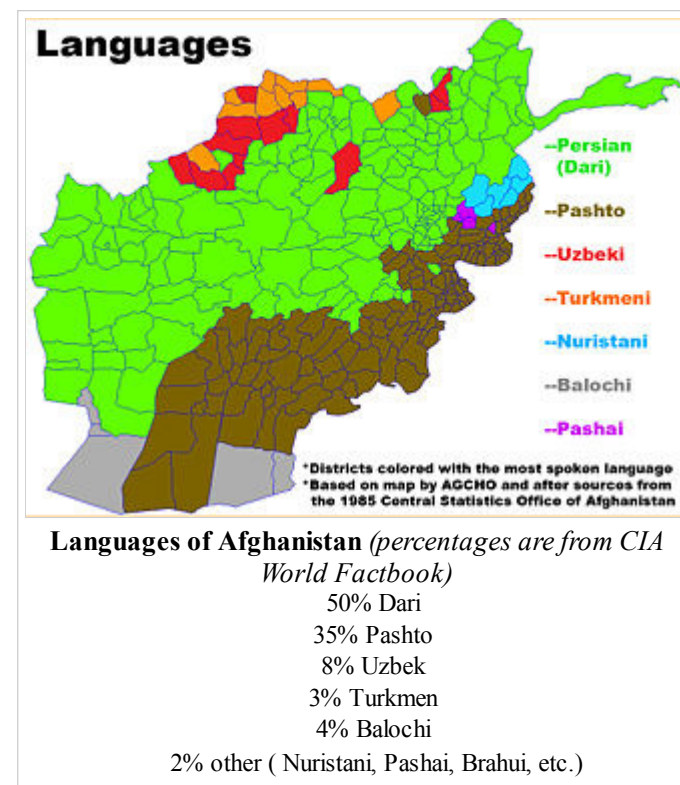
- 36.4% Pashtun
- 33.7% Tajik, Farsiwan, and Qezelbash
- 8.0% Hazara
- 8.0% Uzbek
- 4.1% Aimak
- 3.3% Turkmen
- 1.6% Baloch
- 1.9% other

## Languages



The CIA World Factbook on languages spoken in Afghanistan is shown in the right image box. Persian ( Dari dialects) 50% and Pashto 35%; both are Indo-European languages from the Iranian languages sub-family. Pashto and Persian are the official languages of the country. Hazaragi, spoken by the Hazara minority, is another dialect of Persian. Other languages spoken include Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 9%, as well as 30 minor languages 4% (primarily Balochi, Nuristani, Pashai, Brahui, Pamiri languages, Hindko, etc.). Bilingualism is common.

According to the Encyclopædia Iranica, the Persian language is the mother tongue of roughly one-third of Afghanistan's population, while it is also the most widely used language of the country, spoken by around 80% of the population. It further states that Pashto is spoken by around 50% of the population.



## Culture

Afghans display pride in their religion, country, ancestry, and above all, their independence. Like other highlanders, Afghans are regarded with mingled apprehension and condescension, for their high regard for personal honour, for their clan loyalty and for their readiness to carry and use arms to settle disputes. As clan warfare and internecine feuding has been one of their chief occupations since time immemorial, this individualistic trait has made it difficult for foreign invaders to hold the region.

Afghanistan has a complex history that has survived either in its current cultures or in the form of various languages and monuments. However, many of the country's historic monuments have been damaged in recent wars. The two famous statues of Buddha in the Bamyān Province were destroyed by the Taliban, who regarded them as idolatrous. Other famous sites include the cities of Kandahar, Herat, Ghazni and Balkh. The Minaret of Jam, in the Hari River valley, is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The cloak worn by Muhammad is stored inside the famous Khalka Sharifa in Kandahar City.

Buzkashi is a national sport in Afghanistan. It is similar to polo and played by horsemen in two teams, each trying to grab and hold of a goat carcass. Afghan hounds (a type of running dog) also originated in Afghanistan.

Although literacy levels are very low, classic Persian poetry plays a very important role in the Afghan culture. Poetry has always been one of the major educational pillars in Iran and Afghanistan, to the level that it has integrated itself into culture. Persian culture has, and continues to, exert a great influence over Afghan culture. Private poetry competition events known as “musha’era” are quite common even among ordinary people. Almost every home owns one or more poetry collections of some sort, even if they are not read often.

The eastern dialects of the Persian language are popularly known as "Dari". The name itself derives from "Pārsī-e Darbārī", meaning *Persian of the royal courts*. The ancient term *Darī* – one of the original names of the Persian language – was revived in the Afghan constitution of 1964, and was intended *to signify that Afghans consider their country the cradle of the language*. Hence, the name *Fārsī*, the language of Fārs, is strictly avoided. With this point in mind, we can consider the development of Dari or Persian literature in the political entity known as Afghanistan."

Many of the famous Persian poets of the tenth to fifteenth centuries stem from Khorasan where is now known as Afghanistan. They were mostly also scholars in many disciplines like languages, natural sciences, medicine, religion and astronomy.

- Mawlānā Rumi, who was born and educated in Balkh in the thirteenth century and moved to Konya in modern-day Turkey
- Rabi'a Balkhi (the first poetess in the History of Persian Poetry, tenth century, native of Balkh)
- Daqiqi Balkhi (tenth century, native of Balkh)
- Farrukhi Sistani (tenth century, the Ghaznavids royal poet)
- Unsuri Balkhi (a tenth/eleventh century poet, native of Balkh)
- Khwaja Abdullah Ansari (eleventh century, from Herat)
- Nasir Khusraw (eleventh century, from Qubadyan near Balkh)
- Anvari (twelfth century, lived and died in Balkh)



Girls in Kabul, wearing their traditional clothes, sing at a celebration of International Women's Day in 2002.

- Sanāī Ghaznawi (twelfth century, native of Ghazni)
- Jāmī of Herāt (fifteenth century, native of Herat in western Afghanistan), and his nephew Abdullah Hatifi Herawi, a well-known poet
- Alī Sher Navāī (fifteenth century, Herat).

Most of these individuals were of Persian ( Tājīk) ethnicity who still form the second-largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Also, some of the contemporary Persian language poets and writers, who are relatively well-known in Persian-speaking world, include Ustad Betab, Qari Abdullah, Khalilullah Khalili, Sufi Ghulam Nabi Ashqari, Sarwar Joya, Qahar Asey, Parwin Pazwak and others. In 2003, Khaled Hosseini published *The Kiterunner* which though fiction, captured much of the history, politics and culture experienced in Afghanistan from the 1930s to present day.

In addition to poets and authors, numerous Persian scientists were born or worked in the region of present-day Afghanistan. Most notable was Avicenna (Abu Alī Hussein ibn Sīnā) whose father hailed from Balkh. Ibn Sīnā, who travelled to Isfahan later in life to establish a medical school there, is known by some scholars as "the father of modern medicine". George Sarton called ibn Sīnā "the most famous scientist of Islam and one of the most famous of all races, places, and times." His most famous works are *The Book of Healing* and *The Canon of Medicine*, also known as the Qanun. Ibn Sīnā's story even found way to the contemporary English literature through Noah Gordon's *The Physician*, now published in many languages. Moreover, according to Ibn al-Nadim, Al-Farabi, a well-known philosopher and scientist, was from the Faryab Province of Afghanistan, .

Before the Taliban gained power, the city of Kabul was home to many musicians who were masters of both traditional and modern Afghan music, especially during the Nauroz-celebration. Kabul in the middle part of the twentieth century has been likened to Vienna during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The tribal system, which orders the life of most people outside metropolitan areas, is potent in political terms. Men feel a fierce loyalty to their own tribe, such that, if called upon, they would assemble in arms under the tribal chiefs and local clan leaders (Khans). In theory, under Islamic law, every believer has an obligation to bear arms at the ruler's call ( Ulul-Amr).

Heathcote considers the tribal system to be the best way of organizing large groups of people in a country that is geographically difficult, and in a society that, from a materialistic point of view, has an uncomplicated lifestyle.

## Religions



Religiously, Afghans are over 99% Muslims: approximately 74-80% Sunni and 19-25% Shi'a (estimates vary). Up until the mid-1980s, there were about 30,000 to 150,000 Hindus and Sikhs living in different cities, mostly in Jalalabad, Kabul, and Kandahar.

There was a small Jewish community in Afghanistan (*see Bukharan Jews*) who fled the country after the 1979 Soviet invasion, and only one individual, Zablun Simintov, remains today.

## Economy

Afghanistan is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). It is an impoverished country, one of the world's poorest and least developed. Two-thirds of the population lives on fewer than 2 US dollars a day. Its economy has suffered greatly from the 1979 Soviet invasion and subsequent conflicts, while severe drought added to the nation's difficulties in 1998–2001.

The economically active population in 2002 was about 11 million (out of a total of an estimated 29 million). As of 2005, the official unemployment rate is at 40%. The number of non-skilled young people is estimated at 3 million, which is likely to increase by some 300,000 per annum.

The nation's economy began to improve since 2002 due to the infusion of multi-billion US dollars in international assistance and investments, as well as remittances from expats. It is also due to dramatic improvements in agricultural production and the end of a four-year drought in most of the country.

The real value of *non-drug* GDP increased by 29% in 2002, 16% in 2003, 8% in 2004 and 14% in 2005. As much as one-third of Afghanistan's GDP comes from growing poppy and illicit drugs including opium and its two derivatives, morphine and heroin, as well as hashish production. Opium production in Afghanistan has soared to a new record in 2007, with an increase on last year of more than a third, the United Nations has said. Some 3.3 million Afghans are now involved in producing opium. In a recent article in the Washington Quarterly, Peter van Ham and Jorrit Kamminga argue that the international community should establish a pilot project and investigate a licensing scheme to start the production of medicines such as morphine and codeine from poppy crops to help it escape the economic dependence on opium:

According to a 2004 report by the Asian Development Bank, the present reconstruction effort is two-pronged: first it focuses on rebuilding critical physical infrastructure, and second, on building modern public sector institutions from the remnants of Soviet style planning to ones that promote market-led development. In 2006, two US companies, Black & Veatch and the Louis Berger Group, have won a US 1.4 billion dollar contract to rebuild roads, power lines and water supply systems of Afghanistan.

One of the main drivers for the current economic recovery is the return of over 4 million refugees from neighbouring countries and the West, who brought with them fresh energy, entrepreneurship and wealth-creating skills as well as much needed funds to start up businesses. What is also helping is the estimated US 2–3



Blue Mosque in Mazari Sharif.



A business centre in Kabul.

billion dollars in international assistance every year, the partial recovery of the agricultural sector, and the reestablishment of market institutions. Private developments are also beginning to get underway. In 2006, a Dubai-based Afghan family opened a \$25 million Coca Cola bottling plant in Afghanistan.

While the country's current account deficit is largely financed with the donor money, only a small portion – about 15% – is provided directly to the government budget. The rest is provided to non-budgetary expenditure and donor-designated projects through the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. The government had a central budget of only \$350 million in 2003 and an estimated \$550 million in 2004. The country's foreign exchange reserves totals about \$500 million. Revenue is mostly generated through customs, as income and corporate tax bases are negligible.

Inflation had been a major problem until 2002. However, the depreciation of the Afghani in 2002 after the introduction of the new notes (which replaced 1,000 old Afghani by 1 new Afghani) coupled with the relative stability compared to previous periods has helped prices to stabilize and even decrease between December 2002 and February 2003, reflecting the turnaround appreciation of the new Afghani currency. Since then, the index has indicated stability, with a moderate increase toward late 2003.

The Afghan government and international donors seem to remain committed to improving access to basic necessities, infrastructure development, education, housing and economic reform. The central government is also focusing on improved revenue collection and public sector expenditure discipline. The rebuilding of the financial sector seems to have been so far successful. Money can now be transferred in and out of the country via official banking channels. Since 2003, over sixteen new banks have opened in the country, including Afghanistan International Bank, Kabul Bank, Azizi Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, First Micro Finance Bank, and others. A new law on private investment provides three to seven-year tax holidays to eligible companies and a four-year exemption from exports tariffs and duties.

Some private investment projects, backed with national support, are also beginning to pick up steam in Afghanistan. An initial concept design called the City of Light Development, envisioned by Dr. Hisham N. Ashkouri, Principal of ARCADD, Inc. for the development and the implementation of a privately based investment enterprise has been proposed for multi-function commercial, historic and cultural development within the limits of the Old City of Kabul along the Southern side of the Kabul River and along Jade Meywand Avenue, revitalizing some of the most commercial and historic districts in the City of Kabul, which contains numerous historic mosques and shrines as well as viable commercial activities among war damaged buildings. Also incorporated in the design is a new complex for the Afghan National Museum.

According to the US Geological Survey and the Afghan Ministry of Mines and Industry, Afghanistan may be possessing up to 36 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, 3.6 billion barrels of petroleum and up to 1,325 million barrels of natural gas liquids. This could mark the turning point in Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts. Energy exports could generate the revenue that Afghan officials need to modernize the country's infrastructure and expand economic opportunities for the beleaguered and fractious population. Other reports show that the country has huge amounts of gold, copper, coal, iron ore and other minerals. The government of Afghanistan is in the process of extracting and exporting its copper reserves, which will be earning \$1.2 billion US dollars in royalties and taxes every year for the next 30 years. It will also provide permanent labor to 3,000 of its citizens.



The plan for Kabul's nine billion dollar future modern urban development project, the City of Light Development.

## Infrastructure

### Transport

Ariana Afghan Airlines is the national airlines carrier, with domestic flights between Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif. International flights include to Dubai, Frankfurt, Istanbul and a number of other destinations. There are also limited domestic and international flight services available from Kam Air, Pamir Airways and Safi Airlines.

The country has limited rail service with Turkmenistan. There are two railway projects currently in progress, one is between Herat and the Iranian city Mashad while another is between Kandahar and Quetta in Pakistan. Most people who travel from one city to another use bus services. Automobiles have recently become more widely available, with Land Rover, BMW, Toyota, Nissan and Hyundai dealerships in Kabul. Large number of second-hand vehicles are also arriving from the UAE. Nearly all highways and roads are being rebuilt in the country.

### Communications and technology

Telecommunication services in the country are provided by Afghan Wireless, Etisalat, Roshan, Areeba and Afghan Telecom. In 2006, the Afghan Ministry of Communications signed a US\$64.5 million agreement with ZTE Corporation for the establishment of a countrywide fibre optic cable network. This will improve telephone, internet, television and radio broadcast services throughout the country.

Television and radio broadcastings are available in most parts of the country, with local and international channels or stations.

The nation's post service is also operating. Package delivery services such as FedEx, DHL and others are also available.

## Education



Construction of the *Afghanistan-Tajikistan Bridge* which was completed in August 2007 and is now the largest bridge in Central Asia.

As of 2006 more than four million male and female students are enrolled in schools throughout the country. Primary education is totally free and available for all boys and girls.

Literacy of the entire population is estimated (as of 1999) at 36%, the male literacy rate is 51% and female literacy is 21%. Up to now there are 9,500 schools in the country.

Another aspect of education that is rapidly changing in Afghanistan is the face of higher education. Following the fall of the Taliban, Kabul University was reopened to both male and female students. In 2006, the American University of Afghanistan also opened its doors, with the aim of providing a world-class, English-language, co-educational learning environment in Afghanistan. The university accepts students from Afghanistan and the neighboring countries. Construction work will soon start at the new site selected for University of Balkh in Mazari Sharif. The new building for the university, including the building for the Engineering Department, would be constructed at 600 acres (2.4 km<sup>2</sup>) of land at the cost of 250 million US dollars.



Female students at Kabul University.

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan>"

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# Bangladesh



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**Bangladesh** (Bengali: বাংলাদেশ [ˈbaŋlad̪eʃ] **Bangladesh**), officially the **People's Republic of Bangladesh** (Bengali: গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ **Gônoprojatontri Bangladesh**), is a country in South Asia. It is bordered by India on all sides except for a small border with Myanmar to the far southeast and by the Bay of Bengal to the south. Together with the Indian state of West Bengal, it makes up the ethnolinguistic region of Bengal. The name *Bangladesh* means "Country of Bengal" in the official Bengali language.

The borders of the region that constitutes present-day Bangladesh were established in the 1947 Partition of India when the region became the eastern wing of newly formed Pakistan. The pairing, based on their common religion (Islam), proved geographically awkward since an expanse of foreign Indian territory, 1 600 km (1 000 mi) wide, separated the two wings. Subjected to political and linguistic discrimination as well as economic neglect at the hands of West Pakistan, the Bengalis of East Pakistan declared independence in 1971. After a liberation war, with help from India and the Soviet Union, Bangladesh was born. In spite of its liberation narrative, Bangladesh's development has since been marred by political turmoil, with fourteen different heads of government and at least four military coups.

Bangladesh is among the most densely populated countries in the world and has a high poverty level. Geographically the country straddles the fertile Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta and is subject to annual monsoon floods and cyclones. The government is a parliamentary democracy which has been suspended under emergency law since 11 January 2007. Bangladesh is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, SAARC, BIMSTEC, the OIC, and the D-8.

## History

<p><b>গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ</b> <i>Gônoprojatontri Bangladesh</i> <b>People's Republic of Bangladesh</b></p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	<p>Image:COA of Bangladesh.svg</p> <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Amar Shonar Bangla</i> <i>My Golden Bengal</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Dhaka
<b>Official languages</b>	Bengali (Bangla)
<b>Demonym</b>	Bangladeshi
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary republic
<span> </span> - President	Iajuddin Ahmed



The *Shaheed Minar*, which commemorates the Language Movement, is a well known landmark in Bangladesh.

Remnants of civilisation in the greater Bengal region date back four thousand years, when the region was settled by Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, and Austro-Asiatic peoples. The exact origin of the word "Bangla" or "Bengal" is unknown, though it is believed to be derived from *Bang*, the Dravidian-speaking tribe that settled in the area around the year 1000 BC.

After the arrival of Indo-Aryans, the kingdom of Gangaridai was formed from at least the seventh century BC, which later united with Bihar under the Magadha and Maurya Empires. Bengal was later part of the Gupta Empire from the third to the sixth centuries CE. Following its collapse, a dynamic Bengali named Shashanka founded an impressive yet short-lived kingdom. Shashanka is considered as the first independent king in the history of Bangladesh. After a period

of anarchy, the Buddhist Pala dynasty ruled the region for four hundred years, followed by a shorter reign of the Hindu Sena dynasty. Islam was introduced to Bengal in the twelfth century by Sufi missionaries, and subsequent Muslim conquests helped spread Islam throughout the region. Bakhtiar Khilji, a Turkish general, defeated Lakshman Sen of the Sena dynasty and conquered large parts of Bengal. The region was ruled by dynasties of Sultans and feudal lords for the next few hundred years. By the 16th century, the Mughal Empire controlled Bengal, and Dhaka became an important provincial centre of Mughal administration.

European traders arrived late in the 15th century, and their influence grew until the British East India Company gained control of Bengal following the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The bloody rebellion of 1857, known as the Sepoy Mutiny, resulted in transfer of authority to the crown, with a British viceroy running the administration. During colonial rule, famine racked the Indian subcontinent many times, including the Great Bengal famine of 1943 that claimed 3 million lives.

Between 1905 and 1911, an abortive attempt was made to divide the province of Bengal into two zones, with Dhaka being the capital of the eastern zone. When India was partitioned in 1947, Bengal was partitioned along religious lines, with the western part going to India and the eastern part joining Pakistan as a province called East Bengal (later renamed East Pakistan), with its capital at Dhaka.

In 1950, land reform was accomplished in East Bengal with the abolishment of the feudal zamindari system. However, despite the economic and demographic weight of the east, Pakistan's government and military were largely dominated by the upper classes from the west. The Bengali Language Movement of

- Prime Minister	vacant
- Chief Adviser (Interim Caretaker Government)	Fakhruddin Ahmed
<b>Independence</b>	from Pakistan
- Declared	March 26, 1971
- Victory Day	December 16 1971
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	144,000 km <sup>2</sup> ( 94th) 55,599 sq mi
- Water (%)	7.0
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	150,448,340 ( 7th)
- Density	1045/km <sup>2</sup> ( 11th) 2,706/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	US\$360.9 billion ( 31st)
- Per capita	US\$2,270 ( 144th)
<b>Gini (2000)</b>	31.8 (medium)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.547 (medium) ( 140th)
<b>Currency</b>	Taka ( BDT)
<b>Time zone</b>	BDT ( UTC+6)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC+6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bd
<b>Calling code</b>	+880
<small><sup>1</sup> Adjusted population, p.4, Population Census 2001, Preliminary Report. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2001-08).</small>	

1952 was the first sign of friction between the two wings of Pakistan. Dissatisfaction with the central government over economic and cultural issues continued to rise through the next decade, during which the Awami League emerged as the political voice of the Bengali-speaking population. It agitated for autonomy in the 1960s, and in 1966, its president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was jailed; he was released in 1969 after an unprecedented popular uprising.

In 1970, a massive cyclone devastated the coast of East Pakistan, and the central government responded poorly. The Bengali population's anger was compounded when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whose Awami League won a majority in Parliament in the 1970 elections, was blocked from taking office. After staging compromise talks with Mujib, President Yahya Khan arrested him on the night of March 25, 1971, and launched Operation Searchlight, a sustained military assault on East Pakistan. Yahya's methods were extremely bloody, and the violence of the war resulted in many civilian deaths. Chief targets included intellectuals and Hindus, and about ten million refugees fled to neighbouring India (LaPorte, p. 103). Estimates of those massacred range from three hundred thousand to 3 million.

Most of the Awami League leaders fled and set up a government-in-exile in Calcutta, India. The Bangladesh Liberation War lasted for nine months. The guerrilla Mukti Bahini and Bengali regulars eventually received support from the Indian Armed Forces in December 1971. Under the command of Lt. General J.S. Arora, the Indian Army achieved a decisive victory over Pakistan on 16 December, 1971, taking over 90,000 prisoners of war in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.

After its independence, Bangladesh became a parliamentary democracy, with Mujib as the Prime Minister. In the 1973 parliamentary elections, the Awami League gained an absolute majority. A nationwide famine occurred during 1973 and 1974, and in early 1975, Mujib initiated a one-party socialist rule with his newly formed BAKSAL. On August 15, 1975, Mujib and his family were assassinated by mid-level military officers.

A series of bloody coups and counter-coups in the following three months culminated in the ascent to power of General Ziaur Rahman, who reinstated multi-party politics and founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Zia's rule ended when he was assassinated in 1981 by elements of the military. Bangladesh's next major ruler was General Hossain Mohammad Ershad, who gained power in a bloodless coup in 1982 and ruled until 1990, when he was forced to resign under western donor pressure in a major shift in international policy after the end of communism when anti-communist dictators were no longer felt necessary. Since then, Bangladesh has reverted to a parliamentary democracy. Zia's widow, Khaleda Zia, led the Bangladesh Nationalist Party to parliamentary victory at the general election in 1991 and became the first female Prime Minister in Bangladesh's history. However, the Awami League, headed by Sheikh Hasina, one of Mujib's surviving daughters, clinched power at the next election in 1996 but lost to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party again in 2001. These two female ex-prime ministers are now in imprisonment in a sub-jail due to their suspected attachment with corruption.

In 11 January of 2007, following widespread violence, a caretaker government was appointed to administer the next general election. The country had suffered from extensive corruption, disorder and political violence. The new caretaker government has made it a priority to root out corruption from all levels of government. To this end, many notable politicians and officials, along with large numbers of lesser officials and party members, have been arrested on corruption charges. The caretaker government claims to be paving the way for free and fair elections to be held before the end of 2008.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,  
founder of Bangladesh.

## Government and politics



Jatiyo Sangshad Bhaban houses the Parliament of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy with Islam as the state religion. Direct elections involving all citizens over the age 18 are held every five years for the unicameral parliament. The parliament building is known as the *Jatiyo Sangshad* designed by architect Louis Kahn and currently has 300 seats, elected from single-member constituencies. The Prime Minister, as the head of government, forms the cabinet and runs the day-to-day affairs of state. While the Prime Minister is formally appointed by the President, he or she must be an MP who commands the confidence of the majority of parliament. The President is the head of state, a largely ceremonial post elected by the parliament.

However the President's powers are substantially expanded during the tenure of a caretaker government, which is responsible for the conduct of elections and transfer of power. The officers of the caretaker government must be non-partisan and are given three months to complete their task. This transitional arrangement is an innovation that

was pioneered by Bangladesh in its 1991 election and then institutionalised in 1996 through its 13th constitutional amendment.

The Constitution of Bangladesh was drafted in 1972 and has undergone fourteen amendments. The highest judicial body is the Supreme Court. Justices are appointed by the President. The judicial and law enforcement institutions are weak. Separation of powers, judicial from executive was finally implemented on the 1st of November, 2007. It is expected that this separation will make the judiciary stronger and impartial. Laws are loosely based on English common law, but family laws such as marriage and inheritance are based on religious scripts, and therefore differ between religious communities.

The two major parties in Bangladesh are the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Bangladesh Awami League. BNP is led by Khaleda Zia and finds its allies among Islamist parties like Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and Islami Oikya Jot, while Sheikh Hasina's Awami League aligns with leftist and secularist parties. Hasina and Zia are bitter rivals who have dominated politics for 15 years; both are women and each is related to one of the leaders of the independence movement. Another important player is the Jatiya Party, headed by former military ruler Ershad. The Awami League-BNP rivalry has been bitter and punctuated by protests, violence and murder. Student politics is particularly strong in Bangladesh, a legacy from the liberation movement era. Almost all parties have highly active student wings, and students have been elected to the Parliament.

Two radical Islamist parties, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), were banned in February 2005. Bomb attacks taking place since 1999 have been blamed on those groups, and hundreds of suspected members have been detained in numerous security operations, including the head of those two parties in 2006. The first recorded case of a suicide bomb attack in Bangladesh took place in November 2005.

The 2006 election was postponed indefinitely and emergency law declared in January 2007 as the caretaker government of Fakhruddin Ahmed aims to revise the voter list and crack down on corruption. The government aims to hold new elections by 2008 but lack of coordination between Election Commission and the

### National symbols of Bangladesh

<b>Anthem</b>	Amar Shonar Bangla
<b>Animal</b>	Royal Bengal Tiger
<b>Bird</b>	Oriental Magpie Robin
<b>Fish</b>	Hilsa
<b>Flower</b>	White Water Lily
<b>Fruit</b>	Jackfruit
<b>Sport</b>	Kabadi
<b>Calendar</b>	Bengali calendar



Government, and their recent activities have created uncertainty about Election while the two leading candidates, Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, are facing criminal charges in court and the banned indoor politics is yet to be exercised.

Meanwhile the Bangladesh Military has expressed their interest in controlling the country with statements like "own brand of Democracy" and making changes in the constitution to allow military participation in politics. They are also assisting the interim Government of Bangladesh in a drive against corruption which seems to be mostly targeted against the politicians. The military has also imposed censorship of the national media and closing down/hampering private TV stations.

## Foreign policy and military

Bangladesh pursues a moderate foreign policy that places heavy reliance on multinational diplomacy, especially at the United Nations. In 1974 Bangladesh joined both the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations and has since been elected to serve two terms on the Security Council in 1978-1979 and 2000–2001. In the 1980s, Bangladesh played a lead role in founding the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in order to expand relations with other South Asian states. Since the founding of SAARC 1985, a Bangladeshi has held the post of Secretary General on two occasions.

Bangladesh's most important and complex foreign relationships are with India and Pakistan. These relationships are informed by historical and cultural ties and form an important part of the domestic political discourse.

Bangladesh's relationship with India began on a positive note because of India's assistance in the independence war and reconstruction. Throughout the years, relations between both countries have fluctuated for a number of reasons. The Washington Post reported on a major source of tension between Bangladesh and India, the Farakka Dam (article titled “India’s Major Gains and Losses in World Affairs” by M.M. Ali, March 1997, pg. 25). In 1975, India defied international law and the rights of Bangladeshi people by building a dam on the Ganges River 11 miles (18 km) from the Bangladeshi border. The dam diverts much needed water from Bangladesh and adds a man-made disaster to the country plagued by natural disasters. The dam also has terrible ecological consequences. Bangladesh claims that India feels too comfortable in playing the role of "Big Brother" to smaller, weaker nations. India has voiced concerns about anti-Indian separatists and Islamic militants allegedly being harboured across their 2,500-mile (4,000 km) border, as well as the flow of illegal migrants, and is building a fence along most of it. But at the 2007 SAARC meeting both nations pledged to work cooperatively on security, economic and border issues.

The current strength of the army is around 200,000, the air force 7,000, and navy 14,950. In addition to traditional defense roles, the military has been called on to provide support to civil authorities for disaster relief and internal security during periods of political unrest. Bangladesh is not currently active in any ongoing war, but it did contribute 2,300 troops to the coalition that fought in the 1991 Gulf War and Bangladesh is consistently a top contributor to UN peacekeeping forces around the world. As of May 2007, Bangladesh had major deployments in Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sudan, Timor-Leste and Cote d'Ivoire.

Bangladesh enjoys relatively warm ties with the People's Republic of China which has, particularly in the past decade, increased economic cooperation with the South Asian nation. Between 2006-07, trade between the two nations rose by 28.5% and there have been agreements to grant various Bangladeshi commodities tariff-free access to the Chinese market. Military cooperation between the Military of Bangladesh and the People's Liberation Army is also increasing, with joint military agreements signed and Bangladesh procuring Chinese arms which range from small arms to large naval surface combatants such as the Chinese

Jiangwei Class Missile Frigate.

## Divisions, districts, and upazilas



Administrative divisions of Bangladesh. This map shows the highest level unit called a Division.

Bangladesh is divided into six administrative divisions, each named after their respective divisional headquarters: Barisal (বরিশাল), Chittagong (চট্টগ্রাম), Dhaka (ঢাকা), Khulna (খুলনা), Rajshahi (রাজশাহী), and Sylhet (সিলেট).

Divisions are subdivided into districts (*zila*). There are 64 districts in Bangladesh, each further subdivided into *upazila* (subdistricts) or *thana* ("police stations"). The area within each police station, except for those in metropolitan areas, is divided into several *unions*, with each union consisting of multiple villages. In the metropolitan areas, police stations are divided into wards, which are further divided into *mahallas*. There are no elected officials at the divisional, district or upazila levels, and the administration is composed only of government officials. Direct elections are held for each union (or ward), electing a chairperson and a number of members. In 1997, a parliamentary act was passed to reserve three seats (out of twelve) in every union for female candidates.

Dhaka is the capital and largest city of Bangladesh. Other major cities include Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Barisal. These metropolitan cities have mayoral elections, while other municipalities elect a chairperson. Mayors and chairpersons are elected for a span of five years.

City	City population	Metro population
Dhaka	6,969,458	11,918,442
Chittagong	3,920,222	3,920,222
Khulna	1,400,689	1,400,689
Rajshahi	727,083	727,083
Sylhet	339,368	339,368
Barisal	291,769	291,769



Dhaka

Image:Chittagong02.jpg  
Chittagong

## Geography and climate

Bangladesh is located in the low-lying Ganges-Brahmaputra River Delta or Ganges Delta. This delta is formed by the confluence of the Ganges (local name Padma or *Pôdda*), Brahmaputra ( Jamuna or *Jomuna*), and Meghna rivers and their respective tributaries. The Ganges unites with the Jamuna (main channel of the Brahmaputra) and later joins the Meghna to eventually empty into the Bay of Bengal. The alluvial soil deposited by these rivers has created some of the most fertile plains in the world. Bangladesh has 58 trans-boundary rivers, making water issues politically complicated to resolve - in most cases as the lower riparian state to India. Most parts of Bangladesh are less than 12 metres (39 ft) above the sea level, and it is believed that about 50% of the land would be flooded if the sea level were to rise by 1 metre (3 ft).

The highest point in Bangladesh is in Mowdok range at 1,052 metres (3,451 ft) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the southeast of the country. A major part of the coastline comprises a marshy jungle, the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world and home to diverse flora and fauna, including the Royal Bengal Tiger. In 1997, this region was declared endangered.

Straddling the Tropic of Cancer, Bangladeshi climate is tropical with a mild winter from October to March, a hot, humid summer from March to June. A warm and humid monsoon season lasts from June to October and supplies most of the country's rainfall. Natural calamities, such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, and tidal bores occur almost every year, combined with the effects of deforestation, soil degradation and erosion. Cox's Bazar, south of the city of Chittagong, has a beach that stretches uninterrupted over 120 kilometres (75 mi).

In September 1998 Bangladesh saw the most severe flooding the modern world has seen. As the Brahmaputra, Ganges and Meghna split over and swallowed 300,000 houses, 6,000 miles (9,700 km) of road and 1,600 miles (2,600 km) of embankment 1,000 people were killed and 30 million more were made homeless with 130,000 cattle killed, 50 square kilometres of land destroyed and 11,000 km of roads damaged or destroyed. 66% of the country was underwater. There were several reasons for the severity of the flooding. Firstly, there were unusually high monsoon rains. Secondly, the Himalayas shed off an equally unusually high amount of melt water that year. Lastly, trees that usually intercept rain water were cut down for fire wood or to make space for animals.

## Economy



Satellite image presenting physical features of Bangladesh.

Despite sustained domestic and international efforts to improve economic and demographic prospects, Bangladesh remains a developing nation, in part due to its large population. Its per capita income in 2006 was US\$2300 (on purchasing power parity basis) compared to the world average of \$10,200. Yet, as the World Bank notes in its July 2005 Country Brief, the country has made significant progress in human development in the areas of literacy, gender parity in schooling, and reduction of population growth.

Jute was once the economic engine of the country. Its share of the world export market peaked in the Second World War and the late 1940s at 80% and even in the early 1970s accounted for 70% of its export earnings. However, polypropylene products began to substitute for jute products worldwide and the jute industry started to decline. Bangladesh grows very significant quantities of rice(chal), tea (Cha) and mustard. Although two-thirds of Bangladeshis are farmers, more than three quarters of Bangladesh's export earnings come from the garment industry, which began attracting foreign investors in the 1980s due to cheap labour and low conversion cost. In 2002, the industry exported US\$5 billion worth of products. The industry now employs more than 3 million workers, 90% of whom are women. A large part of foreign currency earnings also comes from the remittances sent by expatriates living in other countries.



Near the town of Cox's Bazaar in southern Bangladesh. Many industries in Bangladesh are still primitive by modern standards.

Image:BDricefield.jpg

Worker in a paddy field - a common scene throughout Bangladesh. The economy of Bangladesh is often cited to be agro-based because of its dependency on agriculture.

Obstacles to growth include frequent cyclones and floods, inefficient state-owned enterprises, mismanaged port facilities, a growth in the labour force that has outpaced jobs, inefficient use of energy resources (such as natural gas), insufficient power supplies, slow implementation of economic reforms, political infighting and corruption. According to the World Bank, "among Bangladesh's most significant obstacles to growth are poor governance and weak public institutions."

Despite these hurdles, the country has achieved an average annual growth rate of 5% since 1990, according to the World Bank. Bangladesh has seen expansion of its middle class, and its consumer industry has also grown. In December 2005, four years after its report on the emerging "BRIC" economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), Goldman Sachs named Bangladesh one of the "Next Eleven," along with Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and seven other countries. Bangladesh has seen a dramatic increase in foreign direct investment. A number of multinational corporations, including Unocal Corporation and Tata, have made major investments, with the natural gas sector being a priority. In December 2005, the Central Bank of Bangladesh projected GDP growth around 6.5%.

One significant contributor to the development of the economy has been the widespread propagation of microcredit by Muhammad Yunus (awarded the Nobel peace prize in 2006) through the Grameen Bank. By the late 1990s, Grameen Bank had 2.3 million members, along with 2.5 million members of other similar organisations.

In order to enhance economic growth, the government set up several export processing zones to attract foreign investment. These are managed by the Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority.

## Demographics

Recent (2005-2007) estimates of Bangladesh's population range from 142 to 159 million, making it the 7th most populous nation in the world. With a land area of 144,000 square kilometers, ranked 94th), the population density is remarkable. A striking comparison is offered by the fact that Russia's population is slightly smaller. Indeed Bangladesh has the highest population density in the world, excluding a handful of city-states. Bangladesh's population growth was among the highest in the world in the 1960s and 1970s, when the count grew from 50 to 90 million, but with the promotion of birth control in the 1980s, the growth rate slowed. The total fertility rate is now 3.1 children per woman, compared with 6.2 thirty years ago. The population is relatively young, with the 0–25 age group comprising 60%, while 3% are 65 or older. Life expectancy is 63 years for both males and females.

Bangladesh is ethnically homogeneous, with Bengalis comprising 98% of the population. The remainder are mostly Bihari migrants and indigenous tribal groups. There are thirteen tribal groups located in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the most populous of the tribes are the Chakmas. The region has been a source for ethnic tension since the inception of Bangladesh. The largest tribal groups outside the Hill Tracts are the Santhals and the Garos (Achiks). There are also Kaibartta, Mundas, Oraons, and Zomi ethnic groups. Human trafficking has been a lingering problem in Bangladesh and illegal immigration has remained a cause of friction with Myanmar and India..

The official and most widely used language in Bangladesh, as in West Bengal, is Bangla (Bengali) , an Indo-Aryan language of Sanskrit origin with its own script. English is used as second language among the middle and upper classes and in higher education. Since a President Order in 1987, Bangla is used for all official correspondence except those that are to foreign recipients.

Health and education levels have recently improved as poverty levels have decreased. Most Bangladeshis are rural, living on subsistence farming. Health problems abound, ranging from surface water contamination, to arsenic in the groundwater, and diseases including malaria, leptospirosis and dengue. The literacy rate in Bangladesh is approximately 41%. There is gender disparity, though, as literacy rates are 50% among men and 31% among women, according to a 2004 UNICEF estimate. Literacy has gone up due to many programmes introduced in the country. Among the most successful ones are the *Food for education* (FFE) programme introduced in 1993, and a stipend programme for women at the primary and secondary levels.

The two major religions practiced in Bangladesh are Islam (89.7%) and Hinduism (9.2%). About 96% of the Muslims are Sunni while over 3% are Shi'a and remainders are Ahmadis. Ethnic Biharis are predominantly Shia Muslims. Other religious groups include Buddhists (0.7% and mostly of Theravada sect), Christians (0.3% amd mostly of Catholic denomination), and Animists (0.1%). Bangladesh ranks fourth after Indonesia and Pakistan among Muslim majority nations. As India has a higher Muslim population, Bangladesh ranks fourth in this category.

## Culture

A new state for an old nation, Bangladesh has a culture that encompasses elements both old and new. The Bengali language boasts a rich literary heritage, which Bangladesh shares with the Indian state of West Bengal. The earliest literary text in Bangla is the eighth century Charyapada. Bangla literature in the medieval age was often either religious (e.g. Chandidas), or adaptations from other languages (e.g. Alaol). Bangla literature matured in the nineteenth century. Its greatest icons are the poets Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Bangladesh also has a long tradition in folk literature, evidenced by *Maimansingha Gitika*, *Thakurmar Jhuli* or stories related to *Gopal Bhar*.

The musical tradition of Bangladesh is lyrics-based (*Baniprodhan*), with minimal instrumental accompaniment. The Baul tradition is a unique heritage of Bangla folk music, and there are numerous other musical traditions in Bangladesh, which vary from one region to the other. Gombhira, Bhatiali, Bhawaiya are a few of the better-known musical forms. Folk music of Bengal is often accompanied by the ektara, an instrument with only one string. Other instruments include the dotara, dhol, flute, and tabla. Bangladesh also has an active heritage in North Indian classical music. Similarly, Bangladeshi dance forms draw from folk traditions, especially those of the tribal groups, as well as the broader Indian dance tradition. Bangladesh produces about 80 films a year. Mainstream Hindi films are also quite popular, as are films from Kolkata, which has its own thriving Bengali-language movie industry. Around 200 dailies are published in Bangladesh, along with more than 1800 periodicals. However, regular readership is low, nearly about 15% of the population. Bangladeshis listen to a variety of local and national radio programmes from Bangladesh Betar, as well as Bangla services from the BBC and Voice of America. There is a state-controlled television channel, but in the last few years, privately owned channels have grown considerably.



Ruins of the ancient Buddhist monastery in Mahasthangarh, Bogra.



Intricate design in a *Nakshikatha*, a traditional stitched quilt.

The culinary tradition of Bangladesh has close relations to Indian and Middle Eastern cuisine as well as having many unique traits. Rice and curry are traditional favourites. Bangladeshis make distinctive sweetmeats from milk products; some common ones are *Rôshogolla*, *Chômchôm* and *Kaloram*.

The sari (*shari*) is by far the most widely worn dress by Bangladeshi women. However, the salwar kameez (*shaloar kamiz*) is also quite popular, and in urban areas some women wear Western attire. Among men, European dressing has greater acceptance. Men also use the *kurta-paejama* combination, often on religious occasions. The lungi, a kind of long skirt, is widely worn by Bangladeshi men.

The two Eids, Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha are the largest festivals in the Islamic calendar. The day before Eid ul-Fitr is called *Chād Rat* (the night of the Moon), and is often marked by firecrackers. Other Muslim holidays are also observed. Major Hindu festivals are Durga Puja and Saraswati Puja. Buddha Purnima, which marks the birth of Gautama Buddha, is one of the most important Buddhist festivals while Christmas, called *Bôṛodin* (Great day) in Bangla is celebrated by the minority Christian population. The most important secular festival is Pohela Baishakh or Bengali New Year, the beginning of the Bengali calendar. Other festivities include Nobanno, *Poush parbon* (festival of Poush) and observance of national days like Shohid Dibosh.

Cricket is one of the most popular sports in Bangladesh. In 2000, the Bangladesh cricket team was granted Test cricket status and joined the elite league of

national teams permitted by the International Cricket Council to play test matches. Other popular sports include football (soccer), field hockey, tennis, badminton, handball, volleyball, chess, carom, and kabadi, a seven-a-side team-sport played without a ball or any other equipment, which is the national sport of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Sports Control Board regulates twenty-nine different sporting federations.

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# Bhutan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

The **Kingdom of Bhutan** (IPA: /buːˈtɑːn/) is a landlocked nation in South Asia. It is located amid the eastern end of the Himalaya Mountains and is bordered to the south, east and west by India and to the north by China. Bhutan is separated from Nepal by the Indian state of Sikkim. The Bhutanese call their country འབྲུག་ཡུལ་, *Druk Yul* (land of the thunder dragon).

Bhutan is one of the most isolated and least developed nations in the world. Foreign influences and tourism are regulated by the government to preserve the nation's traditional culture, identity and the environment. In 2006, however, *Business Week* rated Bhutan the happiest country in Asia and the eighth happiest country in the world. The landscape ranges from subtropical plains in the south to the Himalayan heights in the north, with some peaks exceeding 7,000 metres (23,000 feet). The state religion is Vajrayana Buddhism, and the population is predominantly Buddhist, with Hinduism being the second-largest religion. The capital and largest city is Thimphu. After centuries of direct monarchic rule, Bhutan held its first democratic elections in March 2008. Bhutan is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

## Name

"Bhutan" may be derived from the Sanskrit word *Bhu-Utthan* (highlands). In another theory of Sanskritisation, *Bhots-ant* means "End of Tibet", as Bhutan is immediately to Tibet's south.

Historically Bhutan was known by many names, such as *Lho Mon* (southern land of darkness), *Lho Tsendenjong* (southern land of the *Tsenden* cypress), *Lhomen Khazhi* (southern land of four approaches) and *Lho Men Jong* (southern land of medicinal herbs). Bhutan is also commonly known as The Last Shangrila.

## History

Stone tools, weapons, elephants, and remnants of large stone structures provide evidence that Bhutan was inhabited as early as 2000 BCE, although there are no existing records from that time. Historians

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<div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Brug rGyal-Khab</i> ( Wylie) <i>Dru Gäkhap</i> Kingdom of Bhutan</p> </div>	
	
Flag	Emblem
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Druk Tsendhen Koepay Gyelkhab</i> ("The Glorious Dragon Kingdom of Bhutan")</p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Thimphu
<b>Official languages</b>	Dzongkha
<b>Demonym</b>	Bhutanese
<b>Government</b>	Democracy,



have theorized that the state of *Lhomon* (literally, "southern darkness"), or *Monyul* ("Dark Land", a reference to the Monpa, the aboriginal peoples of Bhutan) may have existed between 500 BCE and 600 CE. The names *Lhomon Tsendenjong* (Sandalwood Country), and *Lhomon Khashi*, or Southern Mon (country of four approaches) have been found in ancient Bhutanese and Tibetan chronicles.



View of Tashichoedzong, Thimphu, seat of the Bhutanese government since 1952

The earliest transcribed event in Bhutan was the passage of the Buddhist saint Padma Sambhava (also known as Guru Rinpoche) in 747. Bhutan's early history is unclear, because most of the records were destroyed after fire ravaged the ancient capital, Punakha, in 1827. By the 10th century, Bhutan's political development was heavily influenced by its religious history. However, there is no sufficient information stating that all historical records were available before the fire. Various sub-sects of Buddhism emerged which were patronised by the various Mongol and Tibetan overlords. After the decline of the Mongols in the 14th century, these sub-sects vied with each other for supremacy in the political and religious landscape, eventually leading to the ascendancy of the Drukpa sub-sect by the 16th century.

Until the early 17th century, Bhutan existed as a patchwork of minor warring fiefdoms, when the area was unified by the

Tibetan lama and military leader Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. To defend the country against intermittent Tibetan forays, Namgyal built a network of impregnable *dzong* (fortresses), and promulgated a code of law that helped to bring local lords under centralised control. Many such *dzong* still exist. After Namgyal's death in 1651, Bhutan fell into civil war. Taking advantage of the chaos, the Tibetans attacked Bhutan in 1710, and again in 1730 with the help of the Mongols. Both assaults were successfully thwarted, and an armistice was signed in 1759.

- King	Constitutional Monarchy Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk
- Prime Minister	Jigme Thinley ( DPT)
<b>Formation</b>	Early 17th century
- Wangchuk Dynasty	December 17, 1907
- Constitutional Monarchy	2008
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	47,000 km <sup>2</sup> ( 131st) 18,147 sq mi
- Water (%)	Not available yet
<b>Population</b>	
- estimate	672,425 (2005) <sup>1</sup>
- Density	45/km <sup>2</sup> ( 154th) 117/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$4.39 billion ( 160th)
- Per capita	\$5,477 ( 117th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.579 (medium) ( 133th)
<b>Currency</b>	Ngultrum ( ₮)
<b>Time zone</b>	BTT ( UTC+6:00)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC+6:00)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bt
<b>Calling code</b>	+975
<sup>1</sup> The population of Bhutan had been estimated based on the reported figure of about 1 million in the 1970s when the country had joined	



In the 18th century, the Bhutanese invaded and occupied the kingdom of Cooch Behar to the south. In 1772, Cooch Behar appealed to the British East India Company who assisted them in ousting the Bhutanese, and later in attacking Bhutan itself in 1774. A peace treaty was signed in which Bhutan agreed to retreat to its pre-1730 borders. However, the peace was tenuous, and border skirmishes with the British were to continue for the next 100 years.

The skirmishes eventually led to the Duar War (1864–1865), a confrontation over who would control the Bengal Duars. After Bhutan lost the war, the Treaty of Sinchula was signed between British India and Bhutan. As part of the war reparations, the Duars were ceded to the United Kingdom in exchange for a rent of Rs. 50,000. The treaty ended all hostilities between British India and Bhutan.

During the 1870s, power struggles between the rival valleys of Paro and Tongsa led to civil war in Bhutan, eventually leading to the ascendancy of Ugyen Wangchuck, the *ponlop* (governor) of Tongsa. From his power base in central Bhutan, Ugyen Wangchuck defeated his political enemies and united the country following several civil wars and rebellions in the period 1882–1885.

In 1907, an epochal year for the country, Ugyen Wangchuck was unanimously chosen as the hereditary king of the country by an assembly of leading Buddhist monks, government officials, and heads of important families. The British government promptly recognised the new monarchy, and in 1910 Bhutan signed a treaty which "let" Great Britain "guide" Bhutan's foreign affairs. In reality, this did not mean much given Bhutan's historical reticence. It also did not seem to apply to Bhutan's traditional relations with Tibet. The greatest impact of this treaty seems to be the perception that it meant Bhutan was not totally sovereign.

After India gained independence from the United Kingdom on August 15, 1947, Bhutan became one of the first countries to recognise India's independence. A treaty similar to the one of 1910 was signed August 8, 1949 with the newly independent India.

the United Nations and precise statistics were lacking . Thus using the annual increase rate of 2-3%, the most population estimates were around 2 million in the year 2000. A national census was carried out in 2005 and it turned out that the population was 672,425. Consequently, United Nations Population Division had down-estimated the country's population in the 2006 revision for the whole period from 1950 to 2050.

In 1953, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck established the country's legislature – a 130-member National Assembly – to promote a more democratic form of governance. In 1965, he set up a Royal Advisory Council, and in 1968 he formed a Cabinet. In 1971, Bhutan was admitted to the United Nations, having held observer status for three years. In July 1972, Jigme Singye Wangchuck ascended to the throne at the age of 16 after the death of his father, Dorji Wangchuck.

In the 1980s, in order to strengthen Bhutan's identity as a nation, the "one nation, one people" campaign was started to foster greater integration of the peripheral ethnic and cultural groups into mainstream Bhutanese society. The age-old code of conduct, known as *Driglam namzha*, and usage of the official national language, Dzongkha, was promoted. At around the same time, a nationwide census revealed a large population of Nepali origin in southern Bhutan. When the government attempted to remove what it considered as illegal settlers, there was a violent backlash; numerous acts of terrorism were carried out against government schools, hospitals, offices and neutral southern Bhutanese. In order to re-establish order in the south, the government drafted many young men and able-bodied civil servants into a militia force. Thousands of civilians, including a number of political dissidents, were expelled or fled to Nepal, where they were admitted into United Nations-run camps and given refugee status. Despite the best efforts of the Bhutanese government Nepal and India, as well as outside parties such as the United Nations, the European Union and the United States, a viable solution to this problem proves to be still elusive. At present, the United States is working towards resettling around 70,000 of these refugees in the US.

In 1998, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck introduced significant political reforms, transferring most of his administrative powers to the Council of Cabinet Ministers and allowing for impeachment of the King by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly. In late 2003, the Bhutanese army successfully launched a large-scale operation to flush out anti-India insurgents who were operating training camps in southern Bhutan.

In 1999, the government lifted a ban on television and the Internet, making Bhutan one of the last countries to introduce television. In his speech, the King said that television was a critical step to the modernisation of Bhutan as well as a major contributor to the country's Gross National Happiness (Bhutan is the only country to measure happiness), but warned that the "misuse" of television could erode traditional Bhutanese values.



The Trongsa Dzong.

A new constitution was presented in early 2005. In December 2005, Jigme Singye Wangchuck announced that he would abdicate the throne in his son's favour in 2008. On December 14, 2005, he announced that he would be abdicating immediately. Bhutan has now entered a new era of democracy, starting with its first national parliamentary elections in December 2007 and March 2008.

## Government and politics

Over the past decade, Bhutan's political system has developed from an absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy. In 1999, the fourth king of Bhutan created a body called the Lhengye Zhungtshog (Council of Ministers). The 'Druk Gyalpo' (King of Druk Yul) is head of state. Executive power is exercised by the Lhengye Zhungtshog, the council of ministers. Legislative power was vested in both the government and the former Grand National Assembly. On the 17th of December 2005, the 4th King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, announced to a stunned nation that the first general elections would be held in 2008, and that he would abdicate the throne in favour of his eldest son, the crown prince. King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck took the throne on December 14, 2006 upon his father's abdication. The Crowning ceremony is expected to be held in May 2008 and the Coronation Celebrations later in the year.

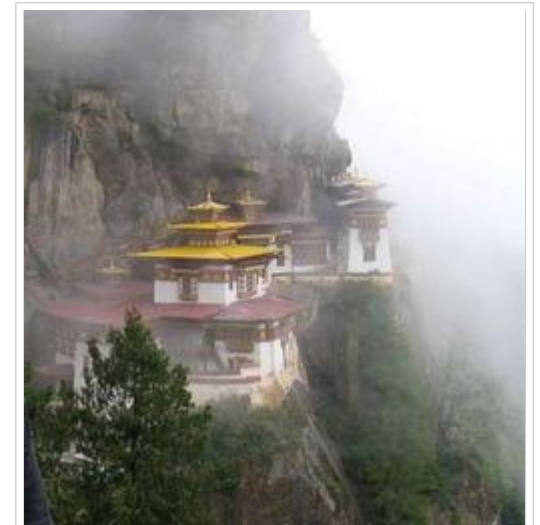
The new democratic system comprises an upper and lower house, the latter based on political party affiliations. Elections for the upper house ( National Council) were held on December 31, 2007, while elections for the lower house, the 47-seat National Assembly, were held on March 24, 2008. Two political parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) headed by Sangay Ngedup, and the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) headed by Jigmi Thinley, competed in the National Assembly election. The Druk Phuensum Tshogpa won the elections taking 45 out of 47 seats in the parliament.

Judicial power is vested in the courts of Bhutan. The Chief Justice is the administrative head of the Judiciary.

## Military and foreign affairs

The Royal Bhutan Army is Bhutan's military service. It includes the Royal Bodyguard and the Royal Bhutan Police. Membership is voluntary, and the minimum age for recruitment is 18. The standing army numbers about 6,000 and is trained by the Indian Army. It has an annual budget of about US\$13.7 million — 1.8 percent of the GDP.

Though the 1949 treaty with India is still sometimes misinterpreted to mean that India controlled Bhutan's foreign affairs, Bhutan handled all of its foreign affairs itself including the sensitive (to India) border demarcation issue with China. The 1949 treaty has been superseded by the 2007 treaty with India which made de-jure what was de-facto, that Bhutan was master of its own foreign relations. Bhutan has diplomatic relations with 22 countries, including the European Union, with missions in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Kuwait. It has two UN missions, one in New York and one in Geneva. Only India and Bangladesh have



The Taktshang Monastery, also known as the "Tiger's Nest". Bhutan is a predominantly Buddhist country, with the religion forming an integral part of everyday life.

residential embassies in Bhutan, while Thailand has a consulate office in Bhutan.

By a long standing treaty, Indian and Bhutanese citizens may travel to each other's countries without a passport or visa using their national identity cards instead. Bhutanese citizens may also work in India without legal restriction. Bhutan does not have formal diplomatic ties with its northern neighbour, China, although exchanges of visits at various levels between the two have significantly increased in the recent past. The first bilateral agreement between China and Bhutan was signed in 1998, and Bhutan has also set up consulates in Macau and Hong Kong. Bhutan's border with China is largely not demarcated and thus disputed in some places.

On November 13, 2005, Chinese soldiers crossed into Bhutan under the pretext that environmental conditions had forced their retreat south from the Himalayas. The Bhutanese government allowed this incursion (after the fact) on humanitarian grounds. Soon after, the Chinese began building roads and bridges within Bhutanese territory. Bhutanese Foreign Minister Khandu Wangchuk took up the matter with Chinese authorities after the issue was raised in Bhutanese parliament. In response, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang of the People's Republic of China has said that the border remains in dispute and that the two sides continue to work for a peaceful and cordial resolution of the dispute. An Indian intelligence officer has said that a Chinese delegation in Bhutan told the Bhutanese that they were "overreacting." The Bhutanese newspaper *Kuensel* has said that China might use the roads to further Chinese claims along the border.

On February 8, 2007, the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty PDF (30.6 KiB) was substantially revised. Whereas in the Treaty of 1949 Article 2 read as "The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations."

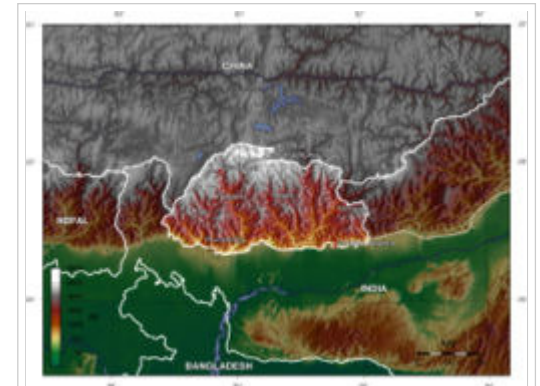
In the revised treaty it now reads as "In keeping with the abiding ties of close friendship and cooperation between Bhutan and India, the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other." The revised treaty also includes in it the preamble "Reaffirming their respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity", an element that was absent in the earlier version. The Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 2007 strengthens Bhutan's status as an independent and sovereign nation.

Bhutan has no formal relations with the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom or France. Informal contact with the United States is made through the U.S. embassy in New Delhi.

## Geography

The northern region consists of an arc of glaciated mountain peaks with an extremely cold climate at the highest elevations. Most peaks in the north are over 23,000 feet (7,000 m) above sea level; the highest point is claimed to be the Kula Kangri, at 24,780 feet (7,553 m), but detailed topographic studies claim Kula Kangri is wholly in Tibet and modern Chinese measurements claim that Gangkhar Puensum, which has the distinction of being the highest unclimbed mountain in the world, is higher at 24,835 feet (7,570 m). Watered by snow-fed rivers, alpine valleys in this region provide pasture for livestock, tended by a sparse population of migratory shepherds.

The Black Mountains in central Bhutan form a watershed between two major river systems: the Mo Chhu and the Drangme Chhu. Peaks in the Black Mountains range between 4,900 feet and 8,900 feet (1,500 m and 2,700 m) above sea level, and fast-flowing rivers have carved out deep gorges in the lower mountain areas. Woodlands of the central region provide most of Bhutan's forest production. The Torsa, Raidak, Sankosh, and Manas are the main rivers of Bhutan, flowing through this region. Most of the population lives in the central highlands.



Topographic map of Bhutan



Gangkhar Puensum from Ura La, Bhutan

In the south, the Shiwalik Hills are covered with dense, deciduous forests, alluvial lowland river valleys, and mountains up to around 4,900 feet (1,500 m) above sea level. The foothills descend into the subtropical Duars Plain. Most of the Duars is located in India, although a 6–9 mile (10–15 km) wide strip extends into Bhutan. The Bhutan Duars is divided into two parts: the northern and the southern Duars. The northern Duars, which abuts the Himalayan foothills, has rugged, sloping terrain and dry, porous soil with dense vegetation and abundant wildlife. The southern Duars has moderately fertile soil, heavy savannah grass, dense, mixed jungle, and freshwater springs. Mountain rivers, fed by either the melting snow or the monsoon rains, empty into the Brahmaputra River in India. Data released by the Ministry of Agriculture showed that the country had a forest cover of 64% as of October 2005.

The climate in Bhutan varies with altitude, from subtropical in the south to temperate in the highlands and polar-type climate, with year-round snow, in the north. Bhutan experiences five distinct seasons: summer, monsoon, autumn, winter and spring. Western Bhutan has the heavier monsoon rains; southern Bhutan has hot humid summers and cool winters; central and eastern Bhutan is temperate and drier than the west with warm summers and cool winters.

## Economy

The Ngultrum is the currency of Bhutan and its value is pegged to the Indian rupee. The rupee is also accepted as legal tender in the country.

Though Bhutan's economy is one of the world's smallest, it has grown rapidly in recent years, by eight percent in 2005 and 14 percent in 2006. This was mainly due to the commissioning of the gigantic Tala Hydroelectricity project. As of March 2006, Bhutan's per capita income was US\$1,321.

Bhutan's economy is based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and the sale of hydroelectric power to India. Agriculture provides the main livelihood for more than 80 percent of the population. Agrarian practices consist largely of subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Handicrafts, particularly weaving and the manufacture of religious art for home altars, are a small cottage industry. A landscape that varies from hilly to ruggedly mountainous has made the building of roads and other infrastructure difficult and expensive. This, and a lack of access to the sea, has meant that Bhutan has not been able to benefit from significant trading of its produce. Bhutan does not have any railways, though Indian Railways plans to link southern Bhutan to its vast network under an agreement signed in January 2005. The historic trade routes over the high Himalayas, which connected India to Tibet, have been closed since the 1959 military takeover of Tibet (although smuggling activity still brings Chinese goods into Bhutan).

The industrial sector is in a nascent stage, and though most production is cottage industry type larger industries are being encouraged and some industries such as cement, steel, ferro alloy, etc., have been set up. Most development projects, such as road construction, rely on Indian contract labour. Agricultural produce includes rice, chilies, dairy (some yak, mostly cow) products, buckwheat, barley, root crops, apples, and citrus and maize at lower elevations. Industries include cement, wood products, processed fruits, alcoholic beverages and calcium carbide.



Jacaranda trees in Bhutan



Terraced farming in the Punakha valley.

Incomes of over Nu 100,000 per annum are taxed, but very few wage and salary earners qualify. Bhutan's inflation rate was estimated at about three percent in 2003. Bhutan has a Gross Domestic Product of around USD 2.913 billion (adjusted to Purchasing Power Parity), making it the 162nd largest economy in the world.

Per capita income is around \$1,400, ranked 124th. Government revenues total \$272 million, though expenditures amount to \$350 million. 60 percent of the budget expenditure, however, is financed by India's Ministry of External Affairs. Bhutan's exports, principally electricity, cardamom, gypsum, timber, handicrafts, cement, fruit, precious stones and spices, total €128 million (2000 est.). Imports, however, amount to €164 million, leading to a trade deficit. Main items imported include fuel and lubricants, grain, machinery, vehicles, fabrics and rice. Bhutan's main export partner is India, accounting for 87.9 percent of its export goods. Bangladesh (4.6 percent) and the Philippines (two percent) are the other two top export partners. As its border with Tibet is closed, trade between Bhutan and China is now almost non-existent. Bhutan's import partners include India (71.3 percent), Japan (7.8 percent) and Austria (three percent).

In a response to accusations in 1987 by a journalist from UK's *Financial Times* that the pace of development in Bhutan was slow, the King said that "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product." This statement appears to have presaged recent findings by western economic psychologists, including 2002 Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman, that question the link between levels of income and happiness. The statement signaled his commitment to building an economy that is appropriate for Bhutan's culture, based on Buddhist spiritual values, and has served as a unifying vision for the economy. In a survey in 2005, 45 percent of Bhutanese reported being very happy, 52 percent reported being happy and only three percent reported not being happy. Based on this data, the Happy Planet Index estimates that the average level of life satisfaction in Bhutan is within the top 10 percent of nations worldwide, and certainly higher than other nations with similar levels of GDP per capita.



Haa Valley, September, 2006

## Districts

Bhutan is divided into four *dzongdey* (administrative zones). Each *dzongdey* is further divided into *dzongkhag* (districts). There are twenty *dzongkhag* in Bhutan. Large *dzongkhags* are further divided into subdistricts known as *dungkhag*. At the basic level, groups of villages form a constituency called *gewog* and are administered by a *gup*, who is elected by the people.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Bumthang                               | 11. Samdrup Jongkhar                            |
| 2. Chukha (old spelling: <i>Chhukha</i> ) | 12. Samtse ( <i>Samchi</i> )                    |
| 3. Dagana                                 | 13. Sarpang                                     |
| 4. Gasa                                   | 14. Thimphu                                     |
| 5. Haa                                    | 15. Trashigang ( <i>Tashigang</i> )             |
| 6. Lhuntse                                | 16. Trashiyangste                               |
| 7. Mongar                                 | 17. Trongsa ( <i>Tongsa</i> )                   |
| 8. Paro                                   | 18. Tsirang ( <i>Chirang</i> )                  |
| 9. Pemagatshel ( <i>Pemagatsetel</i> )    | 19. Wangdue Phodrang ( <i>Wangdi Phodrang</i> ) |
| 10. Punaka                                | 20. Zhemgang ( <i>Shemgang</i> )                |



Dzongkhags(districts) of Bhutan.

## Cities and towns

- Jakar, the administrative headquarters of Bumthang District and the place where Buddhism entered Bhutan.
- Mongar, the eastern commercial hub of the country.
- Paro, Bhutan, site of the international airport.
- Punakha, the old capital.
- Phuentsholing, Bhutan's commercial hub.
- Samdrup Jongkhar
- Thimphu, the largest city and capital of Bhutan.
- Trashigang, the most populous district in the country.
- Trongsa, in central Bhutan which has the largest and the most magnificent of all the dzongs in Bhutan.

## Demographics

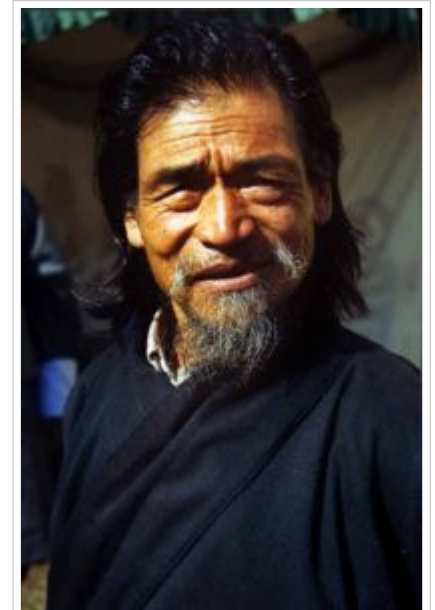
Among the Bhutanese people, several principal ethnic groups may be distinguished. The second dominant group is the Ngalops, a Buddhist group based in the western part of the country. Their culture is closely related to that of Tibet. Much the same could be said of the Sharchops ("Easterners"), the dominant group, who are associated with the eastern part of Bhutan (but who traditionally follow the Nyingmapa rather than the official Drukpa Kagyu form of Himalayan Buddhism). They are called the Western Bhutanese and Eastern Bhutanese respectively. In modern times, with improved transportation infrastructure, there has been much intermarriage between these groups. In the early 1970s, intermarriage between the Lhotshampas and main stream Bhutanese society was encouraged by the government.

The national language is Dzongkha, one of 53 languages in the Tibetan language family. The script, here called *Chhokey* ("Dharma Language"), is identical to classical Tibetan. In the schools English is the medium of instruction and Dzongkha is taught as the national language. Ethnologue lists 24 languages currently spoken in Bhutan, all of them in the Tibeto-Burman family, except Nepali, an Indo-Aryan language. Until the 1980s, the government sponsored the teaching of Nepali in schools in Southern Bhutan. However, after the armed uprising in the south, Nepali was dropped from the curriculum. The languages of Bhutan are still not well-characterized, and several have yet to be recorded in an in-depth academic grammar.

### Religions of Bhutan

religion	percent
Buddhism	75%
Hinduism	24%
Others	1%

The literacy rate is 59.5 percent. The country has a median age of 22.3 years. Bhutan has a life expectancy of 62.2 years (61 for males and 64.5 for females) according to the latest data from the World Bank. There are 1,070 males to every 1,000 females in the country.



Senior Bhutanese man in national dress.

It is estimated that between two third and three quarter of the Bhutanese population follow Mahayana Buddhism, which is also the state religion. About one quarter to one third are followers of Hinduism. Muslim and non-religious communities account for less than 1 % of the population. The current legal framework in principal guarantees freedom of religion; Proselytism, however, is forbidden by a Royal Government decision.

## Culture

Bhutan has a rich and unique cultural heritage that has largely remained intact due to its isolation from the rest of the world until the early 1960s. One of the main attractions for tourists is the country's culture and traditions. Bhutanese tradition is deeply steeped in its Buddhist heritage. Hinduism is the second dominant religion in Bhutan, being most prevalent in the southern regions. Both religions co-exist peacefully and receive support from the government, and enjoy royal patronage. The government is increasingly making efforts to preserve and sustain the current culture and traditions of the country. Due to its largely unspoilt natural environment and cultural heritage, Bhutan has aptly been referred to as *The Last Shangri-la*.

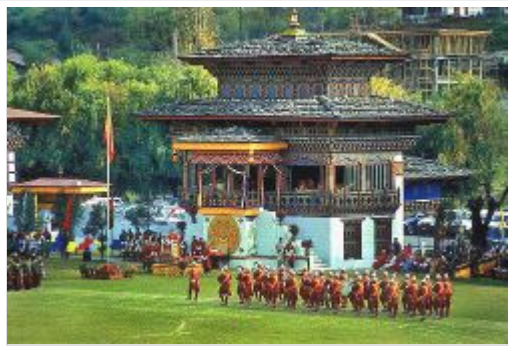
While the Bhutanese are free to travel abroad, Bhutan is seen to be inaccessible to many foreigners. There is a widespread misconception that Bhutan has set limits on tourist visas. However, it is the high tourist tariff and requirement to go on packaged tours that makes Bhutan an exclusive tourist destination.

The National Dress for Bhutanese men is the *gho*, a knee-length robe tied at the waist by a cloth belt known as the *kera*. Women wear an ankle-length dress, the *kira*, which is clipped at one shoulder and tied at the waist. An accompaniment to the kira is a long-sleeved blouse, the *toego*, which is worn underneath the outer layer. Social status and class determine the texture, colours, and decorations that embellish the garments. Differently coloured scarves and shawls are important indicators of social standing, as Bhutan has traditionally been a feudal society. Jewellery is mostly worn by women, especially during religious festivals and public gatherings. To strengthen Bhutan's identity as an independent country, Bhutanese law requires all Bhutanese citizens to wear the national dress in public areas and as formal wear.

Rice, buckwheat, and increasingly maize, are the staple foods of the country. The diet also includes pork, beef, yak meat, chicken, and mutton. Soups and stews of meat and dried vegetables spiced with chillies and cheese are prepared. *Ema datshi*, made very spicy with cheese and chilies, might be called the national dish for its ubiquity and the pride that Bhutanese have for it. Dairy foods, particularly butter and cheese from yaks and cows, are also popular, and indeed almost all milk is turned to butter and cheese. Popular beverages include butter tea, tea, locally brewed rice wine and beer. Bhutan is the only country in the world to have banned the sale of tobacco.



**Bhutanese** thanka of Mt. Meru and the Buddhist Universe, 19th century, Tongsa Dzong, Tongsa, Bhutan



Changlimithang National Stadium, during a parade.

Bhutan's national sport is archery, and competitions are held regularly in most villages. It differs from Olympic standards not only in technical details such as the placement of the targets and atmosphere. There are two targets placed over 100 meters apart and teams shoot from one end of the field to the other. Each member of the team shoots two arrows per round. Traditional Bhutanese archery is a social event and competitions are organized between villages, towns, and amateur teams. There are usually plenty of food and drink complete with singing and dancing. Attempts to distract an opponent include standing around the target and making fun of the shooter's ability. Darts (*khuru*) is an equally popular outdoor team sport, in which heavy wooden darts pointed with a 10 cm nail are thrown at a paperback-sized target ten to 20 meters away.

Another traditional sport is the *digor*, which can be best described as shot put combined with horseshoe throwing. Cricket has gained remarkable popularity in Bhutan, especially since the heavy influx of Indian Television. Their national cricket team is one of the more successful associate nations in the region. Football is an increasingly popular sport. In 2002, Bhutan's national football team played Montserrat - billed as The Other Final, the match

took place on the same day Brazil played Germany in the World Cup Final, but at the time Bhutan and Montserrat were the world's two lowest ranked teams. The match was held in Thimphu's Changlimithang National Stadium, and Bhutan won 4-0. A documentary of the match was made by the Dutch filmmaker Johan Kramer.

*Rigsar* is the new emergent style of popular music, played on a mix of traditional instruments and electronic keyboards, and dates back to the early 1990s; it shows the influence of Indian popular music, a hybrid form of traditional and Western popular influences. Traditional genres include the *zhungdra* and *boedra*.

Characteristic of the region is a type of castle fortress known as the dzong. Since ancient times, the dzongs have served as the religious and secular administration centres for their respective districts.

Bhutan has numerous public holidays, most of which centre around traditional seasonal, secular and religious festivals. They include the winter solstice (around January 1, depending on the lunar calendar), the lunar New Year (February or March), the King's birthday and the anniversary of his coronation, the official start of monsoon season (September 22), National Day (December 17), and various Buddhist and Hindu celebrations.

Masked dances and dance dramas are common traditional features at festivals, usually accompanied by traditional music. Energetic dancers, wearing colourful wooden or composition face masks and stylized costumes, depict heroes, demons, dæmons, death heads, animals, gods, and caricatures of common people. The dancers enjoy royal patronage, and preserve ancient folk and religious customs and perpetuate the ancient lore and art of mask-making.

Inheritance in Bhutan generally goes in the female rather than the male line. Daughters will inherit their parents' house. A man is expected to make his own way in the world and often moves to his wife's home. Love marriages are common in urban areas, but the tradition of arranged marriages is still common in the villages. Although uncommon, polygamy and polyandry are accepted; often being a device to keep property in a contained family unit rather than dispersing it.

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*Chaam*, sacred masked dances, are annually performed during religious festivals.

# British Indian Ocean Territory

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

The **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)** is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom situated in the Indian Ocean, halfway between Africa and Indonesia. The territory comprises the six atolls of the Chagos Archipelago with over 1,000 individual islands.

The largest island is Diego Garcia, the site of a joint military facility of the United Kingdom and the United States.

## History

The Islands of Chagos Archipelago were discovered by Vasco da Gama in the early sixteenth century, then claimed in the eighteenth century by France as a possession of Mauritius. However, in 1810, Mauritius was captured by the United Kingdom, and France ceded the territory in the Treaty of Paris. Agricultural workers migrated to the Islands in the late nineteenth century, settling on the main island of Diego Garcia and establishing copra plantations.

In 1965, the United Kingdom split the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius, and the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches (Des Roches) from the Seychelles to form the British Indian Ocean Territory. The purpose was to allow the construction of military facilities for the mutual benefit of the United Kingdom and the United States. The islands were formally established as an overseas territory of the United Kingdom on November 8, 1965. On June 23, 1976, Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches were returned to Seychelles as a result of it attaining independence. Subsequently, BIOT has consisted only of the six main island groups comprising the Chagos Archipelago.

The creation of BIOT has been subject to legal controversy, as some legal opinions from international law experts say that the decision to separate the BIOT from Mauritius was illegal because international law does not allow the dismembering of a country before independence. However the decision was taken with the full agreement of the Mauritius Council of Ministers.

In 1966, the British Government purchased the privately owned copra plantations, and closed them down, and removed the entire population (known as the Chagossians, or Ilois) of Diego Garcia to

British Indian Ocean Territory	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>In tutela nostra Limuria</i> " (Latin) "Limuria is in our charge"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>God Save the Queen</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Diego Garcia
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Government</b>	British Overseas Territory
- Commissioner	Leigh Turner
- Administrator	Tony Humphries
<b>Created</b>	1965

Mauritius. In 1971, the United Kingdom and the United States signed a treaty, leasing the island of Diego Garcia to the American military for the purposes of building a large air and naval base on the Island. The deal was important to the United Kingdom, as the United States agreed to give them a substantial discount on the purchase of Polaris nuclear missiles in return for the lease. The strategic location of the Island was also significant at the centre of the Indian Ocean, and to counter any Soviet threat in the region.



View of Diego Garcia, showing military base.

Work on the military base commenced in 1971, with a large airbase with several long range runways constructed, as well as a harbour suitable for large naval vessels. Although classed as a joint UK/US base, in practice it is mainly staffed by the American military, although a British garrison is maintained at all times, and Royal Air Force long range patrol aircraft are deployed there. The United States Air Force used the base during the 1991 Gulf War and the 2001 war in Afghanistan, as well as the 2003 Iraq War.

During the 1980s, the Mauritian Government asserted a claim to sovereignty for the territory, citing the 1965 separation as illegal under international law, despite their apparent agreement at the time. The Seychelles also launched a sovereignty claim on several of the Islands.

<b>Area</b>	
- Total	60 km <sup>2</sup> ( n/a) 23.2 sq mi
- Water (%)	0
<b>Population</b>	
- estimate	3,500 ( n/a)
- Density	58.3/km <sup>2</sup> ( n/a) 160.0/sq mi
<b>Currency</b>	Pound sterling <sup>1</sup> ( GBP)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.io
<b>Calling code</b>	+246
	<sup>1</sup> U.S. dollar also accepted.

The islanders, who now reside in Mauritius and the Seychelles have continually asserted their right to return to Diego Garcia, winning important legal victories in the English High Court of Justice in 2000, 2002 and 2007. These judgements were appealed by the British Government, who subsequently lost the appeals.

On 11 May 2006 the High Court ruled that the Order-in-Council was unlawful, and consequently that the Chagossians were entitled to return to the Chagos Archipelago. On 23 May 2007, this was confirmed by the Court of Appeal. The islanders were granted the right to visit Diego Garcia on April 3, 2006 for humanitarian purposes, including the tending of the graves of their ancestors.

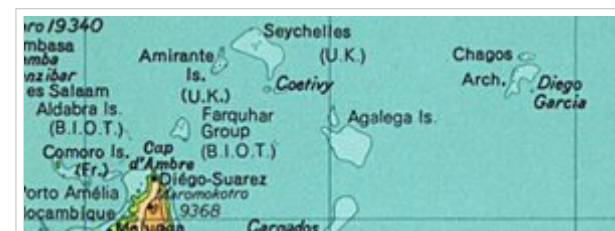
## Politics and law

As this is a territory of the United Kingdom, the head of state is Queen Elizabeth II. There is no Governor appointed to represent the Queen on the territory, as there are currently no longer any native inhabitants. The head of government is the Commissioner, currently Leigh Turner (since July 2006, replacing Tony Crombie) and Administrator Tony Humphries (since February 2005, replacing Charles A. Hamilton), all of whom reside in the UK. The Commissioner's representative in the Territory is the officer commanding the detachment of British forces.

The laws of the territory are based on the constitution, set out in the British Indian Ocean Territory (Constitution) Order 2004, which gives the Commissioner full powers to make laws for the Territory. Applicable treaties between the United Kingdom and the United States govern the use of the military base. The United States is required to ask permission of the United Kingdom to use the base for offensive military action.

The UK has an agreement with Mauritius to return the territory in the event that they are no longer required for defense purposes.

## Geography and communications



BIOT prior to Seychelles independence in 1976.  
(Desroches is not shown, but is a part of the  
Amirante Islands).



The territory is an archipelago of 55 islands, the largest being Diego Garcia, accounting for almost threequarters of the total land area of the territory, which is 60 km<sup>2</sup>. The terrain is flat and low, with most areas not exceeding 2 metres above sea level. The climate is tropical marine; hot, humid, moderated by trade winds.

With the exception of one four-lane motorway, the only one of its kind in the South Indian Ocean, most of the islands in the territory have no roads of any sort. Diego Garcia has a short stretch of paved road between the port and airfield; otherwise most transport is by bicycle.

Diego Garcia's military base is home to the territory's only airport (one paved runway over 3000 metres long) and only major port.

## Economy



A stamp issued in the territory

All economic activity is concentrated on Diego Garcia, where joint UK-US defence facilities are located. Approximately 2,000 native inhabitants, known as the Chagossians or Ilois, were relocated to Mauritius before construction of UK-US military facilities; in 1995, there were approximately 1700 UK and US military personnel and 1500 civilian contractors living on the island. Construction projects and various services needed to support the military installations are done by military and contract employees from the UK, Mauritius, the Philippines, and the US. There are no industrial or agricultural activities on the islands. The licensing of commercial fishing provides an annual income of about one million dollars for the Territory. Separate telephone facilities for military and public needs are available, providing all standard commercial telephone services, including connection to the Internet. International telephone service is carried by satellite. The Territory has three radio broadcast stations, one AM and two FM, and one television broadcast station. Its Internet country code (top-level domain) is .io.

Postage stamps have been issued for British Indian Ocean Territory since 17 January 1968.

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Map of the British Indian Ocean Territory since 1976

# Brunei

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**Brunei Darussalam**, (pronounced /bruːˈnaɪ/ in English) officially the **State of Brunei, Abode of Peace** (Malay: *Negara Brunei Darussalam*, Jawi: ڤرنڤي دارالسلام), is a country located on the north coast of the island of Borneo, in Southeast Asia. Apart from its coastline with the South China Sea it is completely surrounded by the state of Sarawak, Malaysia, and in fact it is separated into two parts by Limbang, which is part of Sarawak.

Brunei, the remnant of a very powerful sultanate, regained its independence from the United Kingdom on 1 January 1984.

## History

The Sultanate of Brunei was very powerful from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Its realm extended over the coastal regions of modern-day Sarawak and Sabah, the Sulu archipelago, and the islands off the northwest tip of Borneo. European influence gradually brought an end to this regional power. Later, there was a brief war with Spain, in which Brunei's capital was occupied. Eventually the sultanate was victorious but lost territories to Spain. The decline of the Bruneian Empire culminated in the nineteenth century when Brunei lost much of its territory to the White Rajahs of Sarawak, resulting in its current small landmass and separation into two parts. Brunei was a British protectorate from 1888 to 1984.

There was a small rebellion against the monarchy during the 1960s, which was suppressed by the United Kingdom. This event became known as the Brunei Revolt and was partly responsible for the failure to create the North Borneo Federation. The rebellion also affected Brunei's decision to opt out of the Malaysian Federation and was the first stage of the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation.

## Politics and government

<p>بروني دارالسلام <i>Negara Brunei Darussalam</i> State of Brunei, Abode of Peace</p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p><b>Motto:</b> "Always in service with God's guidance" (translation)</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Allah Peliharakan Sultan</i> <i>God Bless the Sultan</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Bandar Seri Begawan
<b>Official languages</b>	Malay, Bruneian
<b>Demonym</b>	Bruneian



Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan of Brunei.

The Sultanate of Brunei was founded when Sharif Ali of Hejaz married the local Brunei princess. He brought Islam and founded many mosques in Brunei. Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei, whose title has passed within the same dynasty since the fifteenth century, is the head of state and head of government in Brunei. The Sultan is advised by several councils and a cabinet of ministers although he is effectively the supreme ruler. The media is extremely pro-government and the Royal family retains a venerated status within the country. Brunei is an absolute monarchy and the king has absolute power. There is no elected legislative body. In September 2004, the Sultan convened an appointed Parliament which had not met since independence in 1984, although it lacks any capacity beyond advising the monarch.

The country has been under an Internal Security Act since a rebellion in the early 1960s was put down by British troops from Singapore. Arrests under the internal security act are still commonplace.

## International organisations and Brunei

Brunei is a member of the United Nations, Commonwealth of Nations, and ASEAN.

## Press freedom

Brunei has been given "Not Free" status by Freedom House; press criticism of the government and monarchy is rare. Being an absolute monarchy, press is tightly regulated.

## Territorial disputes

Brunei claims territory in Sarawak, such as Limbang, and it is one of many nations to lay claim to the disputed Spratly Islands. Several small islands situated between Brunei and Labuan, including Kuraman island, are contested between Brunei and Malaysia. However, they are internationally recognised as part of the latter.

## Districts and mukims

<b>Government</b>	Absolute Islamic Sultanate
- Sultan	Hassanal Bolkiah
<b>Independence</b>	
- End of British occupation	January 1, 1984
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	5,765 km <sup>2</sup> ( 172th) 2,226 sq mi
- Water (%)	8.6
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2008 estimate	381,371
- Density	66/km <sup>2</sup> ( 134th) 168/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$10.199 billion ( 138th)
- Per capita	\$24,826 ( 26th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.894 (high) ( 30th)
<b>Currency</b>	Brunei dollar ( BND)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+8.1)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.bn
<b>Calling code</b>	+673 <sup>1</sup>
	<sup>1</sup> Also 080 from East Malaysia

Brunei is divided into four districts (*daerah*):

- Belait
- Brunei and Muara
- Temburong
- Tutong

The districts are subdivided into thirty-eight *mukims*.

## Geography

Brunei consists of two unconnected parts with a total area of 2,226 sq. miles (5,765 sq. kilometers). 97% of the population lives in the larger western part, while only about 10,000 live in the mountainous eastern part (the district of Temburong). The total population of Brunei is 991,000, of which around 367,912 live in the capital Bandar Seri Begawan. Other major towns are the port town of Muara, the oil producing town of Seria and its neighboring town, Kuala Belait. In the Belait district, the Panaga area is home to large numbers of expatriates due to Royal Dutch Shell and British Army housing and recreational facilities. The well-known Panaga Club is situated here.

The climate in Brunei is semi-tropical but in Bandar seri begawan area is sub-tropical climate. the temperature in Brunei is 14-34 degrees Celsius.

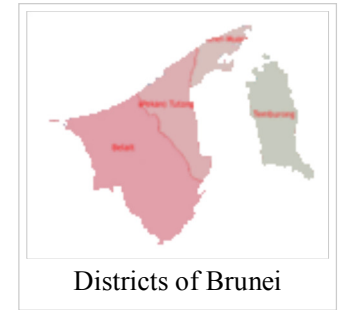
## Economy

This small, wealthy economy is a mixture of foreign and domestic entrepreneurship, government regulation, welfare measures, and village tradition. Crude oil and natural gas production account for nearly half of its GDP. Substantial income from overseas investment supplements income from domestic production. The government provides for all medical services and subsidizes rice and housing. Brunei's leaders are concerned that steadily increased integration in the world economy will undermine internal social cohesion although it became a more prominent player by serving as chairman for the 2000 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Stated plans for the future include upgrading the labour force, reducing unemployment, strengthening the banking and tourism sectors, and, in general, further widening the economic base. The national airline, Royal Brunei is trying to make Brunei a hub for international travel between Europe and Australia/New Zealand. It also has services to major Asian destinations.

## Healthcare

Brunei ensures that all citizens have access to free health care, provided via a group of public hospitals. The largest hospital in Brunei is Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha Hospital, also known as RIPAS Hospital.

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Districts of Brunei



There is also a private medical sector, Jerudong Park Medical Centre.

As of 2008, no hospitals in Brunei were undergoing international healthcare accreditation.

There is currently no medical school in Brunei, and Bruneians wishing to study to become doctors have to attend universities overseas. This situation may be changing. Also, to ensure the public's access to medical care, qualified doctors from overseas are imported into the country.

A School of Nursing was founded in 1951.

## Transport

Brunei is accessible via sea and land travel. The main highway running across Brunei is the Pan Borneo Highway, which is a joint project with Malaysia. Besides the Pan Borneo Highway, Brunei can be accessed by air through Brunei International Airport. Royal Brunei is the main airline company in Brunei.

Brunei has several sea ports, mainly to export its petroleum products, as well as for import/export purposes.

## Demographics

About two-thirds of the Brunei population are of Malay origin and have long dominated the nation's economy. The official languages of the nation are Malay (Malay: *Bahasa Brunei*), although an important minority speak Chinese. English is also widely spoken and there is a relatively large expatriate community with significant numbers of British and Australian citizens.

Islam is the official religion of Brunei, and the sultan is the head of the religion in the country. Other faiths practised are Buddhism (mainly by the Chinese), Christianity, and primarily in isolated and very small communities, indigenous religions.

## Culture

The culture of Brunei is predominantly Malay, with heavy influences from Hinduism and Islam, but is seen as more conservative than Malaysia.

The culture is also influenced by the demographics of the country: two-thirds of the population are Malay, and the remainder consists of Chinese, Indians and indigenous Malays. Brunei also has a large number of foreign workers, including Indonesian and Filipino domestic workers, labourers from Thailand, Indonesia and the Indian subcontinent (particularly India and Bangladesh), and American and British professionals working in industry and education.



Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque  
in Bandar Seri Begawan

## Prohibition of alcohol

The sale and public consumption of alcohol is banned. Foreigners and non-Muslims are allowed to bring in 12 cans of beer and two bottles of other alcohol (e.g., wine or spirits; no distinction is made for alcohol content). This limit used to apply to every entry; in 2007, however, this was changed to one limit every 48 hours. After the introduction of prohibition in the early 1990s, all pubs and nightclubs were forced to close; however, several types of restaurants allegedly still offer illicit alcohol sometimes served in teapots.

## Bruneian celebrities

- Mariana Rahim is a female Bruneian star and also country rock singer
- Dale Brown's novel *Armageddon* is set mostly in Brunei. It details a fictional attack on the country by Islamic fundamentalists with fringe assistance from Malaysian forces, namely a stealth boat.
- Brunei is the birthplace of current Chicago Blackhawks left winger Craig Adams.
- Also the birthplace of Wu Chun, present day Bruneian Taiwanese pop-star idol, who is also gym instructor, model, and member of the band Fahrenheit
- Weekend splash concert season 4, the famous idol show in Brunei, the top six people are Christy Rhonda (Canadian), Saleisha Romana (British), Alex Carlton (Australian), Chad Kilson (American), Asyraf Awang Besar (Bruneian), Jesse Chun ( Taiwanese).
- Zul F is an idol star and TV personality.

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# Burma

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**Burma**, officially the **Union of Myanmar** ( Burmese: ပြည်ထောင်စုမြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်, pronounced [pjìdàunzɯ mjəmà nàinɰàndò]), is the largest country by geographical area in mainland Southeast Asia.

The country is bordered by the People's Republic of China on the northeast, Laos on the east, Thailand on the southeast, Bangladesh on the west, and India on the northwest, with the Bay of Bengal to the southwest. One-third of Burma's total perimeter, 1,930 kilometers (1,199 mi), forms an uninterrupted coastline.

Burma's diverse population has played a major role in defining its politics, history and demographics in modern times, and the country continues to struggle to mend its ethnic tensions. Its political system remains under the tight control of the SPDC, the military-led government, led since 1992 by Senior General Than Shwe. The military has dominated government since General Ne Win led a coup in 1962 that toppled the civilian government of U Nu. The country's culture, heavily influenced by neighbours, is based on Theravada Buddhism intertwined with local elements.

## The name of the country

On 18 June 1989, the Burmese military junta passed the "Adaptation of Expressions Law" that officially changed the English version of the country's name from *Burma* to *Myanmar*, and changed the English versions of many place names in the country along with it, such as its former capital city from *Rangoon* to *Yangon* (which represents its pronunciation more accurately in Burmese though not in Arakanese). This prompted one scholar to coin the term "Myanmarification" to refer to the top-down programme of political and cultural reform in the context of which the renaming was done. The action was strictly an executive act, not based on any statutory authority, and the government did not hold a national referendum to have the Burmese electorate ratify the name change. Within the Burmese language, *Myanma* is the written, literary name of the country, while *Bama* or *Bamar* (from which "Burma" derives) is the oral, colloquial name. In spoken Burmese, the distinction is less clear than the English transliteration suggests.

<p>ပြည်ထောင်စုမြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်</p> <p><i>Pyi-daung-zu Myan-ma Naing-ngan-daw</i></p> <p><b>Union of Myanmar</b></p>	
 	
<p><b>Flag</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Coat of arms</b></span></p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Kaba Ma Kyei</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Naypyidaw
<b>Largest city</b>	Yangon (Rangoon)
<b>Official languages</b>	Burmese
Recognised regional languages	Jingpho, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan
<b>Demonym</b>	Burmese

The renaming proved to be politically controversial on several grounds. Opposition groups continue to use the name "Burma", since they do not recognize the legitimacy of the ruling military government nor its authority to rename the country in English. Various non-Bamar ethnic groups choose to not recognize the name because the term **Myanmah** has historically been used as a label for the majority ethnic group rather than for the country.

Various world entities have chosen to accept or reject the name change. The United Nations accepts the name Myanmar, since the UN allows its members states to be known by any name they choose. However it has not been recognized by many Western governments such as the United States, Australia, Canada or the United Kingdom, which continue to use "Burma", while the European Union uses "Burma/Myanmar" as an alternative. China has not agreed to change its translations and continues to use 缅甸, . Japan uses the name Myanmar (ミャンマー) but calls the people Burmese (ビルマ人). France continues to use Birmanie, and most other countries continue to use their traditional translations..

Use of "Burma" and its adjective, "Burmese", remains common in the United States and Britain. Many news organizations, such as the *BBC*, *The Financial Times*, *The Times*, *Voice of America*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *ITN*, *Sky News*, *Bangkok Post* and others still use these forms . MSNBC, ABC, NBC, CBS, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and others use "Myanmar" as the country name and "Burmese" as the adjective. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation also refers to both names in their news articles.

The name *Myanmar*'s derived from the local short-form name *Myanma Naingngandaw*, the name used by the regime currently in power in the country. While the etymology of the name is unclear, it has been used since the 13th Century primarily as a reference to the Myanma ethnic group. Until the mid-19th century, rulers in the region identified themselves with the areas that they ruled. For example, the 18th Century king, Alaungpaya alternately referred to himself as the ruler of *Tampradipa and Thunaparanta*, *Ramanadesa*, and *Kamboza* (all alternate names of places in the Irrawaddy Valley) in correspondence with the East India Company. The Court of Ava was the first to use this name to refer to its kingdom in the mid-19th Century, when its power was declining, when the kingdom was confined to the Irrawaddy Valley which was predominantly Myanma in character, and at a time when the Myanma ethnic identity first began to develop a political identity. In older English documents the usage was *Bermah*, and later *Burmah*, possibly from the Portuguese *Birmania* which is thought to be a corruption of the Indian word for Burma, *Bama*. Burma is known as *Birmanie* in French, *Birmania* in both Italian and Spanish, and *Birmânia* in Portuguese.

Confusion among English speakers on how to pronounce 'Myanmar' gives rise to pronunciations such as

<b>Government</b>	Military junta
- Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council	Senior General Than Shwe
- Vice Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council	Vice-Senior General Maung Aye
- Prime Minister	General Thein Sein
- Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council	Lt-Gen Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo
<b>Establishment</b>	
- Bagan	1044–1287
- Small Kingdoms	1287–1531
- Taungoo	1531–1752
- Konbaung	1752–1885
- Colonial rule	1886–1948
- Independence from the United Kingdom	4 January 1948
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	676,578 km <sup>2</sup> ( 40th) 261,227 sq mi
- Water (%)	3.06
<b>Population</b>	
- 2005–2006 estimate	55,390,000 ( 24th)
- 1983 census	33,234,000
- Density	75/km <sup>2</sup> ( 119th) 193/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$59.904 billion ( 79th)
- Per capita	\$1,039 ( 162nd)



IPA: /ˌmʃɑːnˈmɑːr/, IPA: /ˈmʃɑːnmɑːr/, IPA: /ˌmɑːrənˈmɑːr/, IPA: /ˈmiːənmar/ and IPA: /miˈɑːnmɑːr/.

## Geography

Burma, which has a total area of 678,500 square kilometers (261,970 sq mi), is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia, and the 40th-largest in the world (Zambia being the 39th).

It is located between Chittagong Division of Bangladesh and Assam, Nagaland and Manipur of India to the northwest. It shares its longest borders with Tibet and Yunnan of China to the northeast for a total of 2,185 km (1,358 mi). It is bounded by Laos and Thailand to the southeast. Burma has 1,930 km (1,199 mi) of contiguous coastline along the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea to the southwest and the south, which forms one-third of its total perimeter.

In the north, the Hengduan Shan mountains form the border with China. Hkakabo Razi, located in Kachin State, at an elevation of 5,881 m (19,295 ft), is the highest point in Burma. Three mountain ranges, namely the Rakhine Yoma, the Bago Yoma, and the Shan Plateau exist within Burma, all of which run north-to-south from the Himalayas. The mountain chains divide Burma's three river systems, which are the Ayeyarwady, Salween (Thanlwin), and the Sittang rivers. The Ayeyarwady River, Burma's longest river, nearly 2,170 kilometres (1,348 mi) long, flows into the Gulf of Martaban. Fertile plains exist in the valleys between the mountain chains. The majority of Burma's population lives in the Ayeyarwady valley, which is situated between the Rakhine Yoma and the Shan Plateau.

Much of the country lies between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator. It lies in the monsoon region of Asia, with its coastal regions receiving over 5,000 mm (200 in) of rain annually. Annual rainfall in the delta region is approximately 2,500 mm (100 in), while average annual rainfall in the Dry Zone, which is located in central Myanmar, is less than 1,000 mm (40 in). Northern regions of the country are the coolest, with average temperatures of 21 °C (70 °F). Coastal and delta regions have mean temperatures of 32 °C (90 °F).

The country's slow economic growth has contributed to the preservation of much of its environment and ecosystems. Forests, including dense tropical growth and valuable teak in lower Burma, cover over 49% of the country. Other trees indigenous to the region include acacia, bamboo, ironwood, mangrove, michelia champaca coconut and betel palm, and rubber has been introduced. In the highlands of the north, oak, pine and various rhododendrons cover much of the land. The lands along the coast support all varieties of tropical fruits. In the Dry Zone, vegetation is sparse and stunted.

Typical jungle animals, particularly tigers and leopards, are common in Burma. In upper Burma, there are rhinoceros, wild buffalo, wild boars, deer, antelope and elephants, which are also tamed or bred in captivity for use as work animals, particularly in the lumber industry. Smaller mammals are also numerous,

<b>HDI (2007)</b>	▲ 0.583 (medium) (132nd)
<b>Currency</b>	kyat (K) (mmK)
<b>Time zone</b>	MMT (UTC+6:30)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.mm
<b>Calling code</b>	+95
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some governments recognize Rangoon as the national capital.</li> <li>Estimates for this country takes into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected.</li> </ol>



The Irrawaddy Delta, which is approximately 50,400 km<sup>2</sup> (19,500 sq mi) in area, is largely used for rice cultivation.

ranging from gibbons and monkeys to flying foxes and tapirs. The abundance of birds is notable with over 800 species, including parrots, peafowl, pheasants, crows, herons and paddybirds. Among reptile species there are crocodiles, geckos, cobras, Burmese pythons and turtles. Hundreds of species of freshwater fish are wide-ranging, plentiful and are very important food sources.

## History

### Summary

After the First Burmese War, the Ava kingdom ceded the provinces of Manipur, Tenassarim, and Arakan to the British. Rangoon and southern Burma were incorporated into British India in 1853. All of Burma came directly or indirectly under British India in 1886 after the Third Burmese War and the fall of Mandalay. Burma was administered as a province of British India until 1937 when it became a separate, self-governing colony. The country became independent from the United Kingdom on 4 January 1948, as the "Union of Burma". It became the "Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma" on 4 January 1974, before reverting to the "Union of Burma" on 23 September 1988. On 18 June 1989, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) adopted the name "Union of Myanmar" for English transliteration. This controversial name change in English, while accepted in the UN and in many countries, is not recognised by opposition groups and by nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States.

### Early history

The Mon people are thought to be the earliest group to migrate into the lower Ayeyarwady valley, and by the mid-900s BC were dominant in southern Burma. The Mons became one of the first in South East Asia to embrace Theravada Buddhism.

The Tibeto-Burman speaking Pyu arrived later in the 1st century BC, and established several city states – of which Sri Ksetra was the most powerful – in central Ayeyarwady valley. The Mon and Pyu kingdoms were an active overland trade route between India and China. The Pyu kingdoms entered a period of rapid decline in early 9th century AD when the powerful kingdom of Nanzhao (in present-day Yunnan) invaded Ayeyarwady valley several times. In 835, Nanzhao decimated the Pyu by carrying off many captives to be used as conscripts.

### Bagan (1044-1287)

Tibeto-Burman speaking Burmans, or the Bamar, began migrating to the Ayeyarwady valley from present-day Yunnan's Nanzhao kingdom starting in 7th century AD. Filling the power gap left by the Pyu, the Burmans established a small kingdom centered in Bagan in 849. But it was not until the reign of King Anawrahta (1044-1077) that Bagan's influence expanded throughout much of present-day Burma.

After Anawrahta's capture of the Mon capital of Thaton in 1057, the Burmans adopted Theravada Buddhism from the Mons. The Burmese script was created, based on the Mon script, during the reign of King Kyanzittha (1084-1112). Prosperous from trade, Bagan kings built many magnificent temples and pagodas throughout the country – many of which can still be seen today.

Bagan's power slowly waned in 13th century. Kublai Khan's Mongol forces invaded northern Burma starting in 1277, and sacked Bagan city itself in 1287. Bagan's over two century reign of Ayeyarwady valley and its periphery was over.

### Small kingdoms (1287-1531)

The Mongols could not stay for long in the searing Ayeyarwady valley. But the Tai-Shan people from Yunnan who came down with the Mongols fanned out to the Ayeyarwady valley, Shan states, Laos, Siam and Assam, and became powerful players in Southeast Asia.

The Bagan empire was irreparably broken up into several small kingdoms:

- The Burman kingdom of Ava or Innwa (1364-1555), the successor state to three smaller kingdoms founded by Burmanized Shan kings, controlling Upper Burma (without the Shan states)
- The Mon kingdom of Hanthawady Pegu or Bago (1287-1540), founded by a Mon-ized Shan King Wareru (1287-1306), controlling Lower Burma (without Taninthayi).
- The Rakhine kingdom of Mrauk U (1434-1784), in the west.
- Several Shan states in the Shan hills in the east and the Kachin hills in the north while the northwestern frontier of present Chin hills still disconnected yet.



Pagodas and temples continue to exist in present-day Bagan, the capital of the Bagan Kingdom.

This period was characterized by constant warfare between Ava and Bago, and to a lesser extent, Ava and the Shans. Ava briefly controlled Rakhine (1379-1430) and came close to defeating Bago a few times, but could never quite reassemble the lost empire. Nevertheless, Burmese culture entered a golden age. Hanthawady Bago prospered. Bago's Queen Shin Saw Bu (1453-1472) raised the gilded Shwedagon Pagoda to its present height.

By the late 15th century, constant warfare had left Ava greatly weakened. Its peripheral areas became either independent or autonomous. In 1486, King Minkyinyo (1486-1531) of Taungoo broke away from Ava and established a small independent kingdom. In 1527, *Mohnyin* (Shan: Mong Yang) Shans finally captured Ava, upsetting the delicate power balance that had existed for nearly two centuries. The Shans would rule Upper Burma until 1555.

### Taungoo (1531-1752)

Reinforced by fleeing Burmans from Ava, the minor Burman kingdom of Taungoo under its young, ambitious king Tabinshwehti (1531-1551) defeated the more powerful Mon kingdom at Bago, reunifying all of Lower Burma by 1540. Tabinshwehti's successor King Bayinnaung (1551-1581) would go on to conquer Upper Burma (1555), Manipur (1556), Shan states (1557), Chiang Mai (1557), Ayutthaya (1564, 1569) and Lan Xang (1574), bringing most of western South East Asia under his rule. Bayinnaung died in 1581, preparing to invade Rakhine, a maritime power controlling the entire coastline west of Rakhine Yoma, up to Chittagong province in Bengal.

Bayinnaung's massive empire unraveled soon after his death in 1581. Ayutthaya Siamese had driven out the Burmese by 1593 and went on to take Tanintharyi. In 1599, Rakhine forces aided by the Portuguese mercenaries sacked the kingdom's capital Bago. Chief Portuguese mercenary *Filipe de Brito e Nicote*

(Burmese: *Nga Zinga*) promptly rebelled against his Rakhine masters and established Portuguese rule in Thanlyin (Syriam), then the most important seaport in Burma. The country was in chaos.

The Burmese under King Anaukpetlun (1605-1628) regrouped and defeated the Portuguese in 1611. Anaukpetlun reestablished a smaller reconstituted kingdom based in Ava covering Upper Burma, Lower Burma and Shan states (but without Rakhine or Taninthayi). After the reign of King Thalun (1629-1648), who rebuilt the war-torn country, the kingdom experienced a slow and steady decline for the next 100 years. The Mons successfully rebelled starting in 1740 with French help and Siamese encouragement, broke away Lower Burma by 1747, and finally put an end to the House of Taungoo in 1752 when they took Ava.

### **Konbaung (1752-1885)**

King Alaungpaya (1752-1760), established the Konbaung Dynasty in Shwebo in 1752. He founded Yangon in 1755. By his death in 1760, Alaungpaya had reunified the country. In 1767, King Hsinbyushin (1763-1777) sacked Ayutthya. The Qing Dynasty of China invaded four times from 1765 to 1769 without success. The Chinese invasions allowed the new Siamese kingdom based in Bangkok to repel the Burmese out of Siam by the late 1770s.

King Bodawpaya (1782-1819) failed repeatedly to reconquer Siam in 1780s and 1790s. Bodawpaya did manage to capture the western kingdom of Rakhine, which had been largely independent since the fall of Bagan, in 1784. Bodawpaya also formally annexed Manipur, a rebellion-prone protectorate, in 1813.

King Bagyidaw's (1819-1837) general Maha Bandula put down a rebellion in Manipur in 1819 and captured then independent kingdom of Assam in 1819 (again in 1821). The new conquests brought the Burmese adjacent to the British India. The British defeated the Burmese in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826). Burma had to cede Assam, Manipur, Rakhine (Arakan) and Tanintharyi (Tenassarim).

In 1852, the British attacked a much weakened Burma during a Burmese palace power struggle. After the Second Anglo-Burmese War, which lasted 3 months, the British had captured the remaining coastal provinces: Ayeyarwady, Yangon and Bago, naming the territories as Lower Burma.

King Mindon (1853-1878) founded Mandalay in 1859 and made it his capital. He skillfully navigated the growing threats posed by the competing interests of Britain and France. In the process, Mindon had to renounce Kayah (Karenni) states in 1875. His successor, King Thibaw (1878-1885), was largely ineffectual. In 1885, the British, alarmed by the French conquest of neighboring Laos, grabbed Upper Burma. The Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885) lasted a mere one month insofar as capturing the capital Mandalay was concerned. The Burmese royal family was exiled to Ratnagiri, India. British forces spent at least another four years pacifying the country – not only in the Burman heartland but also in the Shan, Chin and Kachin hill areas. By some accounts, minor insurrections did not end until 1896.

### **Colonial era (1886-1948)**



A British 1825 lithograph of Shwedagon Pagoda reveals early British occupation in Burma during the First Anglo-Burmese War.

The United Kingdom began conquering Burma in 1824 and by 1886 had incorporated it into the British Raj. Burma was administered as a province of British India until 1937 when it became a separate, self-governing colony. To stimulate trade and facilitate changes, the British brought in Indians and Chinese, who quickly displaced the Burmese in urban areas. To this day Yangon and Mandalay have large ethnic Indian populations. Railroads and schools were built, as well as a large number of prisons, including the infamous Insein Prison, then as now used for political prisoners. Burmese resentment was strong and was vented in violent riots that paralyzed Yangon on occasion all the way until the 1930s. Much of the discontent was caused by a perceived disrespect for Burmese culture and traditions, for example, what the British termed the Shoe Question: the colonizers' refusal to remove their shoes upon entering Buddhist temples or other holy places. In October 1919, Eindawya Pagoda in Mandalay was the scene of violence when tempers flared after scandalized Buddhist monks attempted to physically expel a group of shoe-wearing British visitors. The leader of the monks was later sentenced to life imprisonment for attempted murder. Such incidents inspired the Burmese resistance to use Buddhism as a rallying point for their cause. Buddhist monks became the vanguards of the independence movement, and many died while protesting. One monk-turned-martyr was U Wisara, who died in prison after a 166-day hunger strike to protest a rule that forbade him from wearing his Buddhist robes while imprisoned.

Eric Blair, better known as the writer George Orwell, served in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma for five years and wrote about his experiences. An earlier writer with the same convoluted career path was Saki. During the colonial period, intermarriage between European settlers and Burmese women, as well as between Anglo-Indians (who arrived with the British) and Burmese caused the birth of the Anglo-Burmese community. This influential community was to dominate the country during colonial rule and through the mid 1960's.

On 1 April 1937, Burma became a separately administered territory, independent of the Indian administration. The vote for keeping Burma in India, or as a separate colony "khwe-yay-twe-yay" divided the populace, and laid the ground work for the insurgencies to come after independence. In the 1940s, the Thirty Comrades, commanded by Aung San, founded the Burma Independence Army. The Thirty Comrades received training in Japan.

During World War II, Burma became a major frontline in the Southeast Asian Theatre. The British administration collapsed ahead of the advancing Japanese troops, jails and asylums were opened and Rangoon was deserted except for the many Anglo-Burmese and Indians who remained at their posts. A stream of some 300,000 refugees fled across the jungles into India; known as 'The Trek', all but 30,000 of those 300,000 arrived in India. Initially the Japanese-led Burma Campaign succeeded and the British were expelled from most of Burma, but the British counter-attacked using primarily troops of the British Indian Army. By July 1945, the British had retaken the country. Although many Burmese fought initially for the Japanese, some Burmese, mostly from the ethnic minorities, also served in the British Burma Army. In 1943, the Chin Levies and Kachin Levies were formed in the border districts of Burma still under British administration. The Burma Rifles fought as part of the Chindits under General Orde Wingate from 1943-1945. Later in the war, the Americans created American-Kachin Rangers who also fought against the Japanese. Many others fought with the British Special Operations Executive. The Burma Independence Army under the command of Aung San and the Arakan National Army fought with the Japanese from 1942-1944, but switched allegiance to the Allied side in 1945.

In 1947, Aung San became Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council of Burma, a transitional government. But in July 1947, political rivals assassinated Aung San and several cabinet members.



## Democratic republic (1948-1962)



On 4 January 1948, the nation became an independent republic, named the *Union of Burma*, with Sao Shwe Thaik as its first President and U Nu as its first Prime Minister. Unlike most other former British colonies and overseas territories, it did not become a member of the Commonwealth. A bicameral parliament was formed, consisting of a Chamber of Deputies and a Chamber of Nationalities.

The geographical area Burma encompasses today can be traced to the Panglong Agreement, which combined Burma Proper, which consisted of Lower Burma and Upper Burma, and the Frontier Areas, which had been administered separately by the British.

In 1961, U Thant, then the Union of Burma's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and former Secretary to the Prime Minister, was elected Secretary-General of the United Nations; he was the first non-Westerner to head any international organization and would serve as UN Secretary-General for ten years. Among the Burmese to work at the UN when he was Secretary-General was a young Aung San Suu Kyi.

## Rule by military junta (1962-present)

Democratic rule ended in 1962 when General Ne Win led a military coup d'état. He ruled for nearly 26 years and pursued policies under the rubric of the Burmese Way to Socialism. Between 1962 and 1974, Burma was ruled by a revolutionary council headed by the general, and almost all aspects of society (business, media, production) were nationalized or brought under government control (including the Boy Scouts). In an effort to consolidate power, General Ne Win and many top generals resigned from the military and took civilian posts and, from 1974, instituted elections in a one party system. Between 1974 and 1988, Burma was effectively ruled by General Ne Win through the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP).

Almost from the beginning there were sporadic protests against the military rule, many of which were organized by students, and these were almost always violently suppressed by the government. On July 7, 1962 the government broke up demonstrations at Rangoon University killing 15 students. In 1974, the military violently suppressed anti-government protests at the funeral of U Thant. Student protests in 1975, 1976 and 1977 were quickly suppressed by overwhelming force.

In 1988, unrest over economic mismanagement and political oppression by the government led to widespread pro-democracy demonstrations throughout the country known as the 8888 Uprising. Security forces killed thousands of demonstrators, and General Saw Maung staged a coup d'état and formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). In 1989, SLORC declared martial law after widespread protests. The military government finalized plans for People's Assembly elections on 31 May 1989.

SLORC changed the country's official English name from the "Union of Burma" to the "Union of Myanmar" in 1989. This continues to be a topic of confusion for many people since the mainstream media calls the nation Myanmar but so many others call it Burma. In most cases the nation is called Burma to make a

political statement. By not acknowledging the name Myanmar, one refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of the military junta as well. This is not just among human rights groups but many governments such as the United States, Great Britain and France, legally refer to the nation as Burma. Some suggest the point made by advocates of democracy doesn't matter anyways since the name Burma was given to the country by the colonial British. Also, since the founding of the first democratic government the name Myanmar appeared on the nations currency. But since the military junta did not officially rename the english word for the nations from Burma to Myanmar until 1989, it is very easy to make the argument that it should not be recognized.

In May 1990, the government held free elections for the first time in almost 30 years. The National League for Democracy (NLD), the party of Aung San Suu Kyi, won 392 out of a total 489 seats, but the election results were annulled by SLORC, which refused to step down. Led by Than Shwe since 1992, the military regime has made cease-fire agreements with most ethnic guerrilla groups. In 1992, SLORC unveiled plans to create a new constitution through the National Convention, which began 9 January 1993. In 1997, the State Law and Order Restoration Council was renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

On 23 June 1997, Myanmar was admitted into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The National Convention continues to convene and adjourn. Many major political parties, particularly the NLD, have been absent or excluded, and little progress has been made. On 27 March 2006, the military junta, which had moved the national capital from Yangon to a site near Pyinmana in November 2005, officially named it Naypyidaw, meaning "city of the kings".

In November 2006, the International Labour Organization announced it will be seeking - at the International Court of Justice. - "to prosecute members of the ruling Myanmar junta for crimes against humanity" over the continuous forced labour of its citizens by the military. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), an estimated 800,000 people are subject to forced labour in Myanmar.

### **2007 protests and consequences**

The August 2007 demonstrations were led by well-known dissidents, such as Min Ko Naing (with the nom de guerre Conqueror of Kings), Su Su Nway (now in hiding) and others. The military quickly cracked down and still has not allowed the International Red Cross to visit Min Ko Naing and others who are reportedly in Insein Prison after being severely tortured. Reports have surfaced of at least one death, of activist Win Shwe, under interrogation.

On 19 September 2007, several hundred (possibly 2000 or more) monks staged a protest march in the city of Sittwe. Larger protests in Rangoon and elsewhere ensued over the following days. Security became increasingly heavy handed, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries. By 28 September, internet access had been cut and journalists were reputedly warned not to report on protests. Internet access was restored by at least midnight of 5 October, Burmese time. Sources in Myanmar said on 6 October that the internet seems to be working from 22:00 to 05:00 local time.

On October 13, 2007, the military junta of Burma made people march in a government rally, reportedly paying some participants 1000 kyat (approximately \$0.80) each. Junta officials also approached local factories and demanded they provide 50 workers each; if they didn't, they were to be fined.

On 7 February 2008, SPDC announced that a referendum for the Constitution would be held, and Elections by 2010. The Burmese constitutional referendum, 2008 was held on May 10 and promised a *discipline-flourishing democracy* for the country in the future.

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Various global corporations have been criticized for profiting from the dictatorship by financing Burma's military junta.

World governments remain divided on how to deal with the military junta. Calls for further sanctions by United Kingdom, United States, and France are opposed by neighboring countries; in particular, China has stated its belief that "sanctions or pressure will not help to solve the issue".

### **Cyclone Nargis**

On May 3, 2008, Cyclone Nargis devastated the country when winds of up to 215kph (135 mph) touched land in the densely populated, rice-farming delta of the Irrawaddy Division.

Recent reports estimate that more than 130,000 people are dead or missing from Cyclone Nargis that hit the country's Irrawaddy delta. Damage totaled to 10 billion dollars (USD); it was the worst natural disaster in Burman history. Shari Villarosa, who leads the U.S. Embassy in Yangon, said the number of dead could eventually exceed 140,800 because of illnesses and injury. Adds the World Food Programme, "Some villages have been almost totally eradicated and vast rice-growing areas are wiped out."

The United Nations projects that as many as 1 million were left homeless; and the World Health Organization "has received reports of malaria outbreaks in the worst-affected area." Yet in the critical days following this disaster, Burma's isolationist regime complicated recovery efforts by delaying the entry of United Nations planes delivering medicine, food, and other supplies into the Southeast Asian nation. Similarly, the junta continues to reject the United States offer to provide much-needed assistance, although on May 13, the first U.S. military transport plane was allowed to land, bringing 14 tons of medical supplies, mosquito nets and blankets. The government's failure to permit entry for large-scale international relief efforts was described by the United Nations as "unprecedented." The Burmese Foreign Ministry stressed its capability in handling the aftermath of the cyclone and insisted that it was not ready to accept large-scale foreign assistance.

AP news stories state that foreign aid provided to disaster victims was modified to make it look like it came from the military regime, and state-run television continuously ran images of Gen. Than Shwe ceremonially handing out disaster relief.

More than a week after the disaster, only one out of 10 people who were homeless, injured or threatened by disease and hunger had received some kind of aid. The governmental regime only began to allow UN/international aid into the country for relief efforts after a meeting of heads of States in Singapore, headed by Singapore, who is the current chair of the ASEAN group.

According to British Foreign Secretary David Miliband, "A natural disaster is turning into a humanitarian catastrophe of genuinely epic proportions in significant part because of the maligned neglect of the regime."

Donor nations, meeting in Burma, pressed the government hold to its promise and allow foreign aid workers access to several communities in which foreigners are not allowed, thus increasing the rate of receipt of aid to millions who were most affected by the cyclone. The United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki Moon, said that the government was "moving fast in the right direction." By opening greater access to foreign aid, this will help the nation avoid a "second disaster" of disease.



On May 27, 2008, to complicate world opinion and in contrast to numerous and varied accounts from international relief organizations, the Burma junta praised U.N. aid.

## List of historical capitals

- Amarapura
- Ava
- Bagan
- Bago
- Mandalay
- Mrauk U
- Naypyidaw
- Rangoon (Yangon)
- Sagaing
- Shwebo
- Thaton



Bagan

## Government and politics

Burma is governed by a strict military dictatorship. The current head of state is Senior General Than Shwe, who holds the posts of "Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council" and "Commander in Chief of the Defense Services". General Khin Nyunt was prime minister until 19 October 2004, when he was replaced by General Soe Win, after the purge of Military Intelligence sections within the Burma armed forces. The majority of ministry and cabinet posts are held by military officers, with the exceptions being the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, posts which are held by civilians.

Elected delegates in the 1990 People's Assembly election formed the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), a government-in-exile since December 1990, with the mission of restoring democracy. Dr. Sein Win, a first cousin of Aung San Suu Kyi, has held the position of prime minister of the NCGUB since its inception. The NCGUB has been outlawed by the military government.

Major political parties in the country are the National League for Democracy and the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, although their activities are heavily regulated and suppressed by the military government. Many other parties, often representing ethnic minorities, exist. The military government allows little room for political organizations and has outlawed many political parties and underground student organizations. The military supported the National Unity Party in the 1990 elections and, more recently, an organization named the Union Solidarity and Development Association.

Several human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science have reported on human rights abuses by the military government. They have claimed that there is no independent judiciary in Burma. The military government restricts Internet access through software-based censorship that limits the material citizens can access on-line. Forced labour, human trafficking, and child labour are common. The military is also notorious for rampant use of sexual violence as an instrument of control, including systematic rapes and taking of sex slaves as porters for the military. A strong women's pro-democracy movement has formed in exile, largely along the Thai border and in Chiang Mai. There is a growing international movement to defend women's human rights issues.



Government propaganda poster states: " Tatmadaw and the people, cooperate and crush all those harming the union."

In 1988, the army violently repressed protests against economic mismanagement and political oppression. On 8 August 1988, the military opened fire on demonstrators in what is known as 8888 Uprising and imposed martial law. However, the 1988 protests paved way for the 1990 People's Assembly elections. The election results were subsequently annulled by Senior General Saw Maung's government. The National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won over 60% of the vote and over 80% of parliamentary seats in the 1990 election, the first held in 30 years. The military-backed National Unity Party won less than 2% of the seats. Aung San Suu Kyi has earned international recognition as an activist for the return of democratic rule, winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. The ruling regime has repeatedly placed her under house arrest. Despite a direct appeal by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to Senior General Than Shwe and pressure by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ( ASEAN), the military junta extended Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest another year on 27 May 2006 under the 1975 State Protection Act, which grants the government the right to detain any persons on the grounds of protecting peace and stability in the country. The junta faces increasing pressure from the United States and the United Kingdom. Burma's situation was referred to the UN Security Council for the first time in December 2005 for an informal consultation. In September 2006, ten of the United Nations Security Council's 15 members voted to place Myanmar on the council's formal agenda. On Independence Day, 4 January 2007, the government released 40 political prisoners, under a general amnesty, in which 2,831 prisoners were released. On 8 January 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the national government to free all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Three days later, on 11 January, five additional prisoners were released from prison.

ASEAN has also stated its frustration with the Union of Myanmar's government. It has formed the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus to address the lack of democratisation in the country. Dramatic change in the country's political situation remains unlikely, due to support from major regional powers such as India, Russia, and, in particular, China.

In the annual ASEAN Summit in January 2007, held in Cebu, Philippines, member countries failed to find common ground on the issue of Burma's lack of political reform. During the summit, ASEAN foreign ministers asked Burma to make greater progress on its roadmap toward democracy and national reconciliation. Some member countries contend that Burma's human rights issues are the country's own domestic affairs, while others contend that its poor human rights record is an international issue.

According to Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP), on April 18, 2007, several of its members (Myint Aye, Maung Maung Lay, Tin Maung Oo and Yin Kyi) were met by approximately a hundred people led by a local official, U Nyunt Oo, and beaten up. Due to the attack, Myint Hlaing and Maung Maung Lay were badly injured and subsequently hospitalized. The HRDP believes that this attack was condoned by the authorities and vows to take legal action.

Human Rights Defenders and Promoters was formed in 2002 to raise awareness among the people of Burma about their human rights.

Burma's army-drafted constitution was overwhelmingly approved (by 92.4% of the 22 million voters with alleged voter turnout of 99%) on May 10 in the first phase of a two-stage referendum amid Cyclone Nargis. It was the first national vote since the 1990 election. Multi-party elections in 2010 would end 5 decades of military rule, as the new charter gives the military an automatic 25% of seats in parliament. NLD spokesman Nyan Win, inter alia, criticized the referendum: "This referendum was full of cheating and fraud across the country; In some villages, authorities and polling station officials ticked the ballots themselves and did not let the voters do anything." The constitution would bar Aung San Suu Kyi, from public office. 5 million citizens will vote May 24 in Yangon and the Irrawaddy delta, worst hit by Cyclone Nargis.

## **Divisions and states**

The country is divided into seven states (*pyine*) and seven divisions (*yin*). Divisions (ပြည်နယ်) are predominantly Bamar. States (ပြည်နယ်), in essence, are divisions which are home to particular ethnic minorities. The administrative divisions are further subdivided into districts, which are further subdivided into townships, wards, and villages.

## Divisions

- Ayeyarwady Division
- Bago Division
- Magway Division
- Mandalay Division
- Sagaing Division
- Tanintharyi Division
- Yangon Division

## States

- Chin State
- Kachin State
- Kayin (Karen) State
- Kayah (Karenni) State
- Mon State
- Rakhine (Arakan) State
- Shan State

## Administrative divisions

Number of Districts, Townships, Cities/Towns, Wards, Village Groups and Villages in Burma as of December 31, 2001

No.	State/ Division	District	Township	City/ Town	Wards	Village Groups	Villages
1	Kachin State	3	18	20	116	606	2630
2	Kayah State	2	7	7	29	79	624
3	Kayin State	3	7	10	46	376	2092
4	Chin State	2	9	9	29	475	1355



The 14 states and divisions of Burma.

5	Sagaing Division	8	37	37	171	1769	6095
6	Taninthayi Division	3	10	10	63	265	1255
7	Bago Division	4	28	33	246	1424	6498
8	Magway Division	5	25	26	160	1543	4774
9	Mandalay Division	7	31	29	259	1611	5472
10	Mon State	2	10	11	69	381	1199
11	Rakhine State	4	17	17	120	1041	3871
12	Yangon Division	4	45	20	685	634	2119
13	Shan State	11	54	54	336	1626	15513
14	Ayeyawady Division	5	26	29	219	1912	11651
	<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>2548</b>	<b>13742</b>	<b>65148</b>

## Foreign relations and military

The country's foreign relations, particularly with Western nations, have been strained. The United States has placed a ban on new investments by U.S. firms, an import ban, and an arms embargo on the Union of Myanmar, as well as frozen military assets in the United States because of the military regime's ongoing human rights abuses, the ongoing detention of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi, and refusal to honour the election results of the 1990 People's Assembly election. Similarly, the European Union has placed sanctions on Burma, including an arms embargo, cessation of trade preferences, and suspension of all aid with the exception of humanitarian aid. U.S. and European government sanctions against the military government, coupled with boycotts and other direct pressure on corporations by western supporters of the democracy movement, have resulted in the withdrawal from the country of most U.S. and many European companies. However, several Western companies remain due to loopholes in the sanctions. Asian corporations have generally remained willing to continue investing in the country and to initiate new investments, particularly in natural resource extraction. The country has close relations with neighboring India and People's Republic of China with several Indian and Chinese companies operating in the country. There remains active debate as to the extent to which the American-led sanctions have had adverse effects on the civilian population or on the military rulers.

The country's armed forces are known as the Tatmadaw, which numbers 488,000. The Tatmadaw comprises the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. The country ranked twelfth in the world for its number of active troops in service. The military is very influential in the country, with top cabinet and ministry posts held by military officers. Official figures for military spending are not available. Estimates vary widely because of uncertain exchange rates, but military spending is very high. The country imports most of its weapons from Russia, Ukraine, China and India.

The country is building a research nuclear reactor near May Myo (Pyin Oo Lwin) with help from Russia. It is one of the signatories of the nuclear non-proliferation pact since 1992 and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since 1957. The military junta had informed the IAEA in September 2000 of its intention to construct the reactor. The research reactor outbuilding frame was built by ELE steel industries limited of Yangon and water from Anisakhan/BE water fall will be used for the reactor cavity cooling system.

ASEAN will not defend the country in any international forum following the military regime's refusal to restore democracy. In April 2007, the Malaysian Foreign Ministry parliamentary secretary Ahmad Shabery Cheek said Malaysia and other ASEAN members had decided not to defend Burma if the country's issue was raised for discussion at any international conference. "Now Myanmar has to defend itself if it is bombarded in any international forum," he said when winding up a debate at committee stage for the Foreign Ministry. He was replying to queries from opposition leader Lim Kit Siang on the next course of action to be taken by Malaysia and ASEAN with the military junta. Lim had said Malaysia must play a proactive role in pursuing regional initiatives to bring about a change in Burma and support efforts to bring the situation in Burma to the UN Security Council's attention.

## Drug trade

The country is a corner of the Golden Triangle of opium production. Neither Burma, Vietnam, Laos or Thailand had any history of opium production until colonial times, yet from then until very recently, most of the world's heroin came from the Golden Triangle, including Burma.

In 1996 the United States Embassy in Rangoon released a "Country Commercial Guide" states "Exports of opiates alone appear to be worth about as much as all legal exports." It goes on to say that investments in infrastructure and hotels are coming from major opiate-growing and opiate-exporting organizations and from those with close ties to these organizations.

A four-year investigation concluded that Burma's national company Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) was "the main channel for laundering the revenues of heroin produced and exported under the control of the Burmese army." In a business deal signed with the French oil giant Total in 1992, and later joined by Unocal, MOGE received a payment of \$15 million. "Despite the fact that MOGE has no assets besides the limited installments of its foreign partners and makes no profit, and that the Burmese state never had the capacity to allocate any currency credit to MOGE, the Singapore bank accounts of this company have seen the transfer of hundreds of millions of US dollars," reports Casanier. According to a confidential MOGE file reviewed by the investigators, funds exceeding \$60 million and originating from Burma's most renowned drug lord, Khun Sa, were channeled through the company. "Drug money is irrigating every economic activity in Burma, and big foreign partners are also seen by the SLORC as big shields for money laundering." Banks in Rangoon offered money laundering for a 40% commission.

The main player in the country's drug market is the United Wa State Army, ethnic fighters who control areas along the country's eastern border with Thailand, part of the infamous Golden Triangle. The Wa army, an ally of Burma's ruling military junta, was once the militant arm of the Beijing-backed Burmese Communist Party. Burma has been a significant cog in the transnational drug trade since World War II.

Poppy cultivation in the country decreased more than 80 percent from 1998 to 2006 following an eradication campaign in the Golden Triangle. Officials with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime say opium poppy farming is now expanding. The number of hectares used to grow the crops in has bounced back 29 percent this year. A United Nations report cites corruption, poverty and a lack of government control as causes for the jump.

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## United Nations

In 1961, U Thant, then Burma's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and former Secretary to the Prime Minister, was elected Secretary-General of the United Nations; he was the first non-Westerner to head any international organization and would serve as UN Secretary-General for ten years. Among the Burmese to work at the UN when he was Secretary-General was the young Aung San Suu Kyi.

Until 2005, the United Nations General Assembly annually adopted a detailed resolution about the situation in Burma by consensus. But in 2006 a divided United Nations General Assembly voted through a resolution that strongly called upon the government of Burma to end its systematic violations of human rights.

In January 2007, Russia and China vetoed a draft resolution before the United Nations Security Council calling on the government of Myanmar to respect human rights and begin a democratic transition. South Africa also voted against the resolution, arguing that since there were no peace and security concerns raised by its neighbours, the question did not belong in the Security Council when there were other more appropriate bodies to represent it, adding, "Ironically, should the Security Council adopt [this resolution] ... the Human Rights Council would not be able to address the situation in Myanmar while the Council remains seized with the matter." The issue had been forced onto the agenda against the votes of Russia and the China by the United States ( veto power applies only to resolutions) claiming that the outflow from Burma of refugees, drugs, HIV-AIDS, and other diseases threatened international peace and security.

The following September after the uprisings began and the human rights situation deteriorated, the Secretary-General dispatched his special envoy for the region, Ibrahim Gambari, to meet with the government. After seeing most parties involved, he returned to New York and briefed the Security Council about his visit. During this meeting, the ambassador said that the country "indeed [has experienced] a daunting challenge. However, we have been able to restore stability. The situation has now returned to normalcy. Currently, people all over the country are holding peaceful rallies within the bounds of the law to welcome the successful conclusion of the national convention, which has laid down the fundamental principles for a new constitution, and to demonstrate their aversion to recent provocative demonstrations.

On 11 October the Security Council met and issued a statement and reaffirmed its "strong and unwavering support for the Secretary-General's good offices mission", especially the work by Ibrahim Gambari (During a briefing to the Security Council in November, Gambari admitted that no timeframe had been set by the Government for any of the moves that he had been negotiating for.)

Throughout this period the World Food Program has continued to organize shipments from the Mandalay Division to the famine-struck areas to the north.

## Human rights

### Human rights violations

In a press release of December 16, 2005 the US State Department says UN involvement in Burma is essential. The US listed illicit narcotics, human rights abuses

and political repression as serious problems that the UN needs to address.

In a landmark legal case, some human rights groups have sued the Unocal corporation, previously known as Union Oil of California and now part of the Chevron Corporation. They charge that since the early 1990s, Unocal has joined hands with dictators in Burma to turn thousands of citizens there into virtual slaves under brutality. Unocal, before being purchased, stated that they had no knowledge or connection to these alleged actions although it continued working in Burma. This was a landmark case as this might be the first time that anybody has sued an American corporation in a U.S. court on the grounds that the company violated human rights in another country.

## **Karen minority**

Evidence has been gathered suggesting that the Burmese regime has marked certain ethnic minorities such as the Karen for extermination or 'Burmisation'. This has received little attention from the international community, however, since it has been more subtle and indirect than the mass killings in places like Rwanda.

## **State-sanctioned sex crimes**

Through minority regions, women and children of perceived enemy groups have been subject to mass rape campaigns by the military. This has been going on for decades but only in the last few years have more and more women been speaking out and thousands of first hand accounts have been documented by various exiled women's groups. A 2002 report "Licence to Rape" authored by the Shan Women's Action Network and the Shan Human Rights Foundation assessed such incidents in Shan State. They reported that "83 percent of the rapes were committed by officers and that women who dared speak up were fined, detained, tortured or even killed." The 2007 report "Unsafe State" documents cases of rape by the military in Chin State, western Burma. These findings, when displayed on a map, clearly show that incidences of rape occur in dense clusters closest to army camps or anywhere there is heavy troop presence.

## **Economy**

The country is one of the poorest nations in southeastern Asia, suffering from decades of stagnation, mismanagement and isolation. Burma's GDP grows at an average rate of 2.9% annually – the lowest rate of economic growth in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Under British administration and until the early 1960s, Burma was the wealthiest country in Southeast Asia. It was once the world's largest exporter of rice. During British administration, Burma supplied oil through the Burmah Oil Company. Burma also had a wealth of natural and labor resources. It produced 75% of the world's teak and had a highly literate population. The country was believed to be on the fast track to development.

After a parliamentary government was formed in 1948, Prime Minister U Nu attempted to make Burma a welfare state. His administration adopted the Two-Year Economic Development Plan, which was a failure. The 1962 coup d'état was followed by an economic scheme called the Burmese Way to Socialism, a plan to nationalize all industries, with the exception of agriculture. In 1989, the government began decentralizing economic control. It has since liberalised

Image:Sakuratoweryangon.jpg  
The Sakura Tower in Yangon is virtually vacant due to a lack of major foreign investment.



certain sectors of the economy. Lucrative industries of gems, oil and forestry remain heavily regulated. They have recently been exploited by foreign corporations and governments which have partnered with the local government to gain access to Burma's natural resources.



Locals in Amarapura, Mandalay Division

Burma was designated a least developed country in 1987. Private enterprises are often co-owned or indirectly owned by the Tatmadaw. In recent years, both China and India have attempted to strengthen ties with the government for economic benefit. Many nations, including the United States and Canada, and the European Union, have imposed investment and trade sanctions on Burma. Foreign investment comes primarily from China, Singapore, South Korea, India, and Thailand.

### Modern economy

Today, the country lacks adequate infrastructure. Goods travel primarily across the Thai border, where most illegal drugs are exported and along the Ayeyarwady River. Railroads are old and rudimentary, with few repairs since their construction in the late nineteenth century. Highways are normally unpaved, except in the major cities. Energy shortages are common throughout the country including in Yangon. Burma is also the world's second largest producer of opium, accounting for 8% of entire world production and is a major source of illegal drugs, including amphetamines. Other industries include agricultural goods, textiles, wood products, construction materials, gems, metals,

oil and natural gas.

The major agricultural product is rice which covers about 60% of the country's total cultivated land area. Rice accounts for 97% of total food grain production by weight. Through collaboration with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), 52 modern rice varieties were released in the country between 1966 and 1997, helping increase national rice production to 14 million tons in 1987 and to 19 million tons in 1996. By 1988, modern varieties were planted on half of the country's ricelands, including 98 percent of the irrigated areas.

The lack of an educated workforce skilled in modern technology contributes to the growing problems of the economy.

Inflation is a serious problem for the economy. In April 2007, the National League for Democracy organized a two-day workshop on the economy. The workshop concluded that skyrocketing inflation was impeding economic growth. "Basic commodity prices have increased from 30 to 60 percent since the military regime promoted a salary increase for government workers in April 2006," said Soe Win, the moderator of the workshop. "Inflation is also correlated with corruption." Myint Thein, an NLD spokesperson, added: "Inflation is the critical source of the current economic crisis." The corruption watchdog organization Transparency International in its 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index released on September 26, 2007 ranked Burma the most corrupt country in the world, tied with Somalia.

### Valley of Rubies

The Union of Myanmar's rulers depend on sales of precious stones such as sapphires, pearls and jade to fund their regime. Rubies are the biggest earner; 90% of the world's rubies come from the country, whose red stones are prized for their purity and hue. Thailand buys the majority of the country's gems. Burma's "Valley of Rubies", the mountainous Mogok area, 200 km (125 miles) north of Mandalay, is noted for its rare pigeon's blood rubies and blue sapphires.

## **Tourism**

Since 1992, the government has encouraged tourism in the country. However, fewer than 750,000 tourists enter the country annually.

Aung San Suu Kyi has requested that international tourists not visit Burma. The junta's forced labour programmes were focused around tourist destinations which have been heavily criticised for their human rights records.

Tourism has been promoted by a minority of advocacy groups as a method of providing economic benefit to Burmese civilians, and to avoid isolating the country from the rest of the world. "We believe that small-scale, responsible tourism can create more benefits than harm. So long as tourists are fully aware of the situation and take steps to maximise their positive impact and minimise the negatives, we feel their visit can be beneficial overall. Responsible tourists can help Burma primarily by bringing money to local communities and small businesses, and by raising awareness of the situation worldwide," states Voices for Burma, a pro-democracy advocate group.

## **Humanitarian aid**

In April 2007, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified financial and other restrictions that the military government places on international humanitarian assistance. The GAO report, entitled "Assistance Programs Constrained in Burma", outlined the specific efforts of the government to hinder the humanitarian work of international organizations, including restrictions on the free movement of international staff within the country. The report notes that the regime has tightened its control over assistance work since former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt was purged in October 2004. The military junta passed guidelines in February 2006, which formalized these restrictive policies. According to the report, the guidelines require that programs run by humanitarian groups "enhance and safeguard the national interest" and that international organizations coordinate with state agents and select their Burmese staff from government-prepared lists of individuals. United Nations officials have declared these restrictions unacceptable.

## **2007 economic protests**

The military junta detained eight people on Sunday, April 22, 2007 who took part in a rare demonstration in a Yangon suburb amid a growing military crackdown on protesters. A group of about ten protesters carrying placards and chanting slogans staged the protest Sunday morning in Yangon's Thingangyun township, calling for lower prices and improved health, education and better utility services. The protest ended peacefully after about 70 minutes, but plainclothes police took away eight demonstrators as some 100 onlookers watched. The protesters carried placards with slogans such as "Down with consumer prices." Some of those detained were the same protesters who took part in a downtown Yangon protest on February 22, 2007. That protest was one of the first such demonstrations in recent years to challenge the junta's economic mismanagement rather than its legal right to rule. The protesters detained in the February rally had said they were released after signing an acknowledgment of police orders that they should not hold any future public demonstrations without first

obtaining official permission.

The military government stated its intention to crack down on these human rights activists, according to an April 23, 2007, report in the country's official press. The announcement, which comprised a full page of the official newspaper, followed calls by human rights advocacy groups, including London-based Amnesty International, for authorities to investigate recent violent attacks on rights activists in the country.

Two members of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters, Maung Maung Lay, 37, and Myint Naing, 40, were hospitalized with head injuries following attacks by more than 50 people while the two were working in Hinthada township, Irrawaddy Division in mid-April. On Sunday, April 22, 2007, eight people were arrested by plainclothes police, members of the pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association, and the Pyithu Swan Arr Shin (a paramilitary group) while demonstrating peacefully in a Rangoon suburb. The eight protesters were calling for lower commodity prices, better health-care and improved utility services. Htin Kyaw, 44, one of the eight who also took part in an earlier demonstration in late February in downtown Yangon, was beaten by a mob, according to sources at the scene of the protest.

Reports from opposition activists have emerged in recent weeks saying that authorities have directed the police and other government proxy groups to deal harshly with any sign of unrest in Yangon. "This proves that there is no rule of law [in Burma]," the 88 Generation Students group said in a statement issued today.[Mon 23 April 2007] "We seriously urge the authorities to prevent violence in the future and to guarantee the safety of every citizen."

As of 22 September 2007, the Buddhist monks have withdrawn spiritual services from all military personnel in a symbolic move that is seen as very powerful in such a deeply religious country as Burma. The military rulers seem at a loss as to how to deal with the demonstrations by the monks as using violence against monks would incense and enrage the people of Burma even further, almost certainly prompting massive civil unrest and perhaps violence. However, the longer the junta allows the protests to continue, the weaker the regime looks. The danger is that eventually the military government will be forced to act rashly and doing so will provoke the citizenry even more. Some international news agencies are referring to the uprising as a Saffron Revolution.

## **2007 anti-government protests**

Anti-government protests started on August 15, 2007, and have been ongoing. Thousands of Buddhist monks started leading protests on September 18, and were joined by Buddhist nuns on September 23. On September 24, 20,000 monks and nuns led 30,000 people in a protest march from the golden Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, past the offices of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party. Comedian Zaganar and star Kyaw Thu brought food and water to the monks. On September 22, monks marched to greet Aung San Suu Kyi, a peace activist who has been under house arrest since 1990.

On September 25, 2,000 people defied threats from the Union of Myanmar's junta and marched to Shwedagon Pagoda amid army trucks and warning of Brigadier-General Thura Myint Maung not to violate Buddhist "rules and regulations." The following morning, various prominent protesters were arrested and troops barricaded Shwedagon Pagoda and attacked the 700 people within. Despite this, 5,000 monks continued to protest in Yangon. At least four deaths were reported after security forces fired on the crowds in Yangon. The junta announced that ten people had died in the crackdown on 27 September 2007 but foreign diplomatic sources in Yangon said more than ten Buddhist monks and demonstrators were dead. Later a badly-beaten Buddhist monk's body was found in Yangon River. A photo was released on an Internet site run by a Norway-based group of exiled journalists. On September 27, security forces began raiding monasteries and arresting monks throughout the country. The security forces also fired on the nearly 50,000 people protesting in Yangon, killing nine people.

Internet access within the nation has been suspended, reportedly in an attempt to dampen international awareness of the situation. It has also been reported that troops have been specifically targeting people with cameras. The junta's violent response to peaceful protests has prompted international condemnation and calls for an immediate halt to the violence. In particular, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has demanded an explanation for the killing of Nagai. Ibrahim Gambari, the United Nations special envoy to Burma, has arrived in Naypyidaw and has met with junta leaders and Aung San Suu Kyi. Despite increasingly strong calls for peace, the junta continued to attack monks and raid monasteries through October 1.

By October 2, 2007, thousands of monks were unaccounted for and their whereabouts unknown. Many monasteries are being patrolled by government troops. There are eyewitness accounts of injured protesters being burned alive by the military regime in a crematorium on the outskirts of Rangoon.

On October 31, 2007 the monks started to protest again. 200 monks marched in Pakokku.

On November 29, 2007 the Junta has shut down a Yangon monastery which served as a hospice for HIV/AIDS patients.

The Burmese state media says that all but 91 of the nearly 3,000 arrested in the crackdown were released. The United Nations special envoy Ibrahim Gambari criticised the closing of the monastery, yet was assured that the crackdown would stop. He expects to return to Burma in December.

## Demographics



Protesters in Yangon with a banner that reads *non-violence: national movement* in Burmese, in the background is Shwedagon Pagoda



A block of flats in downtown Yangon, facing Bogyoke Market. Much of Yangon's urban population resides in densely-populated flats.

Burma has a population of about 55 million. Current population figures are rough estimates because the last partial census, conducted by the Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs under the control of the military junta, was taken in 1983. No trustworthy nationwide census has been taken in Burma since 1931. There are over 600,000 registered migrant workers from Burma in Thailand, and millions more work illegally. Burmese migrant workers account for 80% of Thailand's migrant workers. Burma has a population density of 75 inhabitants per square kilometre (194/sq mi), one of the lowest in Southeast Asia. Refugee camps exist along Indian, Bangladeshi and Thai borders while several thousand are in Malaysia. Conservative estimates state that there are over 295,800 refugees from Burma, with the majority being Rohingya, Kayin, and Karenni.

Burma is home to four major linguistic families: Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Austroasiatic, and Indo-European. Sino-Tibetan languages are most widely spoken. They include Burmese, Karen, Kachin, Chin, and Chinese. The primary Tai-Kadai language is Shan. Mon, Palaung, and Wa are the major Austroasiatic languages spoken in Burma. The two major Indo-European languages are Pali, the liturgical language of Theravada Buddhism, and English.

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Burma's official literacy rate as of 2000 was 89.9%. Historically, Burma has had high literacy rates. To qualify for least developed country status by the UN in order to receive debt relief, Burma lowered its official literacy rate from 78.6% to 18.7% in 1987.

Burma is ethnically diverse. The government recognizes 135 distinct ethnic groups. While it is extremely difficult to verify this statement, there are at least 108 different ethnolinguistic groups in Burma, consisting mainly of distinct Tibeto-Burman peoples, but with sizable populations of Daic, Hmong-Mien, and Austroasiatic (Mon-Khmer) peoples. The Bamar form an estimated 68% of the population. 10% of the population are Shan. The Kayin make up 7% of the population. The Rakhine people constitute 4% of the population. Overseas Chinese form approximately 3% of the population. Mon, who form 2% of the population, are ethno-linguistically related to the Khmer. Overseas Indians comprise 2%. The remainder are Kachin, Chin, Anglo-Indians and other ethnic minorities. Included in this group are the Anglo-Burmese. Once forming a large and influential community, the Anglo-Burmese left the country in steady streams from 1958 onwards, principally to Australia and the U.K.. Today, it is estimated that only 52,000 Anglo-Burmese remain in the country.

89% of the country's population are Buddhist, according to a report on abc World News Tonight in May 2008.

## Culture



A girl from the Padaung minority, one of the many ethnic groups that make up Burma's population.

A diverse range of indigenous cultures exist in Burma, the majority culture is primarily Buddhist and Bamar. Bamar culture has been influenced by the cultures of neighbouring countries. This is manifested in its language, cuisine, music, dance and theatre. The arts, particularly literature, have historically been influenced by the local form of Theravada Buddhism. Considered the national epic of Burma, the *Yama Zatdaw*, an adaptation of *Ramayana*, has been influenced greatly by Thai, Mon, and Indian versions of the play. Buddhism is practiced along with nat worship which involves elaborate rituals to propitiate one from a pantheon of 37 nats.

In a traditional village, the monastery is the centre of cultural life. Monks are venerated and supported by the lay people. A novitiation ceremony called shinbyu is the most important coming of age events for a boy when he enters the monastery for a short period of time. All boys of Buddhist family need to be a novice (beginner for Buddhism) before the age of twenty and to be a monk after the age of twenty. It is compulsory for all boys of Buddhism. The duration can be as little as one week. Girls have ear-piercing ceremonies (နားသွင်း) at the same time. Burmese culture is most evident in villages where local festivals are held throughout the year, the most important being the pagoda festival. Many villages have a guardian nat, and superstition and taboos are commonplace.

British colonial rule also introduced Western elements of culture to Burma. Burma's educational system is modelled after that of the United Kingdom. Colonial architectural influences are most evident in major cities such as Yangon. Many ethnic minorities, particularly the Karen in the southeast, and the Kachin and Chin who populate the north and northwest, practice Christianity.



An ear-piercing ceremony at the Mahamuni Pagoda in Mandalay is one of the many coming-of-age ceremonies in Burmese culture.



Members of the Buddhist monkhood are venerated throughout Burma, which is one of the most predominantly Theravada Buddhist countries in the world.

## Language

Burmese, the mother tongue of the Bamar and official language of Burma, is related to Tibetan and to the Chinese languages. It is written in a script consisting of circular and semi-circular letters, which were adapted from the Mon script, which in turn was developed from a southern Indian script in the 700s. The earliest known inscriptions in the Burmese script date from the 1000s. It is also used to write Pali, the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism, as well as several ethnic minority languages, including Shan, several Karen dialects, and Kayah (Karenni), with the addition of specialised characters and diacritics for each language. The Burmese language incorporates widespread usage of honorifics and is age-oriented. Burmese society has traditionally stressed the importance of education. In villages, secular schooling often takes place in monasteries. Secondary and tertiary education take place at government schools.

## Religion

Many religions are practiced in Burma and religious edifices and religious orders have been in existence for many years and religious festivals can be held on a grand scale. The Christian and Muslim populations do, however, face religious persecution and it is hard, if not impossible, for non-Buddhists to join the army or get government jobs, the main route to success in the country. Such persecution and targeting of civilians is particularly notable in Eastern Burma, where over 3000 villages have been destroyed in the past ten years.

Eighty-nine percent of the population embraces Buddhism (mostly Theravada), but other religions can be practised freely. Four percent of the population practices Christianity; 4 percent, Islam; 1 percent, traditional animistic beliefs; and 2 percent follow other religions, including Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism, Chinese religions and the Bahá'í

religion. However, according to a U.S. State Department's 2006 international religious freedom report, official statistics underestimate the non-Buddhist population which could be as high as 30%. Muslim leaders estimated that approximately 20 percent of the population was Muslim.

## Education

The educational system of Burma is operated by the government Ministry of Education. Universities and professional institutes from upper Burma and lower Burma are run by two separate entities, the Department of Higher Education of Upper Burma and the Department of Higher Education of Lower Burma. Headquarters are based in Yangon and Mandalay respectively. The education system is based on the United Kingdom's system, due to nearly a century of British and Christian presences in Burma. Nearly all schools are government-operated, but there has been a recent increase in privately funded English language schools. Schooling is compulsory until the end of elementary school, probably about 9 years old, while the compulsory schooling age is 15 or 16 at international level.

There are 101 universities, 12 institutes, 9 degree colleges and 24 colleges in Burma, a total of 146 higher education institutions.

There are 10 Technical Training Schools, 23 nursing training schools, 1 sport academy and 20 midwifery schools.

There are 2047 Basic Education High Schools, 2605 Basic Education Middle Schools, 29944 Basic Education Primary Schools and 5952 Post Primary Schools. 1692 multimedia classrooms exist within this system.

There is one international school which is acknowledged by WASC and College Board - Yangon International Educare Centre( YIEC) in Yangon.

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Yangon University of Medicine 1



Yangon University of Computer Studies



# Cambodia

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The **Kingdom of Cambodia** (pronounced /kæmˈboʊdiə/, formerly known as **Kampuchea** (ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា Preăh Réachéanachâkr Kâmpŭchea), transliterated: *Preăh Réachéanachâkr Kâmpŭchea*) is a country in South East Asia with a population of over 13 million people. The kingdom's capital and largest city is Phnom Penh. Cambodia is the successor state of the once powerful Hindu and Buddhist Khmer Empire, which ruled most of the Indochinese Peninsula between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries.

A citizen of Cambodia is usually identified as "Cambodian" or "Khmer," though the latter strictly refers to ethnic Khmers. Most Cambodians are Theravada Buddhists of Khmer extraction, but the country also has a substantial number of predominantly Muslim Cham, as well as ethnic Chinese, Vietnamese and small animist hill tribes.

The country borders Thailand to its west and northwest, Laos to its northeast, and Vietnam to its east and southeast. In the south it faces the Gulf of Thailand. The geography of Cambodia is dominated by the Mekong river (colloquial Khmer: *Tonle Thom* or "the great river") and the Tonlé Sap ("the fresh water lake"), an important source of fish.

Cambodia's main industries are garments, tourism, and construction. In 2007, foreign visitors to Angkor Wat alone almost hit the 4 million mark. In 2005, oil and natural gas deposits were found beneath Cambodia's territorial water, and once commercial extraction begins in 2011, the oil revenues could profoundly affect Cambodia's economy.

## History

<p><b>ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា</b>  <i>Preăh Réachéanachâkr Kâmpŭchea</i>  <i>Royaume du Cambodge</i>  <b>Kingdom of Cambodia</b></p>	
	
Flag	Royal Arms
<p><b>ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ</b>  <b>Motto:</b>            "Nation, Religion, King"</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> " Nokoreach"</p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Phnom Penh



A Khmer army going to war against the Cham, from a relief on the Bayon

<b>Official languages</b>	Khmer
<b>Demonym</b>	Cambodian
<b>Government</b>	Constitutional monarchy
- King	Norodom Sihamoni
- Prime Minister	Hun Sen
<b>Independence</b>	
- from France	November 9, 1953
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	181,035 km <sup>2</sup> ( 88th) 69,898 sq mi
- Water (%)	2.5
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2008 estimate	14,241,640 ( 63rd)
- 1998 census	11,437,656
- Density	78/km <sup>2</sup> ( 112th) 201/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$36.82 billion ( 89th)
- Per capita	\$2,600 ( 133rd)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.598 (medium) ( 131st)
<b>Currency</b>	Riel (៛) <sup>1</sup> ( KHR)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+7)
- Summer ( DST)	( UTC+7)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.kh
<b>Calling code</b>	+855
<sup>1</sup> Local currency, although US dollars are widely used.	

The first advanced civilizations in present-day Cambodia appeared in the 1st millennium AD. During the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries, the Indianised states of Funan and Chenla coalesced in what is now present-day Cambodia and southwestern Vietnam. These states, which are assumed by most scholars to have been Khmer, had close relations with China and Thailand. Their collapse was followed by the rise of the Khmer Empire, a civilization which flourished in the area from the 9th century to the 13th century.

The Khmer Empire declined yet remained powerful in the region until the 15th century. The empire's centre of power was Angkor, where a series of capitals was constructed during the empire's zenith. Angkor Wat, the most famous and best-preserved religious temple at the site, is a reminder of Cambodia's past as a major regional power.

After a long series of wars with neighbouring kingdoms, Angkor was sacked by the Thai and abandoned in 1432. The court moved the capital to Lovek where the kingdom sought to regain its glory through maritime trade. The attempt was short-lived, however, as continued wars with the Thai and Vietnamese resulted in the loss of more territory and the conquering of Lovek in 1594. During the next three centuries, The Khmer kingdom alternated as a vassal state of the Thai and Vietnamese kings, with short-lived periods of relative independence between.

In 1863 King Norodom, who had been installed by Thailand, sought the protection of France. In 1867, the Thai king signed a treaty with France, renouncing suzerainty over Cambodia in exchange for the control of Battambang and Siem Reap provinces which officially became part of Thailand. The provinces were ceded back to Cambodia by a border treaty between France and Thailand in 1906.

Cambodia continued as a protectorate of France from 1863 to 1953, administered as part of the French colony of Indochina. After war-time occupation by the Japanese empire from 1941 to 1945, Cambodia gained independence from France on November 9, 1953. It became a constitutional monarchy under King Norodom Sihanouk.

In 1955, Sihanouk abdicated in favour of his father in order to be elected Prime Minister. Upon his father's death in 1960, Sihanouk again became head of state, taking the title of Prince. As the Vietnam War progressed, Sihanouk adopted an official policy of neutrality until ousted in 1970 by a military coup led by Prime Minister General Lon Nol and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, while on a trip abroad. From Beijing, Sihanouk realigned himself with the communist Khmer Rouge rebels who had been slowly gaining territory in the remote mountain regions and urged his followers to help in overthrowing the pro-United States government of Lon Nol, hastening the onset of civil war.

Operation Menu, a series of secret B-52 bombing raids by the United States on alleged Viet Cong bases and supply routes inside Cambodia, was acknowledged after Lon Nol assumed power; U.S. forces briefly invaded Cambodia in a further effort to disrupt the Viet Cong. The bombing continued and, as the Cambodian communists began gaining ground, eventually included strikes on suspected Khmer Rouge sites until halted in 1973.

Some two million Cambodians were made refugees by the bombing and fighting and fled to Phnom Penh. Estimates of the number of Cambodians killed during the bombing campaigns vary widely. Views of the effects of the bombing also vary widely. The US Seventh Air Force argued that the bombing prevented the fall of Phnom Penh in 1973 by killing 16,000 of 25,500 Khmer Rouge fighters besieging the city. Journalist William Shawcross and Cambodia specialists Milton



South East Asia around the 1200s

Osborne, David P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan argued that the bombing drove peasants to join the Khmer Rouge. Chandler writes that the bombing provided "the psychological ingredients of a violent, vengeful and unrelenting social revolution." Cambodia specialist Craig Etcheson argued that it is "untenable" to assert that the Khmer Rouge would not have won but for US intervention, and that while the bombing did help Khmer Rouge recruitment, they "would have won anyway." As the war ended, a draft US AID report observed that the country faced famine in 1975, with 75% of its draft animals destroyed by the war, and that rice planting for the next harvest would have to be done "by the hard labor of seriously malnourished people." The report predicted that

without large-scale external food and equipment assistance there will be widespread starvation between now and next February... Slave labor and starvation rations for half the nation's people (probably heaviest among those who supported the republic) will be a cruel necessity for this year, and general deprivation and suffering will stretch over the next two or three years before Cambodia can get back to rice self-sufficiency.

The Khmer Rouge reached Phnom Penh and took power in 1975, changing the official name of the country to Democratic Kampuchea, led by Pol Pot. They immediately evacuated the cities and sent the entire population on forced marches to rural work projects. They attempted to rebuild the country's agriculture on the model of the 11th century. They also discarded Western medicine, with the result that while hundreds of thousands died from starvation and disease there were almost no drugs in the country.

Estimates vary as to how many people were killed by the Khmer Rouge regime, ranging from approximately one to three million. This era has given rise to the term Killing Fields, and the prison Tuol Sleng became as notorious as Auschwitz in the history of mass killing. Hundreds of thousands more fled across the border into neighbouring Thailand.

In November 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia to stop Khmer Rouge incursions across the border and the genocide of Vietnamese in Cambodia. Violent occupation and warfare between the Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge holdouts continued throughout the 1980s. Peace efforts began in Paris in 1989, culminating two years later in October 1991 in a comprehensive peace settlement. The United Nations was given a mandate to enforce a ceasefire, and deal with refugees and disarmament.

After the brutality of the 1970s and the 1980s, and the destruction of the cultural, economic, social and political life of Cambodia, it is only in recent years that reconstruction efforts have begun and some political stability has finally returned to Cambodia. The stability established following the conflict was shaken in 1997 during a coup d'état, but has otherwise remained in place. Cambodia has been aided by a number of more developed nations like Japan, France, West-Germany, Canada, Australia and the United States, primarily economically. Money raised in schools and community groups in these countries has gone towards the rebuilding of infrastructure and housing.



Bones of children executed at the Killing Fields

## Politics and government

The politics of Cambodia formally take place, according to the nation's constitution of 1993, in the framework of a constitutional monarchy operated as a parliamentary representative democracy. The Prime Minister of Cambodia is the head of government, and of a pluriform multi-party system, while the king is the head of state. The Prime Minister is appointed by the King, on the advice and with the approval of the National Assembly; the Prime Minister and his or her ministerial appointees exercise executive power in government. Legislative power is vested in both the executive and the two chambers of parliament, the National Assembly of Cambodia and the Senate.



King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia

On October 14, 2004, King Norodom Sihamoni was selected by a special nine-member throne council, part of a selection process that was quickly put in place after the surprise abdication of King Norodom Sihanouk a week before. Sihamoni's selection was endorsed by Prime Minister Hun Sen and National Assembly Speaker Prince Norodom Ranariddh (the new king's brother), both members of the throne council. He was crowned in Phnom Penh on October 29. The monarchy is symbolic and does not exercise political power. Norodom Sihamoni was trained in Cambodian classical dance. Due to his long stay in the Czech Republic (then part of Czechoslovakia) Norodom Sihamoni is fluent in the Czech language.

In 2006, Transparency International's rating of corrupt countries rated Cambodia as 151st of 163 countries of their Corruption Perceptions Index. . The 2007 edition of the same list placed Cambodia at 162nd out of 179 countries . According to this same list, Cambodia is the 3rd most corrupt nation in the South-East Asia area, behind Laos, at 168th, and Myanmar, at joint 179th. The BBC reports that corruption is rampant in the Cambodian political arena with international aid from the U.S. and other countries being illegally transferred into private accounts. Corruption has also added to the wide income disparity within the population.

## Military

The king is the Supreme Commander of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) and the country's prime minister effectively holds the position of commander-in-chief. The introduction of a revised command structure early in 2000 was a key prelude to the reorganization of the RCAF. This saw the ministry of national defense form three subordinate general departments responsible for logistics and finance, materials and technical services, and defense services. The High Command Headquarters (HCHQ) was left unchanged, but the general staff was dismantled and the former will assume responsibility over three autonomous infantry divisions. A joint staff was also formed, responsible for inter-service co-ordination and staff management within HCHQ.

The minister of National Defense is Tea Banh. Tea Banh has served as defense minister since 1979. The Secretaries of State for Defense are Chay Saing Yun and Por Bun Sreu.

Ke Kim Yan is the current commander of the RCAF. The Army Commander is Meas Sophea and the Army Chief of Staff is Chea Saran.



Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia

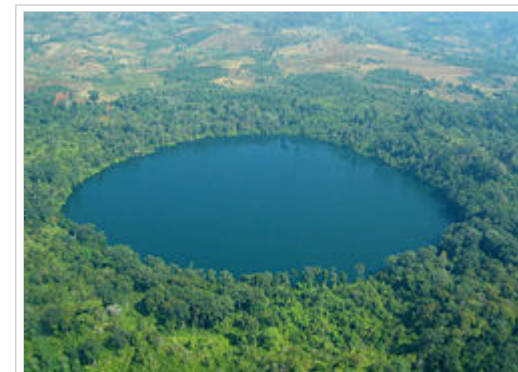
## Geography

Cambodia has an area of 181,035 square kilometres (69,898 sq mi), sharing an 800 kilometre (500 mi) border with Thailand in the north and west, a 541 kilometre (336 mi) border with Laos in the northeast, and a 1,228 kilometre (763 mi) border with Vietnam in the east and southeast. It has 443 kilometres (275 mi) of coastline along the Gulf of Thailand.



A boat on the Tonle Sap

The most distinctive geographical feature is the lacustrine plain, formed by the inundations of the Tonle Sap (Great Lake), measuring about 2,590 square kilometres (1,000 sq mi) during the dry season and expanding to about 24,605 square kilometres (9,500 sq mi) during the rainy season. This densely populated plain, which is devoted to wet rice cultivation, is the heartland of Cambodia. Most (about 75%) of the country lies at elevations of less than 100 metres (330 ft) above sea level, the exceptions being the Cardamom Mountains (highest elevation 1,813 m / 5,948 ft) and their southeast extension the Dâmrei Mountains ("Elephant Mountains") (elevation range 500–1,000 m or 1,640–3,280 ft), as well the steep escarpment of the Dângrêk Mountains (average elevation 500 m / 1,640 ft) along the border with Thailand's Isan region. The highest elevation of Cambodia is Phnom Aoral, near Pursat in the centre of the country, at 1,813 metres (5,948 ft).

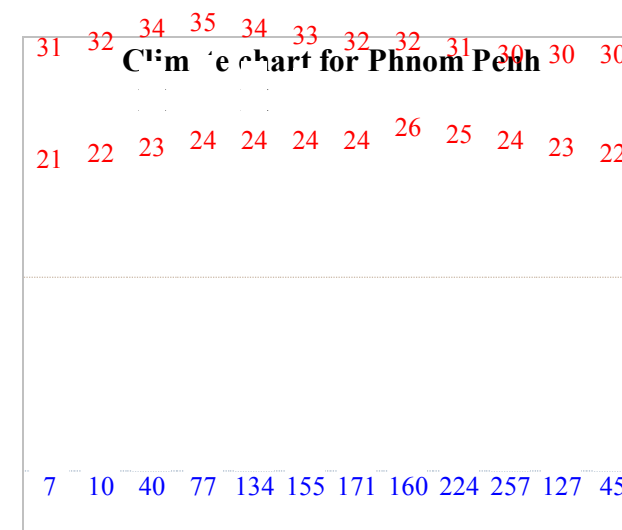


Yak Loum lake in Ratanakiri Province

## Climate

Cambodia's temperatures range from 10° to 38 °C (50° to 100 °F) and experiences tropical monsoons. Southwest monsoons blow inland bringing moisture-laden winds from the Gulf of Thailand and Indian Ocean from May to October. The northeast monsoon ushers in the dry season, which lasts from November to March. The country experiences the heaviest precipitation from September to October with the driest period occurring from January to February.

It has two distinct seasons. The rainy season, which runs from May to October, can see temperatures drop to 22 °C and is generally accompanied with high humidity. The dry season lasts from November to April when temperatures can raise up to 40 °C around April. The best months to visit Cambodia are November to January when temperatures and humidity are lower.



## City and province sizes

No.	City or province	Area	
		km <sup>2</sup>	sq mi
1	City of Phnom Penh	290	112
2	Kandal Province	3,568	1,378
3	Takeo Province	3,563	1,376
4	Kampong Cham Province	9,799	3,783
5	Kampong Thom	13,814	5,334
6	Siem Reap Province	10,299	3,976
7	Preah Vihear Province	13,788	5,324
8	Oddar Meanchey Province	6,158	2,378
9	Banteay Meanchey Province	6,679	2,579
10	Battambang Province	11,072	4,275
11	City of Pailin	803	310
12	Pursat Province	12,692	4,900
13	Kampong Chhnang Province	5,521	2,132
14	Kampong Speu Province	7,017	2,709
15	Koh Kong Province	11,160	4,309
16	City of Sihanoukville	868	335
17	Kampot Province	4,873.2	1,881.6
18	City of Kep	335.8	129.7
19	Prey Veng Province	4,883	1,885
20	Svay Rieng Province	2,966	1,145
21	Kratie Province	11,094	4,283

temperatures in °C

precipitation totals in mm

source: BBC Weather

**Imperial conversion**

[ Hide ]



Monsoon season in Kampong Speu Province



Serendipity Bay, Sihanoukville

22	Stung Treng Province	11,092	4,283
23	Ratanakiri Province	10,782	4,163
24	Mondulkiri Province	14,288	5,517
25	Tonle Sap lake	3,000	1,158
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>		181,035	69,898

## Foreign relations

Cambodia is a member of the United Nations and its specialized agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. It is an Asian Development Bank (ADB) member, a member of ASEAN, and joined the WTO on 13 October 2004. In 2005 Cambodia attended the inaugural East Asia Summit.

Cambodia has established diplomatic relations with numerous countries; the government reports twenty embassies in the country including many of its Asian neighbours and those of important players during the Paris peace negotiations, including the US, Australia, Canada, China, the European Union (EU), Japan, and Russia.

While the violent ruptures of the 1970s and 80s have passed, several border disputes between Cambodia and its neighbours persist. There are disagreements over some offshore islands and sections of the boundary with Vietnam, and undefined maritime boundaries and border areas with Thailand.

In January 2003, there were riots in Phnom Penh prompted by rumored comments about Angkor Wat by a Thai actress wrongly attributed by *Reaksmei Angkor*, a Cambodian newspaper, and later quoted by Prime Minister Hun Sen. The Thai government sent military aircraft to evacuate Thai nationals and closed its border with Cambodia to Thais and Cambodians (at no time was the border ever closed to foreigners or Western tourists) while Thais demonstrated outside the Cambodian embassy in Bangkok. The border was re-opened on March 21, after the Cambodian government paid \$6 million USD in compensation for the destruction of the Thai embassy and agreed to compensate individual Thai businesses for their losses.

## Wildlife of Cambodia



Cambodia has a wide variety of plants and animals. There are 212 mammal species, 536 bird species, 240 reptile species, 850 freshwater fish species (Tonle Sap Lake area), and 435 marine fish species.

The country has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. Since 1970, Cambodia's primary rainforest cover fell dramatically from over 70 percent in 1970 to just 3.1 percent in 2007. In total, Cambodia lost 25,000 square kilometres (9,700 sq mi) of forest between 1990 and 2005—3,340 km<sup>2</sup> (1,290 sq mi) of which was primary forest. As of 2007, less than 3,220 km<sup>2</sup> (1,243 sq mi) of primary forest remain with the result that the future sustainability of the forest reserves of Cambodia is under severe threat, with illegal loggers looking to generate revenue.

## Economy



Rice cropping plays an important role in the economy

Final economic indicators for 2007 are not yet available. 2006 GDP was \$7.265 billion (*per capita* GDP \$513), with annual growth of 10.8%. Estimates for 2007 are for a GDP of \$8.251 billion (*per capita* \$571) and annual growth of 8.5%). Inflation for 2006 was 2.6%, and the current estimate for final 2007 inflation is 6.2%.

Per capita income is rapidly increasing, but is low compared with other countries in the region. Most rural households depend on agriculture and its related sub-sectors. Rice, fish, timber, garments and rubber are Cambodia's major exports. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) reintroduced more than 750 traditional rice varieties to Cambodia from its rice seed bank in the Philippines (*Jahn 2006, 2007*). These varieties had been collected in the 1960s. In 1987, the Australian government funded IRRI to assist Cambodia to improve its rice production. By 2000, Cambodia was once again self-sufficient in rice (*Puckridge 2004, Fredenburg and Hill 1978*).

The recovery of Cambodia's economy slowed dramatically in 1997–98, due to the regional economic crisis, civil violence, and political infighting. Foreign investment and tourism also fell off drastically. Since then however, growth has been steady. In 1999, the first full year of peace in 30 years, progress was made on economic reforms and growth resumed at 5.0%. Despite severe flooding, GDP grew at 5.0% in 2000, 6.3% in 2001, and 5.2% in 2002. Tourism was Cambodia's fastest growing industry, with arrivals increasing from 219,000 in 1997 to 1,055,000 in 2004. During 2003 and 2004 the growth rate remained steady at 5.0%, while in 2004 inflation was at 1.7% and exports at \$1.6 billion US dollars. As of 2005, GDP per capita in PPP terms was \$2,200, which ranked 178th (out of 233) countries.

The older population often lacks education, particularly in the countryside, which suffers from a lack of basic infrastructure. Fear of renewed political instability and corruption within the government discourage foreign investment and delay foreign aid, although there has been significant assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors. Donors pledged \$504 m to the country in 2004, while the Asian Development Bank alone has provided \$850m in loans, grants, and technical assistance.



Indochinese Tiger



Angkor Wat, the biggest tourist draw of Cambodia

The tourism industry is the country's second-greatest source of hard currency after the textile industry. 50% of visitor arrivals are to Angkor, and most of the remainder to Phnom Penh. Other tourist destinations include Sihanoukville in the southeast which has several popular beaches, and the nearby area around Kampot including the Bokor Hill Station.

## Ethnicity

- 87% Khmer
- 4.3% Vietnamese
- 4% Chinese
- 2.3% Cham
- 0.3% Thai
- 0.1% Eurasian
- 2% Other

## Demographics

More than 90% of its population is of Khmer origin and speaks the Khmer language, the country's official language. The remainder include Chinese, Vietnamese, Cham, Khmer Loeu and Indians.

The Khmer language is a member of the Mon-Khmer subfamily of the Austroasiatic language group. French, once the lingua franca of Indochina and still spoken by some, mostly older Cambodians as a second language, remains the language of instruction in various schools and universities that are often funded by the government of France. Cambodian French, a remnant of the country's colonial past, is a dialect found in Cambodia and is frequently used in government. However, in recent decades, many younger Cambodians and those in the business-class have favoured learning English. In the major cities and tourist centers, English is widely spoken and taught at a large number of schools due to the overwhelming number of tourists from English-speaking countries. Even in the most rural outposts, however, most young people speak at least some English, as it is often taught by monks at the local pagodas where many children are educated.



Local women at a market in Battambang

The dominant religion, a form of Theravada Buddhism (95%), was suppressed by the Khmer Rouge but has since experienced a revival. Islam (3%) and Christianity (2%) are also practiced.

Cambodia religiosity	
religion	percent
Buddhism	95%
Islam	3%
Christianity	2%

Civil war and its aftermath have had a marked effect on the Cambodian population. The median age is 20.6 years, with more than 50% of the population younger than 25. At 0.95 males/female, Cambodia has the most female-biased sex ratio in the Greater Mekong Subregion. In the Cambodian population over 65, the female to male ratio is 1.6:1. UNICEF has designated Cambodia the third most mined country in the world, attributing over 60,000 civilian deaths and thousands more maimed or injured since 1970 to the unexploded land mines left behind in rural areas. The majority of the victims are children herding animals or playing in the fields. Adults that survive landmines often require amputation of one or more limbs and have to resort to begging for survival. In 2006, the

number of landmines casualties in Cambodia took a sharp decrease of more than 50% compared to 2005, with the number of landmines victims down from 800 in 2005 to less than 400 in 2006. The reduced casualty rate continued in 2007, with 208 casualties (38 killed and 170 injured)."

## Culture and society

Khmer culture, as developed and spread by the Khmer empire, has distinctive styles of dance, architecture and sculpture, which have strongly influenced neighbouring Laos and Thailand. Angkor Wat (*Angkor* means "city" and *Wat* "temple") is the best preserved example of Khmer architecture from the Angkorian era and hundreds of other temples have been discovered in and around the region. The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, the infamous prison of the Khmer Rouge, and Choeung Ek, one of the main Killing Fields are other important historic sites.

Bonn Om Teuk (Festival of Boat Racing), the annual boat rowing contest, is the most attended Cambodian national festival. Held at the end of the rainy season when the Mekong river begins to sink back to its normal levels allowing the Tonle Sap River to reverse flow, approximately 10% of Cambodia's population attends this event each year to play games, give thanks to the moon, watch fireworks, and attend the boat race in a carnival-type atmosphere. Popular games include cockfighting, soccer, and kicking a *sey*, which is similar to a footbag. Recent artistic figures include singers Sinn Sisamouth and Ros Sereysothea (and later Meng Keo Pichenda), who introduced new musical styles to the country.

Rice, as in other Southeast Asian countries, is the staple grain, while fish from the Mekong and Tonle Sap also form an important part of the diet. The Cambodian per capita supply of fish and fish products for food and trade in 2000 was 20 kilograms of fish per year or 2 ounces per day per person. Some of the fish can be made into prahok for longer storage. Overall, the cuisine of Cambodia is similar to that of its Southeast Asian neighbours. The cuisine is relatively unknown to the world compared to that of its neighbours Thailand and Vietnam.

Soccer is one of the more popular sports, although professional organized sports are not as prevalent in Cambodia as in western countries due to the economic

conditions. The Cambodia national football team managed fourth in the 1972 Asian Cup but development has slowed since the civil war. Western sports such as volleyball, bodybuilding, field hockey, rugby union, golf, and baseball are gaining popularity while traditional boat racing maintains its appeal as a national sport. Martial arts is practiced in Cambodia, as well the native art of Pradal Serey and Bokator.

## Transport

The civil war and wildlife severely damaged Cambodia's transport system, but with assistance and equipment from other countries Cambodia has been upgrading the main highways to international standards and most are vastly improved from 2006. Most main roads are now paved. Cambodia has two rail lines, totalling about 612 kilometers (380 mi) of single, one meter gauge track. The lines run from the capital to Sihanoukville on the southern coast, and from Phnom Penh to Sisophon (although trains often run only as far as Battambang). Currently only one passenger train per week operates, between Phnom Penh and Battambang.

Besides the main interprovincial traffic artery connecting the capital Phnom Penh with Sihanoukville, resurfacing a former dirt road with concrete / asphalt and implementation of 5 major river crossings by means of bridges have now permanently connected Phnom Penh with Koh Kong and hence there is now uninterrupted road access to neighboring Thailand and their vast road system.

The nation's extensive inland waterways were important historically in international trade. The Mekong and the Tonle Sap River, their numerous tributaries, and the Tonle Sap provided avenues of considerable length, including 3,700 kilometers (2,300 mi) navigable all year by craft drawing 0.6 meters (2 ft) and another 282 kilometers (175 mi) navigable to craft drawing 1.8 meters (6 ft). Cambodia has two major ports, Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville, and five minor ones. Phnom Penh, located at the junction of the Bassac, the Mekong, and the Tonle Sap rivers, is the only river port capable of receiving 8,000- ton ships during the wet season and 5,000- ton ships during the dry season.

With increasing economic activity has come an increase in automobile and motorcycle use, though bicycles still predominate; as often in developing countries, an associated rise in traffic deaths and injuries is occurring. Cycle rickshaws ("p<sup>h</sup>ot-p<sup>h</sup>ots") are an additional option often used by visitors.

The country has four commercial airports. Phnom Penh International Airport (Pochentong) in Phnom Penh is the second largest in Cambodia. Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport is the largest and serves the most international flights in and out of Cambodia. The other airports are in Sihanoukville and Battambang.

## International rankings



National Highway 1

Organization		
Heritage Foundation	Index of Economic Freedom	100 out of 157
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index	85 out of 169
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index	162 out of 179
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	131 out of 177
World Economic Forum	Global Competitiveness Report	110 out of 131
Nation Master	Terrorist Acts 2000-2006 Incidences (most recent) by country ,112 being the least reports of Terrorist Acts	42 out of 112

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# China

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## China



Traditional Chinese: 中國

Simplified Chinese: 中国

### Transliterations

Kejia (Hakka)

- Romanization: Chûng-koet

Mandarin

- Hanyu Pinyin: Zhōngguó

- Tongyong Pinyin: Jhongguó

- Wade-Giles: Chung<sup>1</sup>-kuo<sup>2</sup>  
Listen

Min

- Min-nan POJ: Tiong-koek

Yue (Cantonese)

- Jyutping: zung<sup>1</sup> gwok<sup>3</sup>

**China** ( traditional Chinese: 中國; simplified Chinese: 中国; Hanyu Pinyin: Zhōngguó ; Tongyong Pinyin: Jhongguó; Wade-Giles ( Mandarin): Chung<sup>1</sup>kuo<sup>2</sup>) is a cultural region, an ancient civilization, and, depending on perspective, a national or multinational entity occupying a large portion of land in East Asia.

China has one of the world's oldest people and continuous civilizations, consisting of states and cultures dating back more than six millennia. It has the world's longest continuously used written language system, and is the source of such major inventions as what the British scholar and biochemist Joseph Needham called the " four great inventions of Ancient China": paper, the compass, gunpowder, and printing. Historically China's cultural sphere has been very influential in East Asia as a whole, with Chinese religion, customs, and writing system being adopted, to varying degrees, by its neighbors Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

The stalemate of the last Chinese Civil War has resulted in two political entities using the name *China*: the **People's Republic of China (PRC)**, commonly known as **China**, which controls mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau; and the **Republic of China (ROC)**, commonly known as **Taiwan**, which controls the island of Taiwan and some nearby islands.

## Etymology

China is called 'Zhongguo' ( 中國 or 中国) in Chinese. The character *zhōng* means "middle" or central; the latter, *guo*, means land, or kingdom.

The name *Zhongguo* appeared first in the *Classic of History* (6th Century BCE), and was used to refer to the late Zhou Dynasty, as they believed that they were the "centre of civilization" , while peoples in the four cardinals were called Eastern Yi, Southern Man, Western Rong and Northern Di respectively. Some texts imply that "Zhongguo" was originally meant to refer to the capital of the sovereign, to differ from the capital of his vassals. The use of *Zhongguo* implied a claim of political legitimacy. *Zhongguo* was often used by states who saw themselves as the sole legitimate successor to previous Chinese dynasties; for example, in the era of the Southern Song Dynasty, both the Jin Dynasty and the Southern Song state claimed to be *Zhongguo*.

*Zhongguo* came to official use as an abbreviation for the Republic of China (*Zhonghua Minguo*) after the government's establishment in 1912. Since the People's Republic of China, established in 1949, now controls the great majority of area encompassed within the traditional concept of "China", the People's Republic is the political unit most commonly identified with the abbreviated name *Zhongguo*.

English and many other languages use various forms of the name "China" and the prefix "Sino-" or "Sin-". These forms are thought to derive from the name of the Qin Dynasty that first unified the country (221–206 BCE). The pronunciation of "*Qin*" is similar to the phonetic "cheen", which is considered the possible root of the word "China".

## History

中文

**This article contains Chinese text.**

Without proper rendering support, you may see question marks, boxes, or other symbols instead of Chinese characters.



Ancient China was one of the earliest centers of human civilization. Chinese civilization was also one of the few to invent writing independently, the others being Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley Civilization, the Mayan civilization, the Minoan Civilization of ancient Greece, and Ancient Egypt.

## Prehistory

Archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest humans in China date from 2.24 million to 250,000 years ago. A cave in Zhoukoudian (near present-day Beijing) has fossils dated at somewhere between 300,000 to 550,000 years.

The earliest evidence of a fully modern human in China comes from Liujiang County, Guangxi, where a cranium has been found and dated to approximately 67,000 years ago. Although much controversy persists over the dating of the Liujiang remains, a partial skeleton from Minatogawa in Okinawa, Japan has been dated to  $18,250 \pm 650$  to  $16,600 \pm 300$  years ago, so modern humans must have reached China before that time.

## Dynastic rule

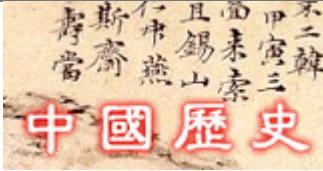
Chinese tradition names the first dynasty Xia, but it was considered mythical until scientific excavations found early bronze-age sites at Erlitou in Henan Province. Archaeologists have since uncovered urban sites, bronze implements, and tombs in locations cited as Xia's in ancient historical texts, but it is impossible to verify that these remains are of the Xia without written records from the period.



Some of the thousands of life-size Terracotta Warriors of the Qin Dynasty, ca. 210 BCE.

The second dynasty, the loosely feudal Shang, definitely settled along the Yellow River in eastern China from the 18th to the 12th century BCE. They were invaded from the west by the Zhou, who ruled from the 12th to the 5th century BCE. The centralized authority of the Zhou was slowly eroded by warlords. Many strong, independent states continually waged war with each other in the Spring and Autumn period, only occasionally deferring to the Zhou king.

The first unified Chinese state was established by the Qin Dynasty in 221 BCE, when the office of the Emperor was set up and the Chinese language was forcibly standardized. This state did not last

	
<b>History of China</b>	
ANCIENT	
<b>3 Sovereigns and 5 Emperors</b>	
<b>Xia Dynasty</b> 2100–1600 BCE	
<b>Shang Dynasty</b> 1600–1046 BCE	
<b>Zhou Dynasty</b> 1122–256 BCE	
<b>Western Zhou</b>	
<b>Eastern Zhou</b>	
Spring and Autumn Period	
Warring States Period	
IMPERIAL	
<b>Qin Dynasty</b> 221 BCE–206 BCE	
<b>Han Dynasty</b> 206 BCE–220 CE	
<b>Western Han</b>	
<b>Xin Dynasty</b>	
<b>Eastern Han</b>	
<b>Three Kingdoms</b> 220–280	
<b>Wei, Shu &amp; Wu</b>	
<b>Jin Dynasty</b> 265–420	
<b>Western Jin</b>	
<b>Eastern Jin</b>	<b>16 Kingdoms</b> 304–439
<b>Southern &amp; Northern Dynasties</b> 420–589	
<b>Sui Dynasty</b> 581–618	
<b>Tang Dynasty</b> 618–907	
( <b>Second Zhou</b> 690–705 )	
<b>5 Dynasties &amp; 10 Kingdoms</b> 907–960	<b>Liao Dynasty</b> 907–1125
<b>Song Dynasty</b> 960–1279	<b>W. Xia Dyn.</b>
<b>Northern Song</b>	
<b>Southern Song</b>	<b>Jin Dyn.</b>
<b>Yuan Dynasty</b> 1271–1368	
<b>Ming Dynasty</b> 1368–1644	
<b>Qing Dynasty</b> 1644–1911	
MODERN	
<b>Republic of China</b> 1912–1949	

long, as its legalist policies soon led to widespread rebellion.

The subsequent Han Dynasty ruled China between 206 BCE and 220 CE, and created a lasting Han cultural identity among its populace that would last to the present day. The Han Dynasty expanded the empire's territory considerably with military campaigns reaching Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia and Central Asia, and also helped establish the Silk Road in Central Asia.

After Han's collapse, another period of disunion followed, including the highly chivalric period of the Three Kingdoms. Independent Chinese states of this period also opened diplomatic relations with Japan, introducing the Chinese writing system there. In 580 CE, China was reunited under the Sui. However, the Sui Dynasty was short-lived after a failure in the Goguryeo-Sui Wars (598–614) weakened it.



A 10th-11th century Longquan stoneware vase from Zhejiang province, during the Song Dynasty.

Under the succeeding Tang and Song dynasties, Chinese technology and culture reached its zenith. The Song dynasty was the first government in world history to issue paper money and the first Chinese polity to establish a permanent standing navy. Between the 10th and 11th centuries, the population of China doubled in size. This growth came about through expanded rice cultivation in central and southern China, along with its production of abundant food surpluses. Within its borders, the Northern Song Dynasty had a population of some 100 million people. The Song Dynasty was a culturally rich period in China for the arts, philosophy, and social life. Landscape art and portrait paintings were brought to new levels of maturity and complexity since the Tang Dynasty, and social elites gathered to view art, share their own, and make trades of precious artworks. Philosophers such as Cheng Yi and Chu Hsi reinvigorated Confucianism with new commentary, infused Buddhist ideals, and emphasis on new organization of classic texts that brought about the core doctrine of Neo-Confucianism.

In 1271, the Mongol leader and the fifth Khagan of the Mongol Empire Kublai Khan established the Yuan Dynasty, with the last remnant of the Song Dynasty falling to the Yuan in 1279. A peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang overthrew the Mongols in 1368 and founded the Ming Dynasty. Ming Dynasty thinkers such as Wang Yangming would further critique and expand Neo-Confucianism with ideas of individualism and innate morality that would have tremendous impact on later Japanese thought. Chosun Korea also became a nominal vassal state of Ming China and adopted much of its Neo-Confucian bureaucratic structure. China's capital was moved from Nanjing to Beijing during the early Ming Dynasty. The Ming fell to the Manchus in 1644, who then established the Qing Dynasty. An estimated 25 million people died during the Manchu

conquest of Ming Dynasty (1616–1644).

The Qing Dynasty, which lasted until 1912, was the last dynasty in China. In the 19th century the Qing Dynasty adopted a defensive posture towards European imperialism, even though it engaged in imperialistic expansion into Central Asia itself. At this time China awoke to the significance of the rest of the world, in particular the West. As China opened up to foreign trade and missionary activity, opium produced by British India was forced onto Qing China. Two Opium

<b>People's Republic of China</b> ( Mainland China) 1949–present	<b>Republic of China</b> (on Taiwan) 1945–present
1949-1976 1976-1989 1989-2002 2002-present	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dynasties in Chinese History</li> <li>Economic history of China</li> <li>Historiography of China</li> <li>History of Chinese Art</li> <li>History of Education in China</li> <li>History of Science and Technology in China</li> <li>Legal history of China</li> <li>Linguistic history of China</li> <li>Military history of China</li> <li>Naval History of China</li> <li>Timeline of Chinese History</li> </ul>	

Wars with Britain weakened the Emperor's control.

One result was the Taiping Civil War which lasted from 1851 to 1862. It was led by Hong Xiuquan, who was partly influenced by a misinterpretation of Christianity. Hong believed himself to be the son of God and the younger brother of Jesus. Although the Qing forces were eventually victorious, the civil war was one of the bloodiest in human history, costing at least twenty million lives (more than the total number of fatalities in the First World War), with some estimates up to two-hundred million. In addition, more costly rebellions in terms of human lives and economics followed the Taiping Rebellion such as the Punti-Hakka Clan Wars (1855–1867), Nien Rebellion (1851–1868), Muslim Rebellion (1862–1877), Panthay Rebellion (1856–1873) and the Miao Rebellion (1854–1873). These rebellions resulted in an estimated loss of several million lives for each rebellion and in disastrous results for the economy and the countryside. The flow of British opium led to more decline.

While China was torn by continuous war, Meiji Japan succeeded in rapidly modernizing its military with its sights on Korea and Manchuria. Maneuvered by Japan, Korea declared independence from Qing China's suzerainty in 1894, leading to the First Sino-Japanese War, which resulted in the Qing Dynasty's cession of both Korea and Taiwan to Japan. Following these series of defeats, a reform plan for the empire to become a modern Meiji-style constitutional monarchy was drafted by the Emperor Guangxu in 1898, but was opposed and stopped by the Empress Dowager Cixi, who placed Emperor Guangxu under house arrest in a coup d'état. Further destruction followed the ill-fated 1900 Boxer Rebellion against westerners in Beijing. By the early 20th century, mass civil disorder had begun, and calls for reform and revolution were heard across the country. The 38 year old Emperor Guangxu died under house arrest on November 14, 1908, suspiciously just a day before Cixi. With the throne empty, he was succeeded by Cixi's handpicked heir, his two year old nephew Puyi, who became the Xuantong Emperor, **the last Chinese emperor**. Guangxu's consort, who became the Empress Dowager Longyu, signed the abdication decree as regent in 1912, ending two thousand years of imperial rule in China. She died, childless, in 1913.

## Republic of China (1912–1949)

On January 1, 1912, the Republic of China was established, heralding the end of the Qing Dynasty. Sun Yat-sen of the Kuomintang (the KMT or Nationalist Party) was proclaimed provisional president of the republic. However, the presidency was later given to Yuan Shikai, a former Qing general, who had ensured the defection of the entire Beiyang Army from the Qing Empire to the revolution. In 1915, Yuan proclaimed himself Emperor of China but was forced to abdicate and return the state to a republic when he realized it was an unpopular move, not only with the population but also his own Beiyang Army and its commanders.



A corner tower of the Forbidden City at night; the palace served as the residence for the imperial family since the reign of the Yongle Emperor of the Ming Dynasty in the 15th century, up until the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912.

After Yuan Shikai's death in 1916, China was politically fragmented, with an internationally recognized but virtually powerless national government seated in Peking (modern day Beijing). Warlords in various regions exercised actual control over their respective territories. In the late 1920s, the Kuomintang, under Chiang Kai-shek, was able to reunify the country under its own control, moving the nation's capital to Nanking (modern day Nanjing) and implementing "political tutelage", an intermediate stage of political development outlined in Sun Yat-sen's program for transforming China into a modern, democratic state. Effectively, political tutelage meant one-party rule by the Kuomintang.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945 (part of World War II) forced an uneasy alliance between the Nationalists and the Communists as well as causing around 10 million Chinese civilian deaths. With the surrender of Japan in 1945, China emerged victorious but financially drained. The continued distrust between the Nationalists and the Communists led to the resumption of the Chinese Civil War. In 1947, constitutional rule was established, but because of the ongoing Civil War many provisions of the ROC constitution were never implemented on the mainland.



Map of Republic of China printed by Rand McNally & Co. in the year 1914.

### People's Republic of China and Republic of China (1949–present)

After its victory in the Chinese Civil War, the Communist Party of China, led by Mao Zedong, gained control of most of the Mainland China. On October 1, 1949, they established the People's Republic of China as a Socialist State headed by a "Democratic Dictatorship" with the CCP as the only legal political party, thus, laying claim as the successor state of the ROC. The central government of the Chinese Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-shek was forced to retreat to the island of Taiwan that it had occupied at the end of World War II and moved the ROC government there. Major armed hostilities ceased in 1950 but no peace treaty has been signed.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the Republic of China began the implementation of full, multi-party, representative democracy in the territories still under its control (Taiwan, and a number of smaller islands including Quemoy and Matsu). Today, the ROC has active political participation by all sectors of society. The main cleavage in ROC politics is the issue of eventual political unification with the Chinese mainland vs. formal independence of Taiwan.

After the Chinese Civil War, mainland China underwent a series of disruptive socioeconomic movements starting in the late 1950s with the Great Leap Forward and continued in the 1960s with the Cultural Revolution that left much of its education system and economy in shambles. With the death of its first generation Communist Party leaders such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the PRC began implementing a series of political and economic reforms advocated by Deng Xiaoping that eventually formed the foundation for mainland China's rapid economic development starting in the 1990s.

Post-1978 reforms on the mainland have led to some relaxation of control over many areas of society. However, the PRC government still has almost absolute



Territories currently administered by two states that formally use the name *China*: the PRC (in purple) and the ROC (in orange).

control over politics, and it continually seeks to eradicate what it perceives as threats to the social, political and economic stability of the country. Examples include the fight against terrorism, jailing of political opponents and journalists, custody regulation of the press, regulation of religion, and suppression of independence/secessionist movements. In 1989, the student protests at Tiananmen Square were violently put to an end by the Chinese military after 15 days of martial law. In 1997, Hong Kong was returned to the PRC by the United Kingdom, and in 1999, Macau was returned by Portugal.

Today, mainland China is administered by the People's Republic of China—a one-party state under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party; while the island of Taiwan and surrounding islands are administered by the Republic of China—a democratic multi-party state. After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, both states claimed to be the sole legitimate ruler of all of "China". After the Kuomintang retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the Republic of China had maintained official diplomatic relations with most states around the world, but by the 1970s, there was a shift in the international diplomatic circles and the People's Republic of China gained the upper hand in international diplomatic relations and recognition count. In 1971, under resolution 2758, the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek to the United Nations were expelled from the intergovernmental organization. With the expulsion of the Chiang Kai-shek's representatives, and effectively the Republic of China, the representatives of the People's Republic of China were invited to assume China's seat on the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and other United Nations councils and agencies. Later attempts by the Republic of China to rejoin the UN have either been blocked by the People's Republic of China, who has veto power on UN Security Council, or rejected by the United Nations Secretariat or a United Nations General Assembly committee responsible for the General Assembly's agenda.

Since its retreat to Taiwan, the Republic of China has not formally renounced its claim to all of China, nor has it changed its official maps, which includes the mainland and Mongolia. Following the introduction to full democracy and the electoral victory of DPP's Chen Shui-bian in the presidential elections, the Republic of China has not pursued its claims on the mainland and in Mongolia. The previous DPP Administration has adopted a policy of separating the state's identity from "China", while moving towards identifying the state as "Taiwan". The ROC has not made formal moves to change the name, flag, or national anthem of the state to reflect a Taiwan identity due to pressure from the United States and the fear of invasion or military action from the People's Republic of China against the island. The People's Republic of China claims to have succeeded the Republic of China as the sole legitimate governing authority of all of China, which, from the official viewpoint of People's Republic of China, includes the island of Taiwan. Over the last 50 years, both the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China have used diplomatic and economic means to compete for recognition in the international arena. Because most international, intergovernmental organizations observe the One-China policy of the People's Republic of China, the PRC has been able to pressure organizations, such as the World Health Organization and the International Olympic Committee, to refuse official recognition of the Republic of China. Due to the One-China policy, states around the world are pressured to refuse, or to cut off, diplomatic relations with the Republic of China. As a result, 23 U.N. member states currently maintain official diplomatic relations with the Republic of China while the vast majority of the U.N. member states maintain official diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

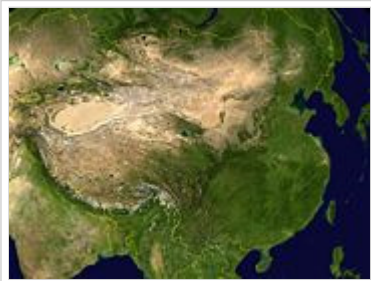
## **Territory and environment**

### **Historical political divisions**

Top-level political divisions of China have altered as administrations changed. Top levels included circuits and provinces. Below that, there have been prefectures, subprefectures, departments, commanderies, districts, and counties. Recent divisions also include prefecture-level cities, county-level cities, towns and townships.

Most Chinese dynasties were based in the historical heartlands of China, known as China proper. Various dynasties also expanded into peripheral territories like Inner Mongolia, Manchuria, Xinjiang, and Tibet. The Manchu-established Qing Dynasty and its successors, the ROC and the PRC, incorporated these territories into the Chinese empire.

## Geography and climate



Composite satellite photo

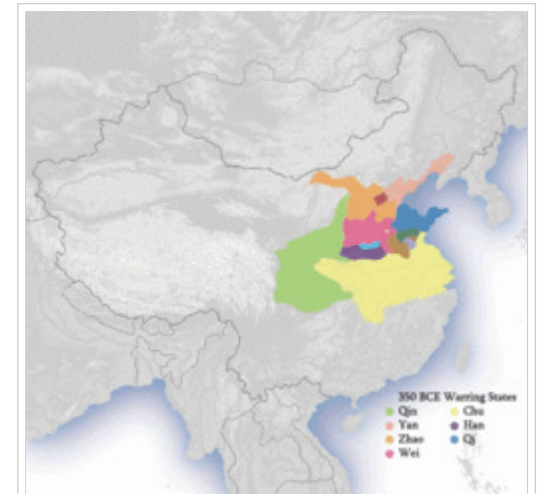
China ranges from mostly plateaus and mountains in the west to lower lands in the east. Principal rivers flow from west to east, including the Yangtze (central), the Huang He (Yellow river, north-central), and the Amur (northeast), and sometimes toward the south (including the Pearl River, Mekong River, and Brahmaputra), with most Chinese rivers emptying into the Pacific Ocean.

In the east, along the shores of the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea there are extensive and densely populated alluvial plains. On the edges of the Inner Mongolian plateau in the north, grasslands can be seen. Southern China is dominated by hills and low mountain ranges. In the central-east are the deltas of China's two major rivers, the Huang He and Yangtze River. Most of China's arable lands lie along these rivers; they were the centers of China's major ancient civilizations. Other major rivers include the Pearl River, Mekong, Brahmaputra and Amur. Yunnan Province is considered a part of the Greater Mekong Subregion, which also includes Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

In the west, the north has a great alluvial plain, and the south has a vast calcareous tableland traversed by hill ranges of moderate elevation, and the Himalayas, containing Earth's highest point, Mount Everest. The northwest also has high plateaus with more arid desert landscapes such as the Takla-Makan and the Gobi Desert, which has been expanding. 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 Paleozoic formations of China, excepting only the upper part of the Carboniferous system, are marine, while the Mesozoic and Tertiary deposits are estuarine and freshwater or else of terrestrial origin. Groups of volcanic cones occur in the Great Plain of north China. In the Liaodong and Shandong Peninsulas, there are basaltic plateaus.

The climate of China varies greatly. The northern zone (containing Beijing) has summer daytime temperatures of more than 30 degrees Celsius and winters of Arctic severity. The central zone (containing Shanghai) has a temperate continental climate with very hot summers and cold winters. The southern zone (containing Guangzhou) has a subtropical climate with very hot summers and mild winters.



Territories occupied by different dynasties as well as modern political states throughout the history of China.



Main geographic features and regions of China.

Due to a prolonged drought and poor agricultural practices, dust storms have become usual in the spring in China. Dust has blown to southern China and Taiwan, and has reached the West Coast of the United States. Water, erosion, and pollution control have become important issues in China's relations with other countries.

## Economy

## Society

## Culture

Confucianism was the official philosophy throughout most of Imperial China's history, and mastery of Confucian texts was the primary criterion for entry into the imperial bureaucracy. China's traditional values were derived from various versions of Confucianism. A number of more authoritarian strains of thought have also been influential, such as Legalism. There was often conflict between the philosophies, e.g. the Song Dynasty Neo-Confucians believed Legalism departed from the original spirit of Confucianism. Examinations and a culture of merit remain greatly valued in China today. In recent years, a number of New Confucians (not to be confused with Neo-Confucianism) have advocated that democratic ideals and human rights are quite compatible with traditional Confucian "Asian values".



Wang Yangming, a highly influential Neo-Confucian.

With the rise of Western economic and military power beginning in the mid-19th century, non-Chinese systems of social and political organization gained adherents in China. Some of these would-be reformers totally rejected China's cultural legacy, while others sought to combine the strengths of Chinese and Western cultures. In essence, the history of 20th century China is one of experimentation with new systems of social, political, and economic organization that would allow for the reintegration of the nation in the wake of dynastic collapse.

### Arts, scholarship, and literature

Chinese characters have had many variants and styles throughout Chinese history. Tens of thousands of ancient written documents are still extant, from Oracle bones to Qing edicts. This literary emphasis affected the general perception of cultural refinement in China, e.g. the view that calligraphy was a higher art form than painting or drama. Manuscripts of the Classics and religious texts (mainly Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist) were handwritten by ink brush. Calligraphy later became commercialized, and works by famous artists became prized possessions.

Chinese literature has a long past; the earliest classic work in Chinese, the *I Ching* or "Book of Changes" dates to around 1000 BCE. A flourishing of philosophy during the Warring States Period produced such noteworthy works as Confucius's *Analects* and Laozi's *Tao Te Ching*. (See also the Chinese classics.) Dynastic histories were often written, beginning with Sima Qian's seminal *Records of the Historian* written from 109 BCE to 91 BCE. The Tang Dynasty witnessed a poetic flowering, while the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature were written during the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

Printmaking in the form of movable type was developed during the Song Dynasty. Academies of scholars sponsored by the empire were formed to comment on the classics in both printed and handwritten form. Royalty frequently participated in these discussions as well. The Song Dynasty was also a period of great scientific literature, such as Su Song's *Xin Yixiang Fayao* and Shen Kuo's *Dream Pool Essays*. There were also enormous works of historiography and large encyclopedias, such as Sima Guang's *Zizhi Tongjian* of 1084 CE or the *Four Great Books of Song* fully compiled and edited by the 11th century.

For centuries, economic and social advancement in China could be provided by high performance on the imperial examinations. This led to a meritocracy, although it was available only to males who could afford test preparation. Imperial examinations required applicants to write essays and demonstrate mastery of the Confucian classics. Those who passed the highest level of the exam became elite scholar-officials known as *jinshi*, a highly esteemed socio-economic position.

Chinese philosophers, writers and poets were highly respected and played key roles in preserving and promoting the culture of the empire. Some classical scholars, however, were noted for their daring depictions of the lives of the common people, often to the displeasure of authorities.

The Chinese invented numerous musical instruments, such as the zheng (zither with movable bridges), qin (bridgeless zither), sheng (free reed mouth organ), and xiao (vertical flute) and adopted and developed others such the erhu (alto fiddle or bowed lute) and pipa (pear-shaped plucked lute), many of which have later spread throughout East Asia and Southeast Asia, particularly to Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

## Demography



Chinese calligraphy by Mi Fu, Song Dynasty, ca. 1100 CE



A bamboo book copy of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, a 20th century reprint of a Qianlong imperial edition.



Hundreds of ethnic groups have existed in China throughout its history. The largest ethnic group in China by far is the Han. This group is diverse in itself and can be divided into smaller ethnic groups that share some traits.

Over the last three millennia, many previously distinct ethnic groups in China have been Sinicized into a Han identity, which over time dramatically expanded the size of the Han population. However, these assimilations were usually incomplete and vestiges of indigenous language and culture often are still retained in different regions of China. Because of this, many within the Han identity have maintained distinct linguistic and cultural traditions, though still identifying as Han. Several ethnicities have also dramatically shaped Han culture, e.g. the Manchurian clothing called the qipao became the new "Chinese" fashion after the 17th century, replacing earlier Han styles of clothing such as the Hanfu. The modern term Chinese nation (*Zhonghua Minzu*) is now used to describe a notion of a Chinese nationality that transcends ethnic divisions.

## Languages

Most languages in China belong to the Sino-Tibetan language family, spoken by 29 ethnicities. There are also several major *dialects* within the Chinese language itself. The most spoken dialects are Mandarin (spoken by over 70% of the population), Wu (Shanghainese), Yue (Cantonese), Min, Xiang, Gan, and Hakka. Non-Sinitic languages spoken widely by ethnic minorities include Zhuang (Thai), Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur (Turkic), Hmong and Korean.

Classical Chinese was the written standard used for thousands of years in China before the 20th century and allowed for written communication between speakers of various unintelligible languages and dialects in China. Vernacular Chinese or *baihua* is the written standard based on the Mandarin dialect first popularized in Ming dynasty novels and was adopted (with significant modifications) during the early 20th century as the national vernacular. Classical Chinese is still part of the high school curriculum and is thus intelligible to some degree to many Chinese.

## Religion



The "official" orthodox faith system held by most dynasties of China until the overthrow of the last dynasty is a panentheism system, centering on the worship of "Heaven" as an omnipotent force. This faith system pre-dated the development of Confucianism and Taoism or the introduction of Buddhism and Christianity. It has features of a monotheism in that Heaven is seen as an omnipotent entity, endowed with personality but no corporeal form. "Heaven" as a supernatural force was variously referred to as *Shangdi* (literally "Emperor Above"). Worship of Heaven includes the erection of shrines, the last and greatest being the Altar of Heaven in Beijing, and the offering of prayers. Manifestation of the powers of Heaven include weather and natural disasters. Although it gradually diminished in popular belief after the advent of Taoism and Buddhism, among others, some of its concepts remained in use throughout the pre-modern period and have been incorporated in later religions of China.

Taoism is an indigenous religion of China and is traditionally traced to the composition of Lao Zi's *Tao Te Ching* (*The Book of Tao and Its Virtues*) or to seminal works by Zhang Daoling. The philosophy of Taoism is centered on "the way"; an understanding of which can be likened to recognizing the true nature of the universe. Taoism in its unorganized form is also considered a folk religion of China. More secular derivatives of Taoist ideas include Feng Shui, Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, and acupuncture.

Buddhism was introduced from India and Central Asia during the Han dynasty and became very popular among Chinese of all walks of life, embraced particularly by commoners, and sponsored by emperors in certain dynasties. Mahayana (大乘, *Dacheng*) is the predominant form of Buddhism practiced in China, where it was largely Sinicized and later exported to Korea, Japan and Vietnam. Some subsets of Mahayana popular in China include Pure Land (Amidism) and Zen. Buddhism is the largest organized faith in China and the country has the most Buddhist adherents in the world, followed by Japan. Many Chinese, however, identify themselves as both Taoist and Buddhist at the same time.

Ancestor worship is a major religious theme shared among all Chinese religions. Traditional Chinese culture, Taoism, Confucianism, and Chinese Buddhism all value filial piety as a top virtue, and the act is a continued display of piety and respect towards departed ancestors. The Chinese generally offer prayers and food for the ancestors, light incense and candles, and burn offerings of Joss paper. These activities are typically conducted at the site of ancestral graves or tombs, at an ancestral temple, or at a household shrine.

Islam, Judaism and Christianity first arrived in China after the 7th century during the Tang Dynasty. Islam was later spread by merchants and craftsmen as trade routes improved along the Silk Road, while Christianity began to make significant inroads in China after the 16th century through Jesuit and later protestant missionaries. Islam arrived in China during the 8th century, only a few years after the Islamic prophet Muhammad's death. The Emperor of China took Islam highly, and the first mosque in China, the Huaisheng Mosque was built in Canton, Guangzhou in 630. In the first half of the 20th century, many Jews arrived in Shanghai and Hong Kong during those cities' periods of economic expansion, seeking refuge from the Holocaust in Europe. Shanghai was particularly notable for its volume of Jewish refugees, as it was the only port in the world then to accept them without an entry visa.

## Sports and recreation

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A Chinese Tang Dynasty (618–907) sculpture of the Buddha seated in meditation.

Many historians believe that football (soccer) originated in China, where a form of the sport may have appeared around 1000 CE. Other popular sports include martial arts, table tennis, badminton, and more recently, golf. Basketball is now popular among young people in urban centers.

There are also many traditional sports. Chinese dragon boat racing occurs during the Duan Wu festival. In Inner Mongolia, Mongolian-style wrestling and horse racing are popular. In Tibet, archery and equestrian sports are part of traditional festivals.

Physical fitness is highly regarded. It is common for the elderly to practice Tai Chi Chuan and qigong in parks.

Board games such as International Chess, Go (Weiqi), and Xiangqi (Chinese chess) are also common and have organized formal competitions. China is also due to host the Olympic Games this year in their capital Beijing.



Dragon boat racing, a popular traditional Chinese sport.

## Science and technology

Among the scientific accomplishments of ancient China were paper (not papyrus) and papermaking, woodblock printing and movable type printing, the early lodestone and magnetic compass, gunpowder, toilet paper, early seismological detectors, matches, dry docks, pound locks, sliding calipers, the double-action piston pump, blast furnace and cast iron, the iron plough, the multi-tube seed drill, the wheelbarrow, the suspension bridge, the parachute, natural gas as fuel, the escapement mechanism for clocks, the differential gear for the South Pointing Chariot, the hydraulic-powered armillary sphere, the hydraulic-powered trip hammer, the mechanical chain drive, the mechanical belt drive, the raised-relief map, the propeller, the crossbow, the cannon, the rocket, the multistage rocket, etc. Chinese astronomers were among the first to record observations of a supernova. The work of the astronomer Shen Kuo (1031–1095) alone was most impressive, as he theorized that the sun and moon were spherical, corrected the position of the polestar with his improved sighting tube, discovered the concept of true north, wrote of planetary motions such as retrogradation, and compared the orbital paths of the planets to points on the shape of a rotating willow leaf. With evidence for them, he also postulated geological theories for the processes of land formation in geomorphology and climate change in paleoclimatology. Yet there were many other astronomers than Shen Kuo, such as Gan De, Shi Shen, Zhang Heng, Yi Xing, Zhang Sixun, Su Song, Guo Shoujing, Xu Guangqi, etc. Chinese mathematics evolved independently of Greek mathematics and is therefore of great interest in the history of mathematics. The Chinese were also keen on documenting all of their technological achievements, such as in the *Tiangong Kaiwu* encyclopedia written by Song Yingxing (1587–1666).



Remains of an ancient Chinese handheld crossbow, 2nd century BCE.

China's science and technology fell behind that of Europe by the 17th century. Political, social and cultural reasons have been given for this, although recent historians focus more on economic causes, such as the high level equilibrium trap. Since the PRC's market reforms China has become better connected to the global economy and is placing greater emphasis on science and technology.

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# Christmas Island

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries; Oceania (Australasia)

The **Territory of Christmas Island** is a small territory of Australia located in the Indian Ocean, 2600 kilometres (1600 mi) northwest of Perth in Western Australia, 500 kilometres (300 mi) south of Jakarta, Indonesia, and 975 km ENE of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

It maintains about 1,600 residents who live in a number of "settlement areas" on the northern tip of the island: Flying Fish Cove (also known as Kampong), Silver City, Poon Saan and Drumsite.

It has a unique natural topography and is of immense interest to scientists and naturalists due to the number of species of endemic flora and fauna which have evolved in isolation and undisturbed by human habitation.

While there has been mining activity on the island for many years, 65% of its 135 square kilometres (52 sq mi) are now National Park and there are large areas of pristine and ancient rainforest.

## History

For centuries, Christmas Island's isolation and rugged coasts provided natural barriers to settlement. British and Dutch navigators first included the island on their charts from the early seventeenth century, and Captain William Mynors of the British East India Company vessel, the *Royal Mary*, named the island when he arrived on Christmas Day, 25 December 1643. The island first appears on a map produced by Pieter Goos and published in 1666. Goos had labelled the island *Moni*.

The earliest recorded visit was in March 1688 by William Dampier of the British ship *Cygnets*, who found it uninhabited. An account of the visit can be found in Dampier's *Voyages*, which describes how, when trying to reach Cocos from New Holland, his ship was pulled off course in an easterly direction and after 28 days arrived at Christmas Island. Dampier landed at the Dales (on the West Coast) and two of his crewmen were the first recorded people to set foot on Christmas Island.

The next visit was by Daniel Beekman, who described it in his 1718 book, *A Voyage to and from the Island of Borneo, in the East Indies*.

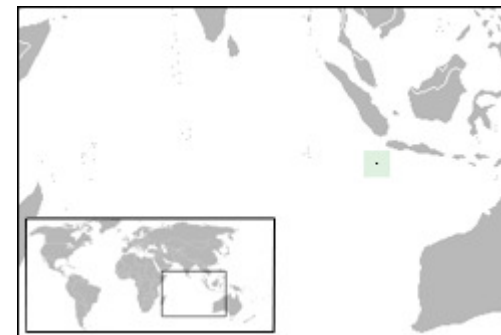
### Territory of Christmas Island



Flag

Coat of arms

**Anthem:** *Advance Australia Fair*



<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Flying Fish Cove ("The Settlement")
<b>Official languages</b>	English ( <i>de facto</i> )
<b>Demonym</b>	Christmas Island
<b>Government</b>	Federal constitutional monarchy
- Queen of Australia	Elizabeth II
- Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia	Michael Jeffery

In 1771, the Indian vessel, the *Pigot*, attempted to find an anchorage but was unsuccessful; the crew reported seeing wild pigs and coconut palms. However, pigs are not known to have been introduced to the island at the time, so the *Pigot* may have found a different island.

## Exploration and annexation

- Administrator	Neil Lucas
- Shire President	Gordon Thomson
<b>Territory of Australia</b>	
- Sovereignty transferred to Australia	1957
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	135 km <sup>2</sup> 52 sq mi
- Water (%)	0
<b>Population</b>	
- 2006 estimate	1,493 ( n/a)
- Density	11.06/km <sup>2</sup> ( n/a) 28.7/sq mi
<b>Currency</b>	Australian dollar (AUD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+7)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.cx
<b>Calling code</b>	+61

The first attempt at exploring the island was in 1857 by the crew of the *Amethyst*. They tried to reach the summit of the island, but found the cliffs impassable.

During the 1872-76 *Challenger* expedition to Indonesia, naturalist Dr John Murray carried out extensive surveys.

In 1887, Captain Maclear of HMS *Flying Fish*, having discovered an anchorage in a bay that he named Flying Fish Cove, landed a party and made a small but interesting collection of the flora and fauna. In the next year, Pelham Aldrich, on board HMS *Egeria*, visited it for ten days, accompanied by J. J. Lister, who gathered a larger biological and mineralogical collection.

Among the rocks then obtained and submitted to Sir John Murray for examination were many of nearly pure phosphate of lime, a discovery which led to annexation of the island by the British Crown on 6 June 1888..

## Settlement and exploitation

Soon afterwards, a small settlement was established in Flying Fish Cove by G. Clunies Ross, the owner of the Keeling Islands (some 900 kilometres to the south west) to collect timber and supplies for the growing industry on Cocos.

Phosphate mining began in the 1890s using indentured workers from Singapore, China, and Malaysia.

The island was administered jointly by the British Phosphate Commissioners and District Officers from the United Kingdom Colonial Office through the Straits Settlements, and later the Crown Colony of Singapore.

## Japanese invasion

Japan invaded and occupied the island in 1942, as the Indian garrison mutinied, and interned the residents until the end of World War II in 1945.

## Transfer to Australia

At Australia's request, the United Kingdom transferred sovereignty to Australia; in 1957, the Australian government paid the government of Singapore £2.9 million in compensation, a figure based mainly on an estimated value of the phosphate forgone by Singapore.

The first Australian Official Representative arrived in 1958 and was replaced by an Administrator in 1968. Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands together are called the Australian Indian Ocean Territories and since 1997 share a single Administrator resident on Christmas Island.

## Refugee and Immigration detention



Poon Saan in the evening



Poon Saan shops

From the late 1980s and early 1990s Christmas Island periodically received boatloads of refugees, mostly from Indonesia. During 2001, Christmas Island received a large number of asylum seekers travelling by boat, most of them from the Middle East and intending to apply for asylum in Australia. The arrival of the Norwegian cargo vessel MV *Tampa*, which had rescued people from the sinking Indonesian fishing-boat *Palapa* in international waters nearby, precipitated a diplomatic stand-off between Australia, Norway, and Indonesia. The vessel held 420 asylum seekers from Afghanistan, 13 from Sri Lanka, and five from Indonesia. In response to requests from the captain of the ship for Canberra to waive the Laws of the Sea and the Refugee Convention 1951, and have the refugees disembarked at Christmas Island, the Australian SAS boarded and took effective control. The stand-off eventually led to the asylum seekers being redirected to Nauru for processing. Another boatload of asylum seekers was taken from Christmas Island to Papua New Guinea for processing, after it was claimed that many of the adult asylum seekers threw their children into the water, apparently in protest at being turned away. This was later proven to be false. Many of the refugees were subsequently accepted by New Zealand.

Former Australian Prime Minister John Howard later secured the passage of legislation through the Australian Parliament which excised Christmas Island from Australia's migration zone, meaning that asylum seekers arriving on Christmas Island could not automatically apply to the Australian government for refugee status, allowing the Royal Australian Navy to relocate them to other countries (Papua New Guinea's Manus Island, and Nauru) as part of the so-called Pacific Solution. As of 2005, the Department of Immigration has begun construction of an "Immigration Reception and Processing Centre" and was completed in late 2007. The facility was originally estimated to cost \$210 million, but the final cost was over \$400 million and contains approximately 800 beds.

The current Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd has announced plans to decommission the Manus Island and Nauru centres now that the Australian Labor Party has assumed power in the Government of Australia. Processing would then occur on Christmas Island itself.

## People

As of 2006, the estimated population is 1,493. (The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports a population of 1,508 as of the 2001 Census.)

The ethnic composition is 70% Chinese, 20% European and 10% Malay. Religions practised on Christmas Island include Buddhism 75%, Christianity 12%, Islam 10% and others 1%. English is the official language, but Chinese and Malay are also spoken.

## Postage stamps

Postage stamps including first day cover albums have been issued by Christmas Island since 1958.

## Government

Christmas Island is a non-self governing territory of Australia, administered by the Attorney-General's Department (before November 29, 2007 administration was carried out by the Department of Transport and Regional Services). The legal system is under the authority of the Governor-General of Australia and Australian law. An Administrator ( Neil Lucas, since 28 January 2006) appointed by the Governor-General represents the monarch and Australia.

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The Australian Government provides **Commonwealth-level government services** through the Christmas Island Administration and the Department of Infrastructure.

There is **no State Government**; instead, state government type services are provided by contractors, including departments of the Western Australian Government, with the costs met by the Australian (Commonwealth) Government.

A unicameral Shire of Christmas Island with 9 seats provides **local government services** and is elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms. Elections are held every two years, with half the members standing for election.

Christmas Island residents who are Australian citizens also vote in Commonwealth (federal) elections. Christmas Island residents are represented in the House of Representatives through the Northern Territory Division of Lingiari and in the Senate by Northern Territory Senators.

In early 1986, the Christmas Island Assembly held a design competition for an island flag; the winning design was adopted as the informal flag of the territory for over a decade, and in 2002 it was made the official flag of Christmas Island.

## Economy

Phosphate mining had been the only significant economic activity, but in December 1987 the Australian Government closed the mine. In 1991, the mine was reopened by a consortium which included many of the former mine workers as shareholders. With the support of the government, a \$34 million casino opened in 1993, but was closed in 1998 and has not re-opened. The Australian Government in 2001 agreed to support the creation of a commercial spaceport on the island, however this has not yet been constructed, and appears that it will not proceed in the future. The Australian Government built a temporary immigration detention centre on the island in 2001 and plans to replace it with a larger, modern facility located at North West Point.

## Geography

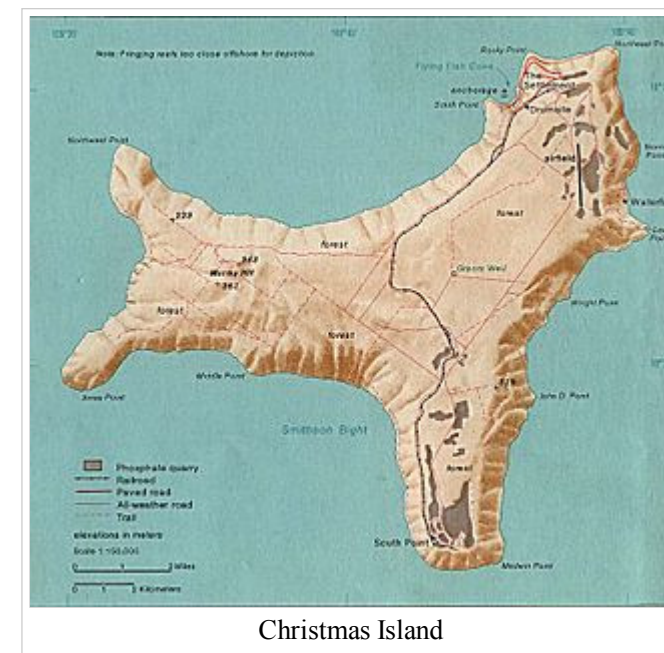
Located at , the island is a quadrilateral with hollowed sides, about 19 km (12 miles) in greatest length and 14.5 km (9 miles) in extreme breadth. The total land area is 135 km<sup>2</sup> (52 square miles), with 138.9 km (86.3 miles) of coastline. The island is the flat summit of a submarine mountain more than 4,572 m (15,000 feet) high, the depth of the platform from which it rises being about 14,000 feet (4267 m) and its height above the sea being upwards of 305 m (1,000 feet). The mountain was originally a volcano, and some basalt is exposed in places such as The Dales and Dolly Beach, but most of the surface rock is limestone accumulated from the growth of coral over millions of years.

The climate is tropical, with heat and humidity moderated by trade winds. Steep cliffs along much of the coast rise abruptly to a central plateau. Elevation ranges from sea level to 361 m (1,184 feet) at Murray Hill. The island is mainly tropical rainforest, of which 65% is National Park.

The narrow fringing reef surrounding the island can be a maritime hazard.

Christmas Island is 500 km south of Indonesia and about 2600 km northwest of Perth.

## Flora and fauna





Coconut crab



Christmas Island red crab

Christmas Island is of immense scientific value as it was uninhabited until the late nineteenth century, so many unique species of fauna and flora exist which have evolved independently of human interference. Two species of native rats, the Maclear's and Bulldog Rat have gone extinct since the island was settled, and one species of shrew may be already extinct. Two-thirds of the island has been declared a National Park which is managed by the Australian Department of Environment and Heritage through Parks Australia.

The dense rainforest has evolved in the deep soils of the plateau and on the terraces. The forests are dominated by twenty-five tree species. Ferns, orchids and vines grow on the branches in the humid atmosphere beneath the canopy. The 135 plant species include sixteen which are only found on Christmas Island.

The annual red crab mass migration (around 100 million animals) to the sea to spawn has been called one of the wonders of the natural world and takes place each year around November; after the start of the wet season and in synchronisation with the cycle of the moon.

The land crabs and sea birds are the most noticeable animals on the island. Twenty terrestrial and intertidal crabs (of which thirteen are regarded as true land crabs, only dependent on the ocean for larval development) have been described. Robber crabs, known elsewhere as coconut crabs, also exist in large numbers on the island.

Christmas Island is a focal point for sea birds of various species. Eight species or subspecies of sea birds nest on the island. The most numerous is the Red-footed Booby that nests in colonies, in trees, on many parts of the shore terrace. The widespread Brown Booby nests on the ground near the edge of the seacliff and inland cliffs. Abbott's Booby (listed as endangered) nests on tall emergent trees of the western, northern and southern plateau rainforest. The Christmas Island forest is the only nesting habitat of the Abbott's Booby left in the world. The endemic Christmas Island Frigatebird (listed as endangered) has nesting areas on the north-eastern shore terraces and the more widespread. Great Frigatebirds nest in semi-deciduous trees on the shore terrace with the greatest concentrations being in the North West and South Point areas. The Common Noddy and two species of boobies or tropicbirds with their brilliant gold or silver plumage and distinctive streamer tail feathers also nest on the island. Of the ten native land birds and shorebirds, seven are endemic species or subspecies. Some 86 migrant bird species have been recorded.

## Communications and transportation

Telephone services are provided by Telstra and are a part of the Australian network with the same prefix as Western Australia (08). A GSM mobile telephone system replaced the old analogue network in February 2005. Four free-to-air television stations from Australia are broadcast (ABC, SBS, GWN and WIN) in the same time-zone as Perth. Radio broadcasts from Australia include ABC Radio National, ABC Regional radio and Red FM. All services are provided by satellite links from the mainland. Broadband internet became available to subscribers in urban areas in mid 2005 through the local internet service provider, CIIA (formerly dotCX).



Red-footed Boobies



Common Noddy



Brown Booby

Christmas Island, due to its close proximity to Australia's northern neighbours, falls within many of the more 'interesting' satellite footprints throughout the region. This results in ideal conditions for receiving various Asian broadcasts which locals sometimes prefer to the West Australian provided content. Additionally, ionospheric conditions usually bode well for many of the more terrestrial radio transmissions - HF right up through VHF and sometimes in to UHF. The island plays home to a small array of radio equipment that, evidently, spans a good chunk of the usable spectrum. A variety of government owned and operated antenna systems are employed on the island to take advantage of this.

A container port exists at Flying Fish Cove with an alternative container unloading point to the south of the island at Norris Point for use during the December to March 'swell season" of seasonal rough seas. There are two weekly flights into Christmas Island Airport from Perth, Western Australia (via RAAF Learmonth) operated by National Jet Systems on Mondays and Fridays with additional Saturday flights almost fortnightly and a weekly charter flight from Malaysia operated by Malaysia Airlines on Mondays.

There is a new recreation centre at Phosphate Hill operated by the Shire of Christmas Island. There is also a taxi service. The road network covers most of the island and is generally good quality, although four wheel drive vehicles are needed to access some more distant parts of the rain forest or the more isolated beaches.

## Tourism

The Christmas Island National Park covers 63% of the island. This means that for the visitor interested in flora and fauna there is a great deal to see. The same is true for the coastal waters where the marine life is equivalently spectacular.

## Education

Christmas Island District High School is located on the island.

The island-operated crèche is located in the Recreation Centre.

The island includes one public library.

Retrieved from "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas\\_Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_Island)"

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# East Timor

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**East Timor** (officially the **Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste**) is a country in Southeast Asia. It comprises the eastern half of the island of Timor, the nearby islands of Atauro and Jaco, and Oecussi-Ambeno, an exclave on the northwestern side of the island, within Indonesian West Timor. The small country of 15,410 km<sup>2</sup> (5,400 sq mi) is located about 640 km (400 mi) northwest of Darwin, Australia.

East Timor was colonized by Portugal in the 16th century, and was known as Portuguese Timor until Portugal's decolonization of the country. In late 1975 East Timor declared its independence but was invaded and occupied by Indonesia later that year, and declared that country's 27th province the following year. In 1999, following the United Nations-sponsored act of self-determination, Indonesia relinquished control of the territory and East Timor became the first new sovereign state of the twenty-first century on May 20, 2002. East Timor is one of only two predominantly Roman Catholic countries in Southeast Asia, the other being the Philippines.

At US\$800, the per capita GDP ( purchasing power parity adjusted) of East Timor is one of the lowest in the world. Its Human Development Index (HDI), however, corresponds to a medium degree of human development and places East Timor 142nd among the world's states.

## Etymology and naming issues

"Timor" derives from *timur*, the word for "east" in Indonesian and Malay (hence the Indonesian *Timor Timur*) which became *Timor* in Portuguese and entered English as *Portuguese Timor*. *Lorosa'e* is also the word for "east" in Tetum, literally "rising sun".

The official names under the Constitution is **República Democrática de Timor-Leste** in Portuguese (pron. IPA: [tɨˈmor ˈlɛʃtɨ]), which is almost universally used within the country, and in Tetum, **Repúblika Demokrátika Timór Lorosa'e**, which is infrequently used and is not standard across the many Tetum dialects. Following independence, the government requested the official name in all languages be *Timor-Leste*, but this has not been commonly adopted within English-speaking countries worldwide, where "East Timor" is the common usage. The Indonesian name *Timor Timur*, abbreviated as *Timtim*, is now

<p><i>Repúblika Demokrátika Timór Lorosa'e</i>  <i>República Democrática de Timor-Leste</i>  <b>Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste</b></p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p><b>Motto:</b> <i>Unidade, Acção, Progresso</i>          (Portuguese: "Unity, Action, Progress")</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Pátria</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Dili
<b>Official languages</b>	Tetum and Portuguese <sup>1</sup>
<b>Demonym</b>	East Timorese

less widely used, with the Indonesian government and media now using *Timor Leste*.

The official short form names of countries worldwide are set by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO). The ISO 3166-1 official short name in English and all other languages is *Timor-Leste*. The ISO definition is adopted by the United Nations, the national standards organisations of France (AFNOR), the United States of America (ANSI), Britain (BSI), Germany (DIN) and Sweden (SIS) and is universally used by international NGOs. *Timor-Leste* is used as a matter of protocol by the departments of foreign affairs of almost all countries for example, the USA Department of State and the European Union, notable exceptions being Australia, which uses "East Timor".

The ISO name gives rise to the standard three letter country code TLS and two letter country code TL as in the country's internet domain name. The old two letter country code, TP, is gradually being phased out.

## History

### Early history

The island of Timor was originally populated as part of the human migrations that have shaped Australasia more generally. It is believed that descendants from at least three waves of migration still live in the country. The East Timorese are primarily of Melanesian races, with a population of 680,000 by the time of the Portuguese withdrawal in 1975. The first were related to the principal indigenous groups of New Guinea and Australia, and arrived before 40,000 years ago. Around 3000 BC, Austronesians migrated through to Timor, and are possibly associated with the development of agriculture on Timor. Thirdly, proto-Malays arrived from south China and north Indochina. The mountainous nature of the country meant that these groups remained separate, and explains why there is so much linguistic diversity in East Timor today.

Timor was incorporated into Chinese and Indian trading networks of the fourteenth century as an exporter of aromatic sandalwood, slaves, honey and wax. Early European explorers report that the island had a number of small chiefdoms or princedoms in the early sixteenth century. One of the most significant is the Wehale kingdom in central Timor, with its capital at Laran, West Timor, to which the Tetum, Bunaq and Kemak ethnic groups were aligned.

### Portuguese colonization

<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary republic
- President	José Ramos-Horta
- Prime Minister	Xanana Gusmão
<b>Independence</b>	from Portugal <sup>2</sup>
- Declared	November 28, 1975
- Recognized	May 20, 2002
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	15,410 km <sup>2</sup> ( 158th) 5,743 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	1,115,000 ( 155th)
- Density	64/km <sup>2</sup> ( 132nd) 166/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$2.18 billion ( 206)
- Per capita	\$800 ( 188)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	0.514 (medium) ( 150th)
<b>Currency</b>	U.S. Dollar <sup>3</sup> ( USD)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+9)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.tl <sup>4</sup>
<b>Calling code</b>	+670
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Indonesian and English are recognised by the Constitution as "working languages".</li> <li>2 Indonesia invaded East Timor on December 7, 1975 and left in 1999.</li> <li>3 Centavo coins also used.</li> <li>4 .tp is being phased out.</li> </ol>	

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to colonize the Malay archipelago when they arrived in the sixteenth century. They established outposts in the (now Indonesian) Maluku Islands and Timor and surrounding islands. During the House of Habsburg's rule over Portugal (1580-1640), all surrounding outposts were lost and eventually came under Dutch control by the mid-seventeenth century. Effective European occupation of a small part of the territory only began after 1769, when the city of Dili, the capital of so-called Portuguese Timor, was founded. In the nineteenth century, the Netherlands gained a foothold on the western half of the island West Timor, and formally received it in 1859 through the Treaty of Lisbon. The definitive border was established by the Hague Treaty of 1916, and it remains the international boundary between the successor states East Timor and Indonesia.

For the Portuguese, East Timor remained little more than a neglected trading post until the late nineteenth century. Investment in infrastructure, health, and education was minimal. Sandalwood remained the main export crop with coffee exports becoming significant in the mid-nineteenth century. In places where Portuguese rule was asserted, it tended to be brutal and exploitative. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a faltering home economy prompted the Portuguese to extract greater wealth from its colonies which met Timorese resistance.

In late 1941, Portuguese Timor was briefly occupied by Dutch and Australian troops in an attempt to preempt a Japanese invasion of the island. The Portuguese Governor protested the occupation, and Dutch forces returned to the Dutch side of the island. The Japanese landed and drove the small Australian force out of Dili, and the mountainous interior became the scene of a guerrilla campaign, known as the Battle of Timor. Waged by Allied forces and Timorese volunteers against the Japanese, the struggle resulted in the deaths of between 40,000 and 70,000 Timorese. Following the end of the war, Portuguese control was reinstated.

The process of decolonization in Portuguese Timor began in 1974, following the change of government in Portugal in the wake of the Carnation Revolution. Owing to political instability and more pressing concerns over the decolonisation of Angola and Mozambique, Portugal effectively abandoned East Timor and it unilaterally declared itself independent on November 28, 1975. Nine days later, it was invaded and occupied by Indonesian forces before the declaration could be internationally recognized.

## **Indonesian occupation**

As political parties began to form and emerge inside the country, the Indonesian military headed an operation that backed Apodeti, a pro-Indonesian party that encouraged divisions between the pro-independence parties of East Timor. This led to a brief civil war in 1975 as well as a series of attacks across borders. Indonesia alleged that the East Timorese FRETILIN party, which received some vocal support from the People's Republic of China, was communist. Fearing a Communist domino effect in Southeast Asia—and in the wake of its South Vietnam campaign—the United States, along with its ally Australia, supported the pro- Western Indonesian government's actions. The UN Security Council had a unanimous vote for Indonesia to stop its invasion and to withdraw immediately from East Timor's borders, and was blocked by the United States from imposing any economic sanctions or other means of enforcing this mandate.

The territory was declared the twenty-seventh province of Indonesia in July 1976. Its nominal status in the UN remained that of a "non-self-governing territory under Portuguese administration."



Indonesian rule in East Timor was often marked by extreme violence and brutality; estimates of the number of East Timorese who died during the occupation vary from 60,000 to 200,000. A detailed statistical report prepared for the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor cited a lower range of 102,800 conflict-related deaths in the period 1974-1999, namely, approximately 18,600 killings and 84,200 'excess' deaths from hunger and illness.

The East Timorese guerrilla force, Falintil, fought a campaign against the Indonesian forces from 1975 to 1999, some members being trained in Portugal by Portuguese special forces. The Dili Massacre proved a turning point for the East Timorese cause internationally, and a burgeoning East Timor solidarity movement grew in Portugal, Australia, and the United States.

## Independence

Following a UN-sponsored agreement between Indonesia, Portugal and the United States and a surprise decision by the Indonesian President B. J. Habibie, a UN-supervised popular referendum was held on August 30, 1999 to choose between Special Autonomy within Indonesia and independence. 78.5% of voters chose independence, but violent clashes, instigated primarily by elements within the Indonesian military and aided by Timorese pro-Indonesia militias led by Eurico Guterres, broke out soon afterwards. A peacekeeping force ( INTERFET, led by Australia) intervened to restore order. The militias fled across the border into Indonesian West Timor, from which sporadic armed raids were attempted. As these raids were repelled and international moral opinion forced Indonesia to withdraw tacit support, the militias dispersed. INTERFET was replaced by a UN force of International Police, the mission became known as UNTAET, and the UNTAET Crime Scene Detachment was formed to investigate alleged atrocities. UNTAET was headed by the late Sérgio Vieira de Mello as UN Transitional Administrator from December 1999 to May 2002. On December 2, 1999 De Mello established the National Consultative Council (NCC), a political body consisting of 11 East Timorese and four UNTAET members charged with overseeing the decision-making process during the transition period leading to independence. However, UNTAET experienced difficulties initially in establishing its credibility amongst the Timorese leadership, leading to street violence. An important workshop on March 1, 2000 brought the Timorese and UN leadership group together to tease out a revised strategy, and identify institutional needs. The Timorese delegation was led by José Ramos-Horta, and included Mari Alkatiri. The outcome was an agreed blueprint for a joint administration with executive powers, including leaders of the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT), led by future president Xanana Gusmão. Further details were worked out in a conference in Lisbon, on June 22, 2000, and to the UN Security Council on June 27, 2000. On July 12, 2000, the NCC adopted a regulation establishing a Transitional Cabinet comprised of four East Timorese and four UNTAET representatives. The revamped joint administration successfully laid the institutional foundations for independence, and on September 27, 2002, East Timor joined the United Nations.

## Crisis and change

In April 2006, riots broke out in Dili following rivalry within the military and police; 40 people were killed and over 20,000 fled their homes. Fighting between pro-government troops and disaffected Falintil troops broke out in May 2006. Upon the invitation of the Prime Minister, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Portugal sent troops to Timor, attempting to quell the violence. On 26 June, Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri resigned as Prime Minister, following an ultimatum from President Xanana Gusmão that he would resign if Alkatiri did not. José Ramos-Horta was appointed as Alkatiri's successor on July 8, 2006. In April 2007, Gusmão declined another presidential term. In the build-up to the April 2007 presidential elections there were renewed outbreaks of violence in February and



Demonstration for independence from Indonesia.

March 2007. José Ramos-Horta was inaugurated as President on May 20, 2007 following his election win in the second round. Gusmão was sworn in as Prime Minister on August 8, 2007. President Ramos-Horta was critically injured in an assassination attempt on February 11, 2008 in a failed coup apparently perpetrated by Alfredo Reinado, a renegade soldier who died in the attack. Prime Minister Gusmão also faced gunfire separately but escaped unharmed. The Australian government immediately sent reinforcements to East Timor to keep order.

## Politics

The Head of state of the East Timor is the President of East Timor, who is elected by popular vote for a five-year term. Although the role is largely symbolic, the president does have veto power over certain types of legislation. Following elections, the president appoints the leader of the majority party or majority coalition as the Prime Minister of East Timor. As head of government, the prime minister presides over the Council of State or cabinet.

The unicameral Timorese parliament is the National Parliament or *Parlamento Nacional*, whose members are elected by popular vote to a five-year term. The number of seats can vary from a minimum of fifty-two to a maximum of sixty-five, though it exceptionally has eighty-eight members at present, due to this being its first term of office. The East Timorese constitution was modelled on that of Portugal. The country is still in the process of building its administration and governmental institutions.



Government Palace in Dili.

## Government departments

- Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste (police)
- East Timor Ministry for State and Internal Administration
- Civil Aviation Division of Timor Leste
- Immigration Department of Timor Leste <http://www.migracao.gov.tl>

## Districts, subdistricts, and sucos

East Timor is divided into thirteen administrative districts:

1. Lautém 2. Baucau 3. Viqueque 4. Manatuto 5. Dili 6. Aileu 7. Manufahi 8. Liquiçá 9. Ermera 10. Ainaro 11. Bobonaro 12. Cova-Lima 13. Oecussi-Ambeno

The districts are subdivided into 65 subdistricts, 443 sucos and 2,336 towns, villages and hamlets.



Map of the districts of East Timor.

## Geography

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 138 of 537

Located in South East Asia, the island of Timor is part of the Malay archipelago, and is the largest and easternmost of the Lesser Sunda Islands. To the north of the mountainous island are the Ombai Strait and Wetar Strait, to the south the Timor Sea separates the island from Australia, while to the west lies the Indonesian Province of East Nusa Tenggara. The highest point of East Timor is Mount Ramelau (also known as Mount Tatamailau) at 2,963 meters (9,721 ft).

The local climate is tropical and generally hot and humid, characterised by distinct rainy and dry seasons. The capital, largest city and main port is Dili, and the second-largest city is the eastern town of Baucau.

The easternmost area of Timor-Leste consists of the Paitchau Range and Iralalero area. This area has been proposed as to be the first conservation area in Timor-Leste as it contains the last remaining Tropical Dry forested area within the country as well as hosts a number of unique plant and animal species and is sparsely populated.



Map of East Timor shows cities and main roads.

## Economy

Prior to and during colonization, Timor was best known for its sandalwood.

In late 1999, about 70% of the economic infrastructure of East Timor was destroyed by Indonesian troops and anti-independence militias, and 260,000 people fled westward. From 2002 to 2005, an international program led by the United Nations, manned by civilian advisers, 5,000 peacekeepers (8,000 at peak) and 1,300 police officers, substantially reconstructed the infrastructure. By mid-2002, all but about 50,000 of the refugees had returned.

One promising long-term project is the joint development with Australia of petroleum and natural gas resources in the waters southeast of Timor. The Portuguese colonial administration granted concessions to Oceanic Exploration Corporation to develop the deposits, however, this was curtailed by the Indonesian invasion in 1976. The resources were divided between Indonesia and Australia with the Timor Gap Treaty in 1989. The treaty established guidelines for joint exploitation of seabed resources in the area of the "gap" left by then-Portuguese Timor in the maritime boundary agreed between the two countries in 1972. Revenues from the "joint" area were to be divided 50%-50%. Woodside Petroleum and ConocoPhillips began development of some resources in the Timor Gap on behalf of the two governments in 1992.

East Timor inherited no permanent maritime boundaries when it attained independence, repudiating the Timor Gap Treaty as illegal. A provisional agreement (the Timor Sea Treaty, signed when East Timor became independent on 20 May 2002) defined a Joint Petroleum Development Area (JPDA), and awarded 90% of revenues from existing projects in that area to East Timor and 10% to Australia. The first significant new development in the JPDA since Timorese independence is the largest petroleum resource in the Timor Sea, the Greater Sunrise gas field. Its exploitation was the subject of separate agreements in 2003 and 2005. Only 20% of the field lies within the JPDA and the rest in waters not subject to the treaty (though claimed by both countries). The initial, temporary agreement gave 82% of revenues to Australia and only 18% to East Timor.

The Government of East Timor has sought to negotiate a definite boundary with Australia at the halfway line between the countries, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Government of Australia preferred to establish the boundary at the end of the wide Australian

continental shelf, as agreed with Indonesia in 1972 and 1991. Normally a dispute such as this could be referred to the International Court of Justice or the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for an impartial decision, but the Australian government had withdrawn itself from these international jurisdictions (solely on matters relating to maritime boundaries) shortly before Timorese independence. Nevertheless, under public and diplomatic pressure, the Australian government offered instead a last-minute concession on Greater Sunrise gas field royalties alone. On July 7, 2005, an agreement was signed under which both countries would set aside the dispute over the maritime boundary, and East Timor would receive 50% of the revenues (estimated at A\$26 billion or about US\$20 billion over the lifetime of the project) from the Greater Sunrise development. Other developments within waters claimed by East Timor but outside the JPDA (Laminaria-Corallina and Buffalo) continue to be exploited unilaterally by Australia, however.

In 2007 bad harvest led to a deaths in several parts of Timor-Leste. In November 2007 eleven subdistricts still needed food supply by international aid.

East Timor also has a large and potentially lucrative coffee industry, which sells organic coffee to numerous Fair Trade retailers and on the open market.

Currently three foreign banks have a branch in Dili: Australia's ANZ, Portugal's Banco Nacional Ultramarino, and Indonesia's Bank Mandiri.

There are no Patent Laws in East Timor.

## Demographics

The population of East Timor is about one million. It has grown considerably recently, because of a high birth rate, but also because of the return of refugees. The population is especially concentrated in the area around Dili.

The Timorese are called Maubere collectively by some of their political organizations, an originally derogatory name turned into a name of pride by Fretilin. They consist of a number of distinct ethnic groups, most of whom are of mixed Malayo-Polynesian and Melanesian/ Papuan descent. The largest Malayo-Polynesian ethnic groups are the Tetum (or Tetun) (100,000), primarily in the north coast and around Dili; the Mambae (80,000), in the central mountains; the Tukudede (63,170), in the area around Maubara and Liquiçá; the Galoli (50,000), between the tribes of Mambae and Makasae; the Kemak (50,000) in north-central Timor island; and the Baikeno (20,000), in the area around Pante Macassar. The main tribes of predominantly Papuan origin include the Bunak (50,000), in the central interior of Timor island; the Fataluku (30,000), at the eastern tip of the island near Lospalos; and the Makasae, toward the eastern end of the island. In addition, like other former Portuguese colonies where interracial marriage was common, there is a smaller population of people of mixed Timorese and Portuguese origin, known in Portuguese as *mestiços*. The East Timorese *mestiço* best-known internationally is José Ramos-Horta, the spokesman for the resistance movement in exile, and now President of East Timor. Mário Viegas Carrascalão, Indonesia's appointed governor between 1987 and 1992, is also a *mestiço*. East Timor also has a small Chinese minority, most of whom are Hakka. Most left after the Indonesian invasion, with most moving to Australia although many Sino-Timorese have



Subdistricts suffering from hunger in November 2007



Indigenous Timorese in traditional dress.

returned, including Pedro Lay, the Minister for Infrastructure.

## Religion

Upon independence, East Timor became one of only two predominantly Roman Catholic countries in Asia (along with the Philippines). The population predominantly identifies as Roman Catholic (97%), though local animist traditions have a persistent and strong influence on the culture. Religious minorities include Muslims (1%) (including former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri) and Protestants (1%) (including Taur Matan Ruak, Commander of the Falintil-FDTL). Smaller Hindu (0.5%), Buddhist (0.1%) and traditional animist minorities make up the remainder. Church membership grew considerably under Indonesian rule, as Indonesia's state ideology *Pancasila* does not recognize traditional beliefs and requires all citizens to believe in God. Although the struggle was not about religion, as a deep-rooted local institution the Church not only symbolized East Timor's distinction from predominantly Muslim Indonesia, but also played a significant role in the resistance movement, as personified by Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. The constitution acknowledges the Church's role among the East Timorese people although it also stipulates a secular state that guarantees freedom of religion to everyone.

## Languages

East Timor's two official languages are Portuguese, and Tetum, which belongs to the Austronesian family of languages spoken throughout South East Asia. The predominant form of Tetum, known as *Tetun-Dili*, grew out of the dialect favored by the colonizers at Dili, and thus has considerable Portuguese influence, but other dialects of Tetum are also widely used in the country, including *Tetun-Terik* which is spoken along the southwestern coast. Indonesian and English are defined as working languages under the Constitution in the Final and Transitional Provisions, without setting a final date. Another fifteen indigenous languages are spoken: Bekais, Bunak, Dawan, Fataluku, Galoli, Habun, Idalaka, Kawaimina, Kemak, Lovaia, Makalero, Makasai, Mambai, Tokodede, and Wetarese.

Under Indonesian rule, the use of Portuguese was banned, but it was used by the clandestine resistance, especially in communicating with the outside world. The language, along with Tetum, gained importance as a symbol of resistance and freedom and was adopted as one of the two official languages for this reason, and as a link to nations in other parts of the world. It is now being taught and promoted widely with the help of Brazil, Portugal, and the Latin Union, although its prominence in official and public spheres has been met with some hostility from younger Indonesian-educated Timorese.

According to the 2006 UN Development Report (using data from official census), under 5% of the Timorese population is proficient in Portuguese. However, the validity of this report has been questioned by members of the Timorese National Institute of Linguistics, which maintains that Portuguese is spoken by up to 25% of Timorese, with the number of speakers more than doubling in the last five years. Along with other local languages, Tetum remains the most common means of communication between ordinary Timorese, while Indonesian is still widely used in the media and school from high school to university. A large proportion of words in Tetum are derived from Portuguese, but it also shares many Malay-derived words with Indonesian. Many Indonesian words are still in common use in Tetum and other Timorese languages, particularly numbers.

East Timor is a member of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), also known as the Lusophone Commonwealth, and a member of the Latin Union. It is the only independent state in Asia with Portuguese as an official language, although this is also one of the official languages of China's Special Administrative Region of Macau.

## Culture

The culture of East Timor reflects numerous influences, including Portuguese, Roman Catholic, and Malay, on the indigenous Austronesian and Melanesian cultures of Timor. Legend has it that a giant crocodile was transformed into the island of Timor, or *Crocodile Island*, as it is often called. East Timorese culture is heavily influenced by Austronesian legends, although the Catholic influence is also strong.

Illiteracy is still widespread, but there is a strong tradition of poetry. Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão, for example, is a distinguished poet. As for architecture, some Portuguese-style buildings can be found, along with the traditional totem houses of the eastern region. These are known as *uma lulik* (sacred houses) in Tetum, and *lee teinu* (houses with legs) in Fataluku. Craftsmanship is also widespread, as is the weaving of traditional scarves or *tais*.

## Sports

### International sports associations

East Timor has joined many international sport associations, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The IOC board has granted full recognition to the East Timorese Olympic Committee (COTL). The IOC had allowed a mainly symbolic four-member team to take part in the 2000 Sydney Games under the Olympic flag as "Independent Olympic Athletes." The Federação de Timor-Leste de Atletismo has joined the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF). The Federação de Badminton de Timor-Leste joined the International Badminton Federation (IBF) in April 2003. The East Timor Cycling Federation has joined the Union Cycliste Internationale. The Confederação do Desporto de Timor Leste has joined the International Weightlifting Federation. East Timor is also a full member of the International Table-Tennis Federation (ITTF). In September 2005, East Timor's national football team joined FIFA.

### Participation in international events

East Timor has taken part in several sporting events. Although the athletes came back with no medals, East Timorese athletes had the opportunity to compete with other Southeast Asian athletes in the 2003 Southeast Asian Games held in Vietnam in 2003. Most of their equipment was lent by the other nations competing. In the 2003 ASEAN Paralympics Games, also held in Vietnam, East Timor won a bronze medal. In the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, six athletes participated in three sports: athletics, weightlifting and boxing).

On East Timor's performance in the 22nd SEA Games in 2003, karate coach Austo Aparício remarked, "This was an opportunity for our athletes to gain experience. East Timor is still young, so it has lots of financial problems." He also commented on his team's karate performance, "We are fairly good at karate and we can make sure that we win a medal in the Philippines in 2005." East Timor went on to win three medals in Arnis at the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

East Timor was also one of the competing nations in the first Lusophony Games, winning a bronze medal in the women's volleyball competition (finishing third out of three teams), despite the fact the team had lost all its three games.

## Public holidays

East Timor now has public holidays that commemorate historic events in the liberation struggle, as well as those associated with Catholicism and Islam. They are defined in Timor-Leste Law no. 10/2005 PDF (16.7 KiB).

Date	Name	Notes
January 1	New Year's Day	
date varies	Eid al-Adha	
March-April	Good Friday	
May 1	Labour Day	
May 20	Independence Restoration Day	Anniversary of transfer of sovereignty from the United Nations transitional government, 2002
May-June	Corpus Christi	
August 30	Popular Consultation Day	Anniversary of the Popular Consultation, 1999
November 1	All Saints' Day	
November 2	All Souls' Day	
November 12	National Youth Day	Anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre, 1991
November 28	Proclamation of Independence Day	1975
date varies	Idul Fitri	
December 7	National Heroes' Day	Anniversary of Indonesian invasion of East Timor, 1975
December 8	Immaculate Conception	
December 25	Christmas Day	

In addition, the law defines "official commemorative dates" which are not considered holidays but could be subject to time off from work:

Date	Name
February-March	Ash Wednesday
March-April	Holy Thursday

May-June	Ascension Day
June 1	International Children's Day
August 20	Day of the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor-Leste (FALINTIL)
November 3	National Women's Day
December 10	International Human Rights Day

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# Hong Kong

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries**

**Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**, commonly known as **Hong Kong** (Chinese: 香港 [pronunciation]), is one of two special administrative regions in the People's Republic of China, the other being Macau. The territory lies on the eastern side of the Pearl River Delta, bordering Guangdong in the north and facing the South China Sea in the east, west and south.

Hong Kong was a dependent territory of the United Kingdom from 1842 until the transfer of its sovereignty to the People's Republic of China in 1997. The Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law of Hong Kong stipulate that Hong Kong operate with a high degree of autonomy until at least 2047, fifty years after the transfer. Under the “one country, two systems” policy, the Central People's Government is responsible for the territory's defence and foreign affairs, while Hong Kong maintains its own legal system, police force, monetary system, customs policy, immigration policy, and delegates to international organisations and events.





Beginning as a trading port, Hong Kong emerged as a leading financial centre in the late 20th century. Its highly capitalist economy is heavily based on service industries, and thrives under a long-standing policy of government nonintervention. Although the population is predominantly Chinese, residents and expatriates of other ethnicities form a small but significant segment of society. Influenced by both Eastern and Western cultures, Hong Kong's unique formative experience is reflected in its cuisine, cinema and music.

## History

Human settlement in the location now known as Hong Kong dates back to the Paleolithic era. The region was first incorporated into Imperial China in the Qin Dynasty, and served as a trading post and naval base during the Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty. The area's earliest recorded European visitor was Jorge Álvares, a Portuguese mariner who arrived in 1513.

In 1839 the refusal by Qing Dynasty authorities to import opium resulted in the First Opium War between China and Britain. Hong Kong Island was occupied by British forces in 1841, and then formally ceded to Britain under the Treaty of Nanking at the end of the war. The British established a Crown Colony with the founding of Victoria City the following year. In 1860, after China's defeat in the Second Opium War, the

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<p>香港特別行政區</p> <p><b>Hong Kong Special Administrative Region</b></p>	
 <p>Flag</p>	 <p>Emblem</p>
 <p>View at night from Victoria Peak</p>	
	
<b>Official languages</b>	Chinese, English
<b>Demonym</b>	Hongkonger

Kowloon Peninsula south of Boundary Street and Stonecutter's Island were ceded to Britain under the Convention of Peking. In 1898 Britain obtained a 99-year lease of Lantau Island and the adjacent northern lands, which became known as the New Territories.



Hong Kong in the late nineteenth century was a major trading post of the British Empire.



Japanese troops march along Queen's Road following the British surrender in 1941.

Hong Kong was declared a free port to serve as an entrepôt of the British Empire. The Kowloon-Canton Railway opened in 1910 with a southern terminus in Tsim Sha Tsui. An education system based on the British model was introduced. The local Chinese population had little contact with the European community of wealthy tai-pans settled near Victoria Peak.

In conjunction with its military campaign in World War II, the Empire of Japan invaded Hong Kong on December 8, 1941. The Battle of Hong Kong ended with British and Canadian defenders surrendering control of the colony to Japan on December 25. During the Japanese occupation, civilians suffered widespread food shortages, rationing, and hyper-inflation due to forced exchange of currency for military notes. Hong Kong lost more than half of its population in the period between the invasion and Japan's surrender in 1945, when the United Kingdom resumed control of the colony.

Hong Kong's population recovered quickly as a wave of mainland migrants arrived for refuge from the ongoing Chinese Civil War. With the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 more migrants fled to Hong Kong from fear of persecution by the Communist Party. Many corporations in Shanghai and Guangzhou also shifted their operations to Hong Kong. The colony became the sole place of contact between mainland China and the Western world, as the communist government increasingly isolated the country from outside influence. Trade with the mainland was interrupted during the Korean War, when the United Nations ordered a trade embargo against the communist government.

The textile and manufacturing industries grew with the help of population growth and low cost of labour. As Hong Kong rapidly industrialised, its economy became driven by exports to international markets. Living standards rose steadily with industrial growth. The construction of Shek Kip Mei Estate in 1953 marked the beginning of the public housing estate program. Hong Kong was disrupted by a year of chaos during the riots of 1967 following the commencement of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 in communist China.

<b>Government</b>	
- Chief Executive	Donald Tsang
<b>Establishment</b>	
- Treaty of Nanking	29 August 1842
- Japanese occupation	25 December 1941 – 15 August 1945
- Transfer of sovereignty	1 July 1997
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	1,104 km <sup>2</sup> ( 183rd) 426 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.6
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	6,963,100 ( 98th)
- 2001 census	6,708,389
- Density	6,352/km <sup>2</sup> ( 3rd) 16,469/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	
- Total	2007 estimate US\$292.8 billion ( 38th)
- Per capita	US\$41,994 ( 10th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	
- Total	2007 estimate US\$206.7 billion ( 37th)
- Per capita	US\$29,650 ( 27th)
<b>Gini (2007)</b>	53.3
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.937 (high) ( 21st)
<b>Currency</b>	Hong Kong dollar ( <small>HKD</small> )
<b>Time zone</b>	HKT ( UTC+8)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.hk
<b>Calling code</b>	+852

The Independent Commission Against Corruption established in 1974 dramatically reduced corruption in the government. When the People's Republic of China initiated economic reforms in 1978, Hong Kong became the main source of foreign investments to the mainland. A Special Economic Zone was established the following year in the Chinese city of Shenzhen, located immediately north of the mainland's border with Hong Kong. Services gradually displaced textiles and manufacturing in the economy of Hong Kong, as the financial and banking sectors became increasingly dominant.

After the Vietnam War ended in 1975 the Hong Kong government spent 25 years dealing with the entry and repatriation of Vietnamese refugees.

With the lease of the New Territories due to expire within two decades the governments of the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China discussed the issue of Hong Kong's sovereignty in the 1980s. In 1984 the two countries signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration, agreeing to transfer the sovereignty of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1997. The declaration stipulated that Hong Kong would be governed as a special administrative region, retaining its laws and a high degree of autonomy for at least fifty years after the transfer. Lacking confidence in the arrangement, some residents chose to emigrate, particularly after the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.

The Basic Law of Hong Kong, which would serve as the constitutional document after the transfer, was ratified in 1990. Over strong objections from Beijing, Governor Chris Patten introduced democratic reforms to the election process for the Legislative Council. The transfer of the sovereignty occurred at midnight on July 1, 1997, marked by a handover ceremony at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Tung Chee Hwa assumed office as the first Chief Executive of Hong Kong.

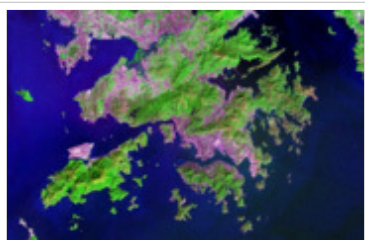
Hong Kong's economy was affected by the Asian financial crisis of 1997 that hit many East Asian markets. The lethal H5N1 avian influenza also surfaced that year. Implementation of the Airport Core Programme led to the opening of the new Hong Kong International Airport in 1998, after six years of construction. The project was part of the ambitious Port and Airport Development Strategy that was drafted in the early 1980s.

There was an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Hong Kong in the first half of 2003. That year half a million people participated in a march to voice disapproval of the Tung administration and the proposal to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law, which had raised concerns over infringements on civil liberties. The proposal was later abandoned by the administration. In 2005 Tung submitted his resignation as chief executive. Donald Tsang, the Chief Secretary for Administration, was selected as chief executive to complete the term.

## Geography and climate



Colonial flag of Hong Kong,  
used from 1959 to 1997



Areas of urban development and vegetation are visible in this false-colour satellite image.



The hilly terrain of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island

Hong Kong is located on China's south coast, 60 km (37 mi) east of Macau on the opposite side of the Pearl River Delta. It is surrounded by the South China Sea on the east, south, and west, and borders the city of Shenzhen in Guangdong Province to the north over the Sham Chun River. The territory consists primarily of Hong Kong Island, Lantau Island, Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories as well as some 260 other islands. While Lantau is the largest island, Hong Kong Island is the second largest and the most populated. Ap Lei Chau is the most densely populated island in the world.

Much of Hong Kong remains undeveloped as the terrain is mostly hilly to mountainous with steep slopes. Of the territory's 1,104 square kilometres (426 sq mi), less than 25% is developed. The remaining land is remarkably green with about 40% of the landmass reserved as country parks and nature reserves. Most of the territory's urban development exists on

Kowloon peninsula, along the northern shores of Hong Kong Island and in scattered settlements throughout the New Territories. The highest elevation in the territory is at Tai Mo Shan, at a height of 958 metres (3,140 ft) above sea level. Hong Kong's long, irregular and curvaceous coastline also affords the territory with many bays, rivers and beaches. Lowlands exist in the northwestern part of the New Territories.

Despite Hong Kong's reputation of being intensely urbanised, the territory has made much effort to promote a green environment, and recent growing public concern has prompted the severe restriction of further land reclamation from Hong Kong's most famous natural landmark, Victoria Harbour. Awareness of the environment is growing as Hong Kong suffers from increasing pollution compounded by its geography and tall buildings. Approximately 80% of the city's smog originates from other parts of the Pearl River Delta.

Situated just south of the Tropic of Cancer, Hong Kong's climate is subtropical ( Köppen climate classification *Cwa*), and is known for being unpredictable. Summer is hot and humid with occasional showers and thunderstorms, with warm air coming in from the southwest. It is also the time when tropical cyclones are most likely, sometimes resulting in flooding or landslips. Winter weather usually starts sunny and becomes cloudier towards February, with the occasional cold front bringing strong, cooling winds from the north. The most pleasant seasons are spring, although changeable, and autumn, which is generally sunny and dry. Hong Kong averages 1,948 hours of sunshine per year, while the highest and lowest ever recorded temperatures at the Hong Kong Observatory are 36.1 °C (97.0 °F) and 0.0 °C (32.0 °F), respectively. Frost occurs only once or twice a year inland and on higher ground, and snow is almost unheard of. Hong Kong does not observe daylight saving time.

Weather averages for Hong Kong													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
<b>Average high °C (°F)</b>	18.6 (65)	18.6 (65)	21.5 (71)	25.1 (77)	28.4 (83)	30.4 (87)	31.3 (88)	31.1 (88)	30.2 (86)	27.7 (82)	24.0 (75)	20.3 (69)	25 (77)
<b>Average low °C (°F)</b>	14.1 (57)	14.4 (58)	16.9 (62)	20.6 (69)	23.9 (75)	26.1 (79)	26.7 (80)	26.4 (80)	25.6 (78)	23.4 (74)	19.4 (67)	15.7 (60)	21 (70)

<b>Precipitation mm (inches)</b>	24 (0.94)	52 (2.05)	71 (2.8)	188 (7.4)	329 (12.95)	388 (15.28)	374 (14.72)	444 (17.48)	287 (11.3)	151 (5.94)	35 (1.38)	34 (1.34)	2,382 (93.78)
<i>Source: Hong Kong Observatory 2008</i>													

## Politics and government

In accordance with the Sino-British Joint Declaration, and reflecting the policy known as "one country, two systems" by the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong enjoys autonomy as a special administrative region except in defence and foreign affairs. The declaration stipulates that the region maintain its capitalist economic system and guarantees the rights and freedoms of its people for at least 50 years beyond the transfer of sovereignty. The Basic Law is the constitutional document that outlines executive, legislative and judicial authorities of government.

The Chief Executive is the head of government and the region's principal representative, chosen by the Election Committee to serve no more than two five-year terms. The 800 members of the Election Committee serve five-year terms, and are composed of *ex-official* government members and functional constituency delegates selected by qualified individuals and legal entities belonging to various industrial, commercial, professional, labour, social services, academic and religious sectors of society. The candidate chosen by the Election Committee must receive appointment by the Central People's Government to assume office. The Chief Executive appoints senior officers under the Principal Officials Accountability System and directs government policies with consultation from the Executive Council, the cabinet body. In addition, the Chief Executive appoints judges, signs legislation and may pardon or commute sentences.

The Legislative Council is the unicameral lawmaking body with 60 members serving four-year terms. Half of its membership is directly elected from geographical electoral districts by universal suffrage through a party-list proportional representation system, while the remaining half are returned from functional constituencies. The President of the Legislative Council is elected by and from among the members, and serves the role of speaker. Government bills are passed by a simple majority vote from members of the council, while private member's bills require separate majorities from geographical constituency members and functional constituency members for passage.

The Hong Kong Civil Service is a politically-neutral body that implements policies and provides government services. The appointment and promotion of public servants is based on qualifications, experience and ability. The permanent secretary is the most senior civil service position within each government bureau, serving under the politically-appointed position of secretary. The twelve bureaus operate from government office buildings located throughout the territory, with headquarters in the Central Government Offices.

The Basic Law and universal suffrage have been major issues of political debate since the transfer of sovereignty. In 2002, the government attempted to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law, which requires the enactment of laws prohibiting acts of treason and subversion against the Chinese government. The proposal met strong opposition due to concerns that it undermined civil liberties, and was a major cause for the July 1 march in 2003.

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The Legislative Council Building is located in Central.



Government House is the official residence of the Chief Executive, the head of Hong Kong Government.

The bill was shelved after it became clear it lacked the needed support in the legislature. Debate also surrounds the issue of reforming the electoral system for the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council, and the time frame for such political reforms. The Basic Law states that the ultimate aim is the election of the Chief Executive and the entire membership of the legislature by universal suffrage. The politics of Hong Kong is often characterised by the debate between pro-government groups and pro-democracy groups, which generally support a faster pace of democratisation. A proposal for political reform was defeated in the legislature in 2005.

## Legal system and judiciary

In contrast to mainland China's civil law system, Hong Kong continues to follow the common law tradition established by British colonial rule. Article 84 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong allows Hong Kong's courts to refer to decisions ( precedents) rendered by courts of other common law jurisdictions. Articles 82 and 92 allow judges from other common law jurisdictions to participate in proceedings of Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal and sit as Hong Kong judges.

Structurally, Hong Kong's court system consists of the Court of Final Appeal which replaced the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the High Court, which is made up of the Court of Appeal and the Court of First Instance, and the District Court, which includes the Family Court. Other adjudicative bodies include the Lands Tribunal, the Magistrates' Courts, the Juvenile Court, the Coroner's Court, the Labour Tribunal, the Small Claims Tribunal, and the Obscene Articles Tribunal, which is responsible for classifying non-video pornography to be circulated in Hong Kong. Justices of the Court of Final Appeal are appointed by Hong Kong's Chief Executive. The Basic Law of Hong Kong is subject to interpretation by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC:SC) and this power has been invoked three times: the right of abode issue, an interpretation regarding post-2008 election procedures, and an interpretation regarding the length of the term of the Chief Executive.

As in England, lawyers in Hong Kong are classified as either barristers or solicitors, where one can choose to practice as either one but not both (but it is possible to switch from one to another.) The vast majority of lawyers are solicitors, who are licensed and regulated by the Law Society of Hong Kong. Barristers, on the other hand, are licensed and regulated by the Hong Kong Bar Association. Only barristers are allowed to appear in the Court of Final Appeal and the High Court. Just as the common law system is maintained, so are British courtroom customs such as the wearing of robes and wigs by both judges and lawyers.

According to the Article 63 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong, the Department of Justice controls criminal prosecutions, free from interference. It is the largest legal institution in Hong Kong, and its responsibilities involve legislation, judicial administration, prosecution, civil representation, legal and policy drafting and reform, and the legal profession. Aside from prosecuting criminal cases in Hong Kong, officials of the Department of Justice also appear in court on behalf of the government in all civil and administrative lawsuits against the government. As the protector of public interests, it may apply for judicial reviews and assign legal representation on behalf of public interest to take part in the trial of cases that involve material public interests.

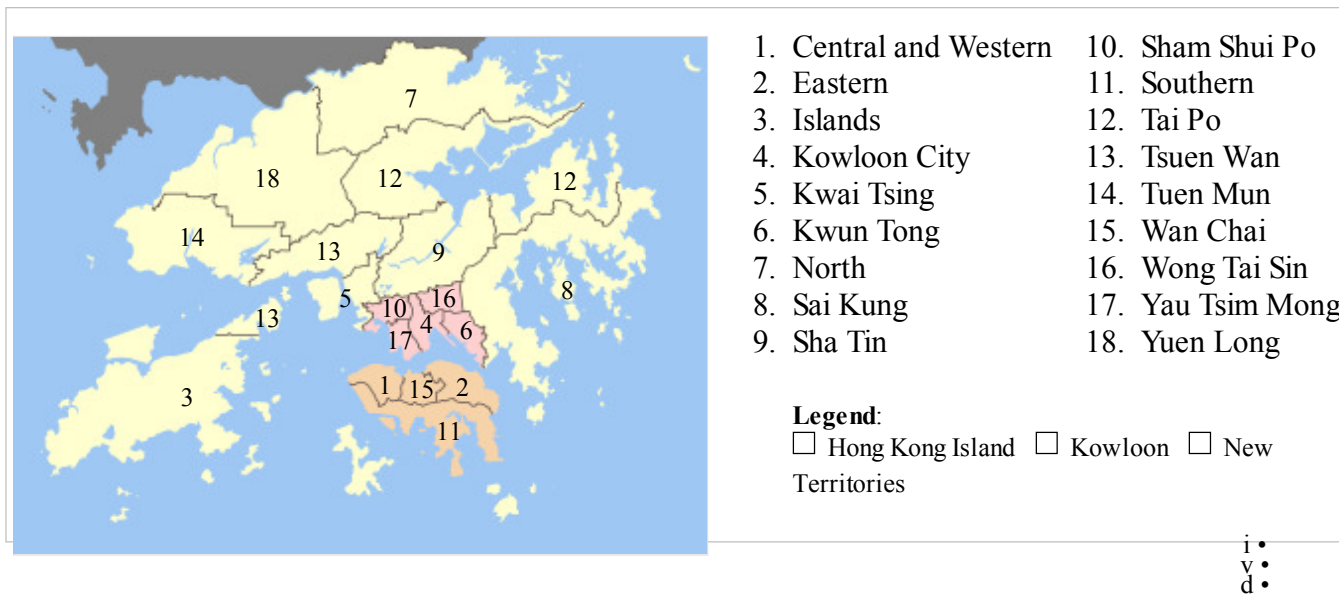
## Administrative districts

Hong Kong is subdivided into 18 geographic districts for administrative purposes:

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The Court of Final Appeal in Central



Each district is represented by a District Council that advises the Government of Hong Kong on local matters such as public facilities, community programmes, cultural activities and environmental improvements. The Home Affairs Department is the governmental body responsible for coordinating services and communicating government policies and plans to the public. It interacts with the public at the local level through corresponding district offices.

As the territory is governed by unitary authority, there are no formal definitions for cities and towns in Hong Kong and no capital city has been designated. The historic boundaries of Victoria City, Kowloon and New Kowloon remain stated in law, but these entities have not had any legal or administrative status since the implementation of the District Administration Scheme in 1982. Previously some colonial-era texts had considered Victoria City to be the capital.

## Economy

Hong Kong is one of the world's leading financial centres. Its highly capitalist economy, built on a policy of free markets, low taxation and government non-intervention, has been ranked as the most free economy in the world in the Index of Economic Freedom for 14 consecutive years. It is an important centre for international finance and trade, with the greatest concentration of corporate headquarters in the Asia-Pacific region, and is known as one of the Four Asian Tigers for its high growth rates and rapid industrialisation between the 1960s and 1990s. The Hong Kong Stock Exchange is the sixth largest in the world, with a market capitalisation of US\$2.97 trillion as of October 2007, and the second highest value of initial public offerings, after London. The currency used in Hong Kong is the Hong Kong dollar, which has been pegged to the US dollar since 1983.

Continuing the practice established under the British administration, the Government of Hong Kong generally plays a passive role in the financial industry, mostly leaving the direction of the economy to market forces and the private sector. Under the official policy of positive non-interventionism, Hong Kong has often been cited as a prime example of laissez-faire capitalism. Following the Second World War, Hong Kong industrialised rapidly as a manufacturing centre driven by exports, and then underwent a rapid transition to a service-based economy in the 1980s. Hong Kong matured to become a financial centre in the 1990s, but was greatly affected by the Asian financial crisis in 1998, and again in 2003 by the SARS outbreak. A revival of external and domestic demand led to a strong recovery the following year, as cost decreases strengthened the competitiveness of Hong Kong exports, and a 68-month-long deflationary period ended, with consumer price inflation close to zero.

Hong Kong has little arable land and few natural resources within its borders, and must therefore import most of its food and raw materials. Hong Kong is the world's eleventh largest trading entity, with the total value of imports and exports exceeding its gross domestic product. Much of Hong Kong's exports consist of re-exports, which are products made outside of the territory, especially in mainland China, and distributed via Hong Kong. Even before the transfer of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong had established extensive trade and investment ties with mainland China. The territory's autonomous status enables it to serve as a point of entry for investments and resources flowing into the mainland. It is also a connecting point for flights from Taiwan destined for the mainland.

At the end of 2007, there were 3.46 million people employed full-time, with the unemployment rate averaging 4.1%, the fourth straight year of decline. Hong Kong's economy is dominated by the service sector, which accounts for over 90% of its GDP, while industry now constitutes just 9%. Hong Kong's tourism industry has recently benefitted from an increase in mainland visitors and the opening of Hong Kong Disneyland Resort in 2005. Inflation was at 2% in 2007, and Hong Kong's largest export markets are China, the United States, and Japan.

## Demographics



2 International Finance Centre,  
the tallest building in Hong  
Kong



Residents of Hong Kong are sometimes referred to as Hongkongers. Hong Kong's population increased sharply throughout the 1990s, reaching 6.99 million in 2006. About 95% of Hong Kong's population is of Chinese descent, the majority of which is Cantonese or from ethnic groups such as Hakka and Teochew. Cantonese, a Chinese language originating from Guangdong province to the north of Hong Kong, is Hong Kong's *de-facto* official dialect and 95% of the population speaks Cantonese as their first language. English is also an official language widely spoken by more than 38% of the population. According to the 1996 Hong Kong Government by-census, some 3.1% regard English as their 'usual' language with 34.9% claiming to speak English as 'another' language. Signs displaying both Chinese and English are common throughout the territory. Since the 1997 handover, new groups of mainland Chinese immigrants have arrived. The usage of Mandarin, the official dialect of People's Republic of China and Republic of China (Taiwan), has also increased. The integration with mainland economy led to a demand in Mandarin speakers.



Sai Yeung Choi Street South, a crowded street in Mong Kok

The remaining 5% of the population is composed of non-ethnic Chinese forming a highly visible group despite their smaller numbers. A South Asian population of Sindhis, Indians, Pakistanis and Nepalese are found. Vietnamese refugees have become permanent residents. Approximately 140,000 Filipinos live and work in Hong Kong with the majority as foreign domestic helpers. An increasing number of domestic workers also originate from Indonesia. There are also a number of Europeans, Americans, Australians, Canadians, Japanese, and Koreans working in Hong Kong's commercial and financial sector.

Considered as a dependency, Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated countries/dependencies in the world, with an overall density of more than 6,200 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Hong Kong has a fertility rate of 0.95 children per woman, one of the lowest in the world and far below the 2.1 children per woman required to sustain the current population. However, population in Hong Kong continues to grow due to the influx of immigrants from mainland China approximating 45,000 per year. Life expectancy in Hong Kong is 81.6 years as of 2006, 2nd highest in the world.

Hong Kong's population has an extremely dense urban core, consisting of Kowloon and the north of Hong Kong Island. The rest of Hong Kong is relatively sparsely populated, with millions of residents scattered irregularly throughout the New Territories, south Hong Kong island and Lantau Island. An increasing number of citizens are commuting from Shenzhen in mainland China.

## Education

A former Crown colony, Hong Kong's education system has roughly followed the system of the United Kingdom, and in particular, the education system in England. At the higher education levels, both British and American systems exist. The University of Hong Kong (HKU), the oldest institution of tertiary education in Hong Kong, has traditionally been based on the British model but has incorporated elements of the American model in recent years. The second oldest university, Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), follows the American model with a characteristically British college system. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) was established on the American model of higher education. There are nine public universities in Hong Kong, and a number of private higher institutions.

Hong Kong's public schools are operated by the Education Bureau. The system features a non-compulsory three-year kindergarten, followed by a compulsory six-year primary education, three-year junior secondary education; a non-compulsory two-year senior secondary education leading to the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations and a two-year matriculation course leading to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations. A new "3+3+4" curriculum, consisting of a three-year junior secondary, three-year senior secondary and four-year undergraduate academic system, will be implemented from 2009 (for senior secondary) and 2012 (for tertiary) onwards. There are also tertiary institutions offering various Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees, other higher diplomas and associate degree courses.

Most comprehensive schools in Hong Kong fall under three categories: Public schools, subsidised schools and private schools. Public schools are rare, and subsidised schools are the most common, which include government aids and grant schools, run by charitable organisations often with religious affiliations. The majority of such religious affiliations are Christian, but there are also Buddhist, Daoist (Taoist), Islamic and Confucian ones as well. Meanwhile, private schools, often run by Christian organisations, have admissions based on academic merit rather than on financial resources. Outside this system are the schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) and private international schools. The medium of instruction is mainly spoken Cantonese, written Chinese and English.

The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Hong Kong's education as the 2nd best in the world.

## Culture



Hong Kong University of  
Science and Technology



Hong Kong Polytechnic  
University with view of Cross  
Harbour Bus Stop



A statue on the Avenue of Stars, a tribute to Hong Kong cinema

Hong Kong is frequently described as a place where East meets West, a meeting reflected in its inhabitants, their customs, economic infrastructure, education and culture. British rule may have ended in 1997 but Western culture is deeply ingrained in Hong Kong and coexists seamlessly with traditional philosophy and practices of the Chinese. On one street corner, there may be traditional Chinese shops selling Chinese herbal medicine, Buddhist paraphernalia or bowls of synthetic shark fin soup, but around the next, one may find theatres showing the latest Hollywood blockbuster, an English-style pub, or a Catholic Church. Hong Kong's official languages are Cantonese and English; signs in both languages are omnipresent throughout Hong Kong. The government, police and most workplaces and stores conduct business bilingually.

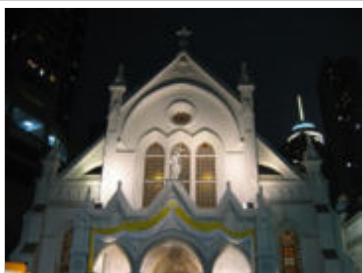
While Hong Kong is a global centre of trade, another famous export is its entertainment industry, particularly in the martial arts genre which gained a high level of popularity in the late 1960s and 1970s. Several Hollywood performers originate from Hong Kong cinema, notably Bruce Lee, Chow Yun-Fat, and Jackie Chan. A number of Hong Kong filmmakers have also achieved widespread fame in Hollywood, such as John Woo, Wong Kar-wai and Tsui Hark. Homegrown films such as *Chungking Express*, *Infernal Affairs*, *Shaolin Soccer*, *Rumble in the Bronx*, *Eros* and *In the Mood for Love* have also gained international recognition. Hong Kong is also the world's main hub for Cantopop music and is home to the first fulltime comedy club in Asia, The TakeOut Comedy Club Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government also supports cultural institutions such as the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Hong Kong Museum of Art, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. Furthermore, the government's Leisure and Cultural Services Department also subsidises and sponsors international performers brought to Hong Kong. Many international cultural activities are organised by the government, consulates and privately.

## Religion

Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of religious freedom, a right enshrined and protected through its constitutional document, the Basic Law. The majority of Hong Kong's population (90%) practise a mix of local religions, Buddhism (mainly Chinese Mahayana) alongside with Taoism. Buddhists and Taoists share a common background of Confucian theory, Chinese folk religion (worship of folk deities and figures of Chinese mythology) and ancestor worship.

A sizable Christian community of around 560,000 local adherents (320 thousand Protestant Christians, 240 thousand Roman Catholics) to 660,000 exists (if including over 100 thousand Filipino Catholics), forming about 8% to 9% of the total population; it is roughly equally divided between Catholics and Protestants. Apart from the major religions, there are also a significant number of followers of other religions, including an estimated 90,000 Muslims; 22,000 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; 4,000 Jews; 4,600 Jehovah's Witnesses and a number of Hindus, Sikhs and Bahá'ís. Apart from offering religious instructions, many major religious bodies have established schools and provided social welfare facilities.



Hong Kong Immaculate Conception Cathedral at 16 Caine Road, Central.

Hong Kong's religious beliefs are tied to the region's early role as a fishing community. Tin Hau, the protector of seafarers, has been honoured with several temples throughout Hong Kong for at least 300 years. Hong Kong residents, especially elder generations, visit Taoist or Buddhist temples to appease the deities and, usually, to request compassion, good health or good fortune. Gifts of food, and in particular fruit, are presented, and incense and paper offerings are burnt in respect.

With the transfer of Hong Kong to the PRC, there were significant concerns over religious freedom in Hong Kong. So far, this has proved mostly unfounded. Despite the banning of the Falun Gong movement by Beijing in 1999, adherents are still free to practice in Hong Kong. Similarly, the Catholic Church freely appoints its own bishops in Hong Kong, unlike on mainland China where the only approved 'Catholic' institution is the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association where bishops and priests are appointed by Beijing (though there is also an unofficial and illegal part of the Catholic church that maintains contact with the Vatican). A significant issue in the normalisation of ties between the PRC and the Vatican is Beijing's insistence that the Vatican drops its diplomatic ties with the ROC.

## Architecture



A panoramic view of northern Hong Kong Island between North Point in the east (left) and Central in the west (right).

At present, Hong Kong has the world's greatest number of skyscrapers, with a total of 7,688, well ahead of the second place city, New York City, which has 5,640. Most of these were built in the past two decades.

Due to the lack of available space, few historical buildings remain in Hong Kong as older buildings are regularly torn down to make way for new developments. Instead, the city has become a centre for modern architecture, especially in and around Central. Dense commercial skyscrapers line the coast of Victoria Harbour from Central to Causeway Bay, and Hong Kong's skyline, ranked the best skyline in the world, is a major tourist attraction. Four of the 18 tallest skyscrapers in the world are in Hong Kong. In Kowloon, which once included the nihilistic settlement called the Kowloon Walled City, the proximity of Kai Tak Airport previously necessitated strict height limits for all buildings. With the closure of Kai Tak Airport in 1998, these restrictions were lifted and several new skyscrapers

in Kowloon are now under construction, including International Commerce Centre which, when completed in 2010, will become the world's fourth tallest.

One of the notable buildings in Hong Kong is I. M. Pei's Bank of China Tower, completed in 1990 and now the city's third tallest skyscraper. This building generated heated controversy from the start, as its sharp angles were said to cast negative feng shui energy into the heart of Hong Kong. Predating the Bank of China Tower, another well-known structure is the HSBC Headquarters Building, finished in 1985. It was built on the site of Hong Kong's first skyscraper, which was finished in 1935 and was the subject of a bitter heritage conservation struggle in the late 1970s. Both banks' buildings are featured on many of Hong Kong's banknotes.

The tallest building in Hong Kong is currently the Two International Finance Centre. Other well-known projects in Hong Kong include the new Hong Kong International Airport on Chek Lap Kok near Lantau, a huge land reclamation project linked to the centre of Hong Kong by the Lantau Link, which features three new major bridges: Tsing Ma, the world's sixth largest suspension bridge; Kap Shui Mun, the world's longest cable-stayed bridge carrying both road and railway traffic; and Ting Kau, the world's first major four-span cable-stayed bridge.

## Transport



Hong Kong's tram system is the only one in the world that runs exclusively with double-deckers.



The iconic Star Ferry on one of its nine-minute voyages across Victoria Harbour

Hong Kong has a highly developed transportation network, encompassing both public and private transport. Over 90% of daily travels (11 million) are on public transport, making it the highest percentage in the world. The Octopus card stored value smart card payment system can be used to pay for fares on almost all railways, buses and ferries in Hong Kong. The Octopus card uses RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) to allow users to scan their card without taking it out of their wallet or bag. All parking meters in Hong Kong accept payment by Octopus card only, and Octopus card payment can be made at various car parks. Unlike the rest of the People's Republic of China, Hongkongers drive on the left side of the road.

Seeing wide usage is the city's metro system, MTR, both an underground rail system and a link between Hong Kong and mainland China. It has 150 stations and moves 3.4 million people a day. The tramway system, serving the city since 1904, covers the northern parts of Hong Kong Island and is the only tram system in the world run exclusively with double deckers. There are five operators running franchised public bus services in Hong Kong. Double-decker buses were introduced to Hong Kong in 1949, and are now almost exclusively used, with single-decker buses remaining in use for routes with lower demand or roads with lower carrying capacity. Most normal franchised bus routes in Hong Kong operate until 1 am. Public light buses run the length and breadth of Hong Kong, through areas where standard bus lines cannot reach or do not reach as frequently, quickly, or directly.

The Star Ferry service operates four lines across Victoria Harbour and has been in operation for over 120 years, providing a panoramic view of Hong Kong's



Pre-war Chinese tenement in Sham Shui Po.

skyline for its 53,000 daily passengers. It is considered one of the city's most treasured cultural icons and has been rated as one of the most picturesque ferry crossings in the world. Other ferry services are provided by operators serving outlying islands, new towns, Macau, and cities in mainland China. Hong Kong is also famous for its junks traversing the harbour, and small kai-to ferries which serve remote coastal settlements.

As Hong Kong is dominated by steep, hilly terrain, some unusual methods of transport have been devised to ease movement up and down the slopes. For example, the Peak Tram, the first public transport system in Hong Kong, has provided vertical rail transport between Central and Victoria Peak since 1888 by steeply ascending the side of a mountain. In Central and Western district, there is an extensive system of escalators and moving pavements, including the longest outdoor covered escalator system in the world, the Mid-Levels escalator.

Hong Kong International Airport is a leading air passenger gateway and logistics hub in Asia and one of the world's busiest airports in terms of international passenger and cargo movement, serving more than 47 million passengers and handling 3.74 million tonnes of cargo in 2007. It replaced Kai Tak Airport in Kowloon in 1998 and has been voted the world's best airport multiple times. Over 85 airlines operate at the two-terminal airport and it is the primary hub of Cathay Pacific, Dragonair, Air Hong Kong, Hong Kong Airlines and Hong Kong Express.

Taxis are widely used throughout Hong Kong, all of which are obliged by law to run on liquefied petroleum gas instead of diesel, in order to help the city's pollution problems. Despite the effort, the level of smog and pollution in Hong Kong is very high.

## Healthcare



Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine

Hong Kong's medical infrastructure consists of a mixed medical economy, with 12 private hospitals and more than 50 public hospitals. There are also polyclinics that offer primary care services, including dentistry. Hong Kong has two medical schools, one with the University of Hong Kong (the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine) and the other with the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Medical graduates obtain the MBChB or MBBS, based upon the British model. There are also schools of nursing, both public and private, and training for professions allied to medicine, including a school dedicated to dentistry. The Hospital Authority is a statutory body established on 1 December 1990 under the Hospital Authority Ordinance to manage all 38 public hospitals and institutions in Hong Kong. It is mainly responsible for delivering a comprehensive range of secondary and tertiary specialist care and medical rehabilitation through its network of health care facilities. The Authority also provides some primary medical services in 74 primary care clinics.

Hong Kong's 12 private hospitals have partnered with the United Kingdom for international healthcare accreditation. All 12 private hospitals are "Trent Hospitals", having been surveyed and accredited by the United Kingdom's Trent Accreditation Scheme. The Hong Kong Academy of Medicine is an independent institution with the statutory power to organise, monitor, assess and accredit all medical specialist training and to oversee the provision of continuing medical education in Hong Kong. In addition, The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada has also accredited the postgraduate medical education (1994-present) in Hong Kong and allowed these graduates from the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine seeking RCPSC Certification and practising in Canada.

The Department of Health, under Food and Health Bureau, is the health adviser of Hong Kong government and an executive arm in health legislation and policy. Its main role is to safeguard the health of the community through promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services in Hong Kong. The main function of the department includes child assessment service, immunisation programmes, dental service, forensic pathology service, registration of healthcare professionals etc, though boards and councils (i.e. Medical Council of Hong Kong, Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong) are independent statutory bodies established under the relevant ordinances that operate independently to discharge their statutory functions.

Hong Kong is one of the healthiest places in the world. Because of its early health education, professional health services, and well-developed health care and medication system, Hongkongers enjoy a life expectancy of 84 for females and 78 for men, which are the second highest in the world, and 2.94 infant mortality rate, the fourth lowest in the world.

Hong Kong has high standards of medical practice. It has contributed to the development of liver transplantation, being the first in the world to carry out adult to adult live donor liver transplant in 1993.

## Military

During British administration, the Governor of Hong Kong was the Commander-in-Chief and Vice-Admiral, defence force was provided by the British military, who stationed soldiers in barracks throughout Hong Kong, including the British Forces Overseas Hong Kong. Its finance was supported by both the UK Government and the Hong Kong Government. Hong Kong has never had its own military forces because it has never been a sovereign state, except voluntary auxiliary forces like The Royal Hong Kong Regiment (The Volunteers).

The People's Republic of China's State Council assumed sovereignty over Hong Kong on 1 July 1997 and stationed a garrison of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to manage its defence affairs. Although the garrison has little practical military value, the stationing of the PLA troops in Hong Kong is a significant symbol of the PRC government's assumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong.

According to Hong Kong's Basic Law, military forces stationed in Hong Kong will not interfere with local civil affairs; the Hong Kong SAR Government remains responsible for the maintenance of public order. The Hong Kong Garrison, composed of ground, naval, and air forces, is under the command of the Chinese Central Military Commission. The PLA Garrison subsequently opened its barracks on Stonecutters Island and Stanley to the public to promote understanding and trust between the troops and residents.

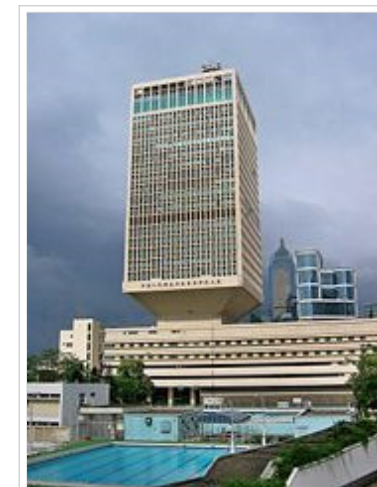
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Hospital Authority  
Headquarters



The headquarters of the  
People's Liberation Army Hong  
Kong Garrison (former Prince  
of Wales Building)

# India

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries  
SOS Children works in India. For more information see SOS Children in India

**India** (Hindi: भारत *Bhārat*; see also other names), officially the **Republic of India** (Hindi: भारत गणराज्य *Bhārat Gaṇarājya*), is a sovereign nation in South Asia. It is the seventh largest country by geographical area, the second most populous country, and the most populous democracy in the world. Bounded by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the west, and the Bay of Bengal on the east, India has a coastline of 7,517 kilometers (4,671 mi). It borders Pakistan to the west; China, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north-east; and Bangladesh and Burma to the east. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Indonesia.

Home to the Indus Valley Civilization and a region of historic trade routes and vast empires, the Indian subcontinent was identified with its commercial and cultural wealth for much of its long history. Four major world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism originated here, while Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam arrived in the first millennium CE and shaped the region's diverse culture. Gradually annexed by the British East India Company from the early eighteenth century and colonised by the United Kingdom from the mid-nineteenth century, India became a modern nation state in 1947 after a struggle for independence that was marked by widespread nonviolent resistance.

India is the world's twelfth largest economy at market exchange rates and the third largest economy in purchasing power. Economic reforms have transformed it into the second fastest growing large economy; however, it still suffers from high levels of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and environmental degradation. A pluralistic, multilingual, and multiethnic society, India is also home to a diversity of wildlife in a variety of protected habitats.

## Etymology

The name *India* (pronounced /'ɪndiə/) is derived from *Indus*, which is derived from the Old Persian word *Hindu*, from Sanskrit *Sindhu*, the historic local appellation for the Indus River. The ancient Greeks referred to the Indians as *Indoi*, the people of the Indus. The Constitution of India and common usage in various Indian languages also recognise *Bharat* (pronunciation , /bʰɑːrət/) as an official name of equal status. *Hindustan* ( /hɪndʊstɑːn/ ), which is the Persian word for “ Land of the Hindus” and historically

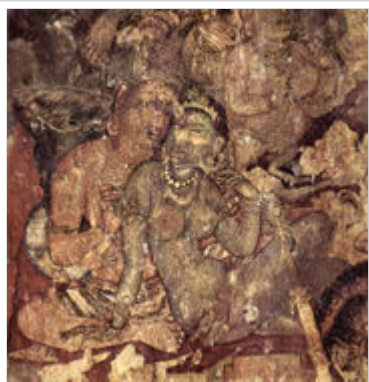
<b>भारत गणराज्य*</b> <b>Republic of India</b>	
	
Flag	Emblem सत्यमेव जयते
<b>Motto:</b> <i>'Satyameva Jayate'</i> (Sanskrit) <b>सत्यमेव जयते</b> ( Devanāgarī) "Truth Alone Triumphs"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Jana Gana Mana</i> Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people	
<i>Vande Mataram</i> I bow to thee, Mother	



referred to northern India, is also occasionally used as a synonym for all of India.

## History

Stone Age rock shelters with paintings at the Bhimbetka rock shelters in Madhya Pradesh are the earliest known traces of human life in India. The first known permanent settlements appeared over 9,000 years ago and gradually developed into the Indus Valley Civilization, dating back to 3300 BCE in western India. It was followed by the Vedic period, which laid the foundations of Hinduism and other cultural aspects of early Indian society. From around 550 BCE, many independent kingdoms and republics known as the Mahajanapadas were established across the country.



Paintings at the Ajanta Caves in Aurangabad, Maharashtra, 6th century.

The empire built by the Maurya Empire under Emperor Ashoka united most of South Asia in the third century BCE. From 180 BCE, a series of invasions from Central Asia followed, including those led by the Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians, Indo-Parthians and Kushans in the north-western Indian subcontinent. From the third century CE, the Gupta dynasty oversaw the period referred to as ancient "India's Golden Age." Among the notable South Indian empires were the Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Hoysalas, Pallavas, Pandyas, and Cholas. Science, engineering, art, literature, astronomy, and philosophy flourished under the patronage of these kings.

Following invasions from Central Asia between the tenth and twelfth centuries, much of north India came under the rule of the Delhi Sultanate, and later the Mughal Empire. Mughal emperors gradually expanded their kingdoms to cover large parts of the subcontinent.

Nevertheless, several indigenous kingdoms, such as the Vijayanagara Empire, flourished, especially in the south. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the Mughal supremacy declined and the Maratha Empire became the dominant power. From the sixteenth century, several European countries, including Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom, started arriving as traders and later took advantage of the fractious nature of relations between the kingdoms to establish colonies in the country. By 1856, most of India was under the control of the British East India Company. A year later, a nationwide insurrection of rebelling military units and kingdoms, variously referred to as the First War of Indian Independence or Sepoy Mutiny, seriously challenged British rule but eventually failed. As a consequence, India came under the direct control of the British Crown as a colony of the British Empire.

<b>Capital</b>	New Delhi
<b>Largest city</b>	Mumbai
<b>Official Languages:</b>	<b>Hindi, English</b> [ Show ]
<b>Scheduled Languages:</b>	<b>8th Schedule:</b> [ Show ]
<b>Demonym</b>	Indian
<b>Government</b>	Federal republic Parliamentary democracy
<span> </span> - President	Pratibha Patil
<span> </span> - Prime Minister	Manmohan Singh
<b>Independence</b>	from British colonial rule
<span> </span> - Declared	15 August 1947
<span> </span> - Republic	26 January 1950
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	3,287,590 <sup>‡</sup> km <sup>2</sup> ( 7th)
	1,269,346 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	9.56
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - 2007 estimate	1.12 billion ( 2nd)
<span> </span> - 2001 census	1,027,015,248
<span> </span> - Density	329/km <sup>2</sup> ( 31st)
	852/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$ 2.965 trillion ( 6th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$ 2,700
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	798.2 billion
<span> </span> - Per capita	863
<b>Gini (1999-2000)</b>	32.5

During the first half of the twentieth century, a nationwide struggle for independence was launched by the Indian National Congress and other political organizations. In the 1920s and 1930, a movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, and displaying commitment to *ahimsa*, or non-violence, millions of protesters engaged in mass campaigns of civil disobedience. Finally, on 15 August 1947, India gained independence from British rule, but was partitioned, in accordance to wishes of the Muslim League, along the lines of religion to create the Islamic nation state of Pakistan. Three years later, on 26 January 1950, India became a republic and a new constitution came into effect.

Since independence, India has experienced sectarian violence and insurgencies in various parts of the country, but has maintained its unity and democracy. It has unresolved territorial disputes with China, which in 1962 escalated into the brief Sino-Indian War; and with Pakistan, which resulted in wars in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999. India is a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations (as part of British India). In 1974, India conducted an underground nuclear test. This was followed by five more tests in 1998, making India a nuclear state. Beginning in 1991, significant economic reforms have transformed India into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, adding to its global and regional clout.

## Government

The constitution of India, the longest and most exhaustive constitution of any independent nation in the world, came into force on January 26, 1950. The preamble of the constitution defines India as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. India has a quasi-federal form of government and a bicameral parliament operating under a Westminster-style parliamentary system. It has three branches of governance: the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary.

The President of India is the official head of state elected indirectly by an electoral college for a five-year term. The Prime Minister is, however, the *de facto* head of government and exercises most executive powers. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and, by convention, is the candidate supported by the party or political alliance holding the majority of seats in the lower house of Parliament.

The legislature of India is the bicameral Parliament, which consists of the upper house called the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the lower house called the Lok Sabha (House of People). The Rajya Sabha, a permanent body, has up to 250 members serving staggered six year terms. Most are elected indirectly by the state and territorial legislatures in proportion to the state's population. The 543 of the Lok Sabha's 545 members are directly elected by popular vote to represent individual constituencies for five year terms. The other two members are nominated by the President from the Anglo-Indian community if, in his opinion, the community is not adequately represented.

The executive branch consists of the President, Vice-President, and the Council of Ministers (the Cabinet being its executive committee) headed by the Prime

<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.619 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 128th)
<b>Currency</b>	Indian rupee (Rs) ( <span style="font-family: monospace;">INR</span> )
<b>Time zone</b> - Summer ( DST)	IST ( UTC+5:30) not observed ( UTC+5:30)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.in
<b>Calling code</b>	+91
<b>Non-numbered Footnotes:</b>	[ Show ]

 <b>National Symbols of India</b>	
<b>Flag</b>	Tricolour
<b>Emblem</b>	Sarnath Lion Capital
<b>Anthem</b>	<i>Jana Gana Mana</i>
<b>Song</b>	<i>Vandē Mātaram</i>
<b>Animal</b>	Royal Bengal Tiger
<b>Bird</b>	Indian Peafowl
<b>Flower</b>	Lotus
<b>Tree</b>	Banyan
<b>Fruit</b>	Mango
<b>Sport</b>	Field hockey
<b>Calendar</b>	<i>Saka</i>

Minister. Any minister holding a portfolio must be a member of either house of parliament. In the Indian parliamentary system, the executive is subordinate to the legislature, with the Prime Minister and his Council being directly responsible to the lower house of the parliament.

India has a unitary three-tier judiciary, consisting of the Supreme Court, headed by the Chief Justice of India, twenty-one High Courts, and a large number of trial courts. The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction over cases involving fundamental rights and over disputes between states and the Centre, and appellate jurisdiction over the High Courts. It is judicially independent, and has the power to declare the law and to strike down union or state laws which contravene the Constitution. The role as the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution is one of the most important functions of the Supreme Court.

## Politics

India is the largest democracy in the world. For most of its democratic history, the federal government has been led by the Indian National Congress (INC). State politics have been dominated by several national parties including the INC, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India (CPI), and various regional parties. From 1950 to 1990, barring two brief periods, the INC enjoyed a parliamentary majority. The INC was out of power between 1977 and 1980, when the Janata Party won the election owing to public discontent with the "Emergency" declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In 1989, a Janata Dal-led National Front coalition in alliance with the Left Front coalition won the elections but managed to stay in power for only two years.

The years 1996–1998 were a period of turmoil in the federal government with several short-lived alliances holding sway. The BJP formed a government briefly in 1996, followed by the United Front coalition. In 1998, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with several regional parties and became the first non-Congress government to complete a full five-year term. In the 2004 Indian elections, the INC won the largest number of Lok Sabha seats and formed a government with a coalition called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), supported by various left-leaning parties and members opposed to the BJP.



The North Block, in New Delhi, houses key government offices.

## Foreign relations and military

Since its independence in 1947, India has maintained cordial relationships with most nations. It took a leading role in the 1950s by advocating the independence of European colonies in Africa and Asia. India is a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement. After the Sino-Indian War and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, India's relationship with the Soviet Union warmed at the expense of ties with the United States and continued to remain so until the end of the Cold War. India has fought two wars with Pakistan, primarily over Kashmir. India also fought and won an additional war with Pakistan for the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

In recent years, India has played an influential role in the ASEAN, SAARC, and the WTO. India is a founding member and long time supporter of the United Nations, with over 55,000 Indian military and police personnel having served in thirty-five UN peace keeping operations deployed across four continents. Despite criticism and military sanctions, India has consistently refused to sign the CTBT and the NPT, preferring instead to maintain sovereignty over its nuclear program. Recent overtures by the Indian government have strengthened relations with the United States, China, and Pakistan. In the economic sphere, India has close relationships with other developing nations in South America, Asia, and Africa.

India maintains the third largest military force in the world, which consists of the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force. Auxiliary forces such as the Paramilitary Forces, the Coast Guard, and the Strategic Forces Command also come under the military's purview. The President of India is the supreme commander of the Indian armed forces. India became a nuclear power in 1974 after conducting an initial nuclear test, Operation Smiling Buddha. Further underground testing in 1998 led to international military sanctions against India, which were gradually withdrawn after September 2001. India maintains a "no first use" nuclear policy and has a clean record of non-proliferation.

## Subdivisions

India is a federal republic of twenty-eight states and seven Union Territories. All states, the union territory of Puducherry, and the National Capital Territory of Delhi have elected governments. The other five union territories have centrally appointed administrators and hence are under direct rule of the President. In 1956, under the States Reorganisation Act, states were formed on linguistic basis. Since then this structure has remained largely unchanged. Each state or union territory is divided into basic units of government and administration called districts. There are nearly 600 districts in India. The districts in turn are further divided into *tehsils* and eventually into villages.



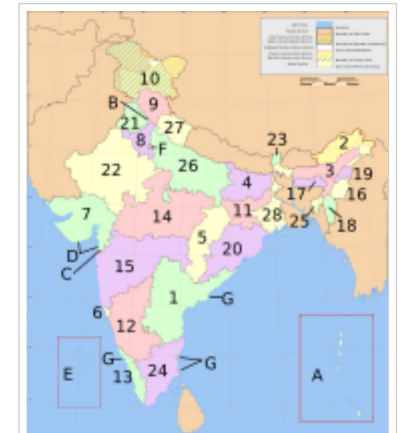
The nuclear capable Agni-II ballistic missile during a Republic Day parade.

**States:**

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Andhra Pradesh     | 15. Maharashtra   |
| 2. Arunachal Pradesh  | 16. Manipur       |
| 3. Assam              | 17. Meghalaya     |
| 4. Bihar              | 18. Mizoram       |
| 5. Chhattisgarh       | 19. Nagaland      |
| 6. Goa                | 20. Orissa        |
| 7. Gujarat            | 21. Punjab        |
| 8. Haryana            | 22. Rajasthan     |
| 9. Himachal Pradesh   | 23. Sikkim        |
| 10. Jammu and Kashmir | 24. Tamil Nadu    |
| 11. Jharkhand         | 25. Tripura       |
| 12. Karnataka         | 26. Uttar Pradesh |
| 13. Kerala            | 27. Uttarakhand   |
| 14. Madhya Pradesh    | 28. West Bengal   |

**Union Territories:**

- |  |
|--|
| A. Andaman and Nicobar Islands         |
| B. Chandigarh                          |
| C. Dadra and Nagar Haveli              |
| D. Daman and Diu                       |
| E. Lakshadweep                         |
| F. National Capital Territory of Delhi |
| G. Puducherry                          |



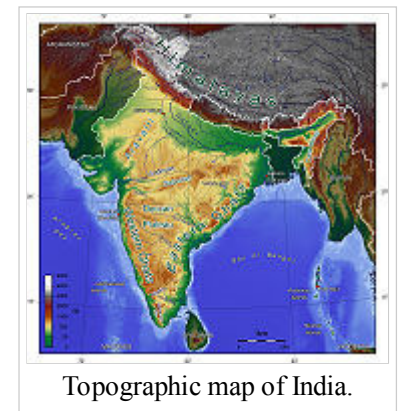
Administrative divisions of India, including 28 states and 7 union territories.

**Major Cities:** Bangalore • Chennai • Delhi • Hyderabad • Kolkata • Mumbai

## Geography

India, the major portion of the Indian subcontinent, sits atop the Indian tectonic plate, a minor plate within the Indo-Australian Plate.

India's defining geological processes commenced seventy-five million years ago, when the Indian subcontinent, then part of the southern supercontinent Gondwana, began a northeastwards drift — lasting fifty million years — across the then unformed Indian Ocean. The subcontinent's subsequent collision with the Eurasian Plate and subduction under it, gave rise to the Himalayas, the planet's highest mountains, which now abut India in the north and the north-east. In the former seabed immediately south of the emerging Himalayas, plate movement created a vast trough, which, having gradually been filled with river-borne sediment, now forms the Indo-Gangetic Plain. To the west of this plain, and cut off from it by the Aravalli Range, lies the Thar Desert. The original Indian plate now survives as peninsular India, the oldest and geologically most stable part of India, and extending as far north as the Satpura and Vindhya ranges in central India. These parallel ranges run from the Arabian Sea coast in Gujarat in the west to the coal-rich Chota Nagpur Plateau in Jharkhand in the east. To their south, the remaining peninsular landmass, the Deccan Plateau, is flanked on the left and right by the coastal ranges, Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats respectively; the plateau contains the oldest rock formations in India, some over one billion years old. Constituted in such fashion, India lies to the north of the equator between 6°44' and 35°30' north latitude and 68°7' and 97°25' east longitude.



Topographic map of India.

India's coast is 7,517 kilometers (4,671 mi) long; of this distance, 5,423 kilometers (3,370 mi) belong to peninsular India, and 2,094 kilometers (1,301 mi) to the Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep Islands. According to the Indian naval hydrographic charts, the mainland coast consists of: 43% sandy beaches, 11% rocky coast including cliffs, and 46% mudflats or marshy coast.

Major Himalayan-origin rivers that substantially flow through India include the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, both of which drain into the Bay of Bengal. Important tributaries of the Ganges include the Yamuna and the Kosi, nicknamed "Bihar's Sorrow," whose extremely low gradient causes disastrous floods every year. Major peninsular rivers — whose steeper gradients prevent their waters from flooding — include the Godavari, the Mahanadi, the Kaveri, and the Krishna, which also drain into the Bay of Bengal, and the Narmada and the Tapti, which drain into the Arabian Sea. Among notable coastal features of India are the marshy Rann of Kutch in western India, and the alluvial Sundarbans delta, which India shares with Bangladesh. India has two archipelagos: the Lakshadweep, coral atolls off India's south-western coast, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a volcanic chain in the Andaman Sea.

India's climate is strongly influenced by the Himalayas and the Thar Desert, both of which drive the monsoons. The Himalayas prevent cold Central Asian katabatic winds from blowing in, keeping the bulk of the Indian subcontinent warmer than most locations at similar latitudes. The Thar Desert plays a crucial role in attracting the moisture-laden southwest summer monsoon winds that, between June and October, provide the majority of India's rainfall. Four major climatic groupings predominate in India: tropical wet, tropical dry, subtropical humid, and montane.

## **Flora and fauna**

India, which lies within the Indomalaya ecozone, displays significant biodiversity. One of seventeen megadiverse countries, it is home to 7.6% of all mammalian, 12.6% of all avian, 6.2% of all reptilian, 4.4% of all amphibian, 11.7% of all fish, and 6.0% of all flowering plant species. Many ecoregions, such as the *shola* forests, exhibit extremely high rates of endemism; overall, 33% of Indian plant species are endemic. India's forest cover ranges from the tropical rainforest of the Andaman Islands, Western Ghats, and North-East India to the coniferous forest of the Himalaya. Between these extremes lie the sal-dominated moist deciduous forest of eastern India; the teak-dominated dry deciduous forest of central and southern India; and the babul-dominated thorn forest of the central Deccan and western Gangetic plain. Important Indian trees include the medicinal neem, widely used in rural Indian herbal remedies. The pipal fig tree, shown on the seals of Mohenjo-daro, shaded Gautama Buddha as he sought enlightenment.

Many Indian species are descendants of taxa originating in Gondwana, to which India originally belonged. Peninsular India's subsequent movement towards, and collision with, the Laurasian landmass set off a mass exchange of species. However, volcanism and climatic changes 20 million years ago caused the extinction of many endemic Indian forms. Soon thereafter, mammals entered India from Asia through two zoogeographical passes on either side of the emerging Himalaya. Consequently, among Indian species, only 12.6% of mammals and 4.5% of birds are endemic, contrasting with 45.8% of reptiles and 55.8% of amphibians. Notable endemics are the Nilgiri leaf monkey and the brown and carmine Beddome's toad of the Western Ghats. India contains 172, or 2.9%, of IUCN-designated threatened species. These include the Asiatic Lion, the Bengal Tiger, and the Indian white-rumped vulture, which suffered a near-extinction from ingesting the carrion of diclofenac-treated cattle.

In recent decades, human encroachment has posed a threat to India's wildlife; in response, the system of national parks and protected areas, first established in 1935, was substantially expanded. In 1972, India enacted the Wildlife Protection Act and Project Tiger to safeguard crucial habitat; in addition, the Forest Conservation Act was enacted in 1980. Along with more than five hundred wildlife sanctuaries, India hosts thirteen biosphere reserves, four of which are part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves; twenty-five wetlands are registered under the Ramsar Convention.

## Economy



Indian giant squirrels inhabit the forests of the Western Ghats.

For most of its post-independence history, India adhered to a quasi-socialist approach with strict government control over private sector participation, foreign trade, and foreign direct investment. However, since 1991, India has gradually opened up its markets through economic reforms and reduced government controls on foreign trade and investment. Foreign exchange reserves have risen from US\$5.8 billion in March 1991 to US\$275 billion in 2007, while federal and state budget deficits have decreased. Privatization of publicly-owned companies and the opening of certain sectors to private and foreign participation has continued amid political debate. With a GDP growth rate of 9.4% in 2006-07, the Indian economy is among the fastest growing in the world. India's GDP in terms of USD exchange-rate is US\$ 778.7 billion. When measured in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), India has the world's third largest GDP at US\$4.164 trillion. India's per capita income (nominal) is US\$ 707, while its per capita (PPP) is US\$ 3600.

Although the Indian economy has grown steadily over the last two decades; its growth has been uneven when comparing different social groups, economic groups, geographic regions, and rural and urban areas. Income inequality in India is relatively small ( Gini coefficient: 32.5 in year 1999–2000), though it has been increasing of late. Wealth distribution in India is fairly uneven, with the top 10% of income groups earning 33% of the income. Despite significant economic progress, a quarter of the nation's population earns less than the government-specified poverty threshold of \$0.40 per day. In 2004–2005, 27.5% of the population was living below the poverty line.

India has the world's second largest labour force, with 509.3 million people, 60% of whom are employed in agriculture and related industries; 28% in services and related industries; and 12% in industry. Major agricultural crops include rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, and potatoes. The agricultural sector accounts for 28% of GDP; the service and industrial sectors make up 54% and 18% respectively. Major industries include automobiles, cement, chemicals, consumer electronics, food processing, machinery, mining, petroleum, pharmaceuticals, steel, transportation equipment, and textiles.

In 2006, estimated exports stood at US\$112 billion and imports were around US\$187.9 billion. Textiles, jewellery, engineering goods and software are major export commodities. Crude oil, machineries, fertilizers, and chemicals are major imports. India's most important trading partners are the United States, the European Union, China, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, and Australia. More recently, India has capitalised on its large pool of educated, English-speaking people, and trained professionals to become an important outsourcing destination for multinational corporations and a popular destination for medical tourism. India has also become a major exporter of software as well as financial, research, and technological services. Its natural resources include arable land, bauxite, chromite, coal, diamonds, iron ore, limestone, manganese, mica, natural gas, petroleum, and titanium ore.

## Demographics



The Bombay Stock Exchange, in Mumbai, is Asia's oldest and India's largest stock exchange.



With an estimated population of 1.12 billion, India is the world's second most populous country. Almost 70% of Indians reside in rural areas, although in recent decades migration to larger cities has led to a dramatic increase in the country's urban population. India's largest cities are Mumbai (formerly Bombay), Delhi, Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), Chennai (formerly Madras), Bangalore, and Hyderabad.

India is the second most culturally, linguistically and genetically diverse geographical entity after the African continent. India is home to two major linguistic families: Indo-Aryan (spoken by about 74% of the population) and Dravidian (spoken by about 24%). Other languages spoken in India come from the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman linguistic families. Hindi, with the largest number of speakers, is the official language of India. English, which is extensively used in business and administration, has the status of a 'subsidiary official language'. The constitution also recognises in particular 21 other languages that are either abundantly spoken or have classical status. The number of dialects in India is as high as 1,652.

Over 800 million Indians (80.5%) are Hindu. Other religious groups include Muslims (13.4%), Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%), Jains (0.4%), Jews, Zoroastrians, Bahá'ís and others. Tribals constitute 8.1% of the population.

India's literacy rate is 64.8% (53.7% for females and 75.3% for males). The state of Kerala has the highest literacy rate (91%); Bihar has the lowest (47%). The national gender ratio is 944 females per 1,000 males. India's median age is 24.9, and the population growth rate of 1.38% per annum; there are 22.01 births per 1,000 people per year.

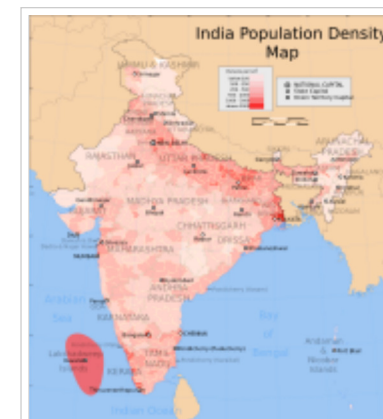
## Culture

India's culture is marked by a high degree of syncretism and cultural pluralism. It has managed to preserve established traditions while absorbing new customs, traditions, and ideas from invaders and immigrants. Multicultural concerns have long informed India's history and traditions, constitution and political arrangements.

Indian Architecture, including notable monuments, such as the Taj Mahal and other examples of Mughal architecture and South Indian architecture, is the result of traditions that combined elements from several parts of the country and abroad. Vernacular architecture also displays notable regional variation.

Indian music covers a wide range of traditions and regional styles. Classical music is split mainly between the North Indian Hindustani and South Indian Carnatic traditions. Highly regionalised forms of popular music include filmi and folk music; the syncretic tradition of the *bauls* is a well-known form of the latter.

Indian dance too has diverse *folk* and *classical* forms. Among the well-known folk dances are the *bhangra* of the Punjab, the *bihu* of Assam, the *chhau* of Bihar and Orissa and the *ghoomar* of Rajasthan. Eight dance forms, many with narrative forms and mythological elements, have been accorded classical dance status by India's *National Academy of Music, Dance, and*



Population density map of India.



The Taj Mahal in Agra was built by Shah Jahan as memorial to wife Mumtaz Mahal. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site considered to be of "outstanding universal value".

*Drama*. These are: *bharatanatyam* of the state of Tamil Nadu, *kathak* of Uttar Pradesh, *kathakali* and *mohiniattam* of Kerala, *kuchipudi* of Andhra Pradesh, *manipuri* of Manipur, *odissi* of the state of Orissa and the *sattriya* of Assam.

Theatre in India often incorporates music, dance, and improvised or written dialogue. Often based on Hindu mythology, but also borrowing from medieval romances, and news of social and political events, Indian theatre includes the *bhavai* of state of Gujarat, the *jatra* of West Bengal, the *nautanki* and *ramlila* of North India, the *tamasha* of Maharashtra, the *terukkuttu* of Tamil Nadu, and the *yakshagana* of Karnataka.



A prayer flag above Tanze Monastery in the Kurgiakh Valley. The wind is believed to propagate the prayers printed on tissue.

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world. Bollywood, based in Mumbai, makes commercial Hindi films and is the most prolific film industry in the world. Established traditions also exist in Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, and Telugu language cinemas.

The earliest works of Indian literature were transmitted orally and only later written down. These included works of Sanskrit literature – such as the early Vedas, the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, the drama *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* (The Recognition of Śakuntalā), and poetry such as the *Mahākāvya* – and the Tamil language *Sangam* literature. Among Indian writers of the modern era active in Indian languages or English, Rabindranath Tagore won the Nobel Prize in 1913.

Indian cuisine is characterized by a wide variety of regional styles and sophisticated use of herbs and spices. The staple foods in the region are rice (especially in the south and the east) and wheat (predominantly in the north). Spices originally native to the Indian subcontinent that are now consumed world wide include black pepper; in contrast, hot chilli peppers, popular across India, were introduced by the Portuguese.

Traditional Indian dress varies across the regions in its colours and styles and depends on various factors, including climate. Popular styles of dress include draped garments such as sari for women and dhoti or lungi for men; in addition, stitched clothes such as shalwar kameez for women and kurta- pyjama and European-style trousers and shirts for men, are also popular.

Many Indian festivals are religious in origin, although several are celebrated irrespective of caste and creed. Some popular festivals are Diwali, Pongal, Holi, Onam, Vijayadashami, Bihu, Durga puja, Eid ul-Fitr, Bakr-Id, Christmas, Ugadi, Buddha Jayanti and Vaisakhi. India has three national holidays. Other sets of holidays, varying between nine and twelve, are officially

observed in individual states. Religious practices are an integral part of everyday life and are a very public affair. Traditional Indian family values are highly respected, although urban families now prefer nuclear family system due to the socio-economic constraints imposed by traditional joint family system.

India's national sport is field hockey though cricket is the most popular sport in India. In some states, particularly those in the northeast and the states of West Bengal, Goa, and Kerala, football (soccer) is also a popular sport. In recent times, tennis has also gained popularity. Chess, commonly held to have originated in India, is also gaining popularity with the rise in the number of Indian grandmasters. Traditional sports include kabaddi, kho-kho, and gilli-danda, which are played nationwide. India is home to the age-old discipline of yoga and to the ancient martial arts, Kalarippayattu and Varma Kalai.

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# Indonesia

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The **Republic of Indonesia** (IPA: /ˌɪndəʊˈniːzi.ə/, /ˌɪndəˈniːzi.ə/) (Indonesian: *Republik Indonesia*), is a nation in Southeast Asia. Comprising 17,508 islands, it is the world's largest archipelagic state. With a population of over 234 million people, it is the world's fourth most populous country and the most populous Muslim-majority nation, although officially it is not an Islamic state. Indonesia is a republic, with an elected parliament and president. The nation's capital city is Jakarta. The country shares land borders with Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Malaysia. Other neighboring countries include Singapore, the Philippines, Australia, and the Indian territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Indonesian archipelago has been an important trade region since at least the seventh century, when the Srivijaya Kingdom formed trade links with China. Indonesian history has been influenced by foreign powers drawn to its natural resources. Under Indian influence, Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms flourished from the early centuries CE. Muslim traders brought Islam, and European powers fought one another to monopolize trade in the Spice Islands of Maluku during the Age of Discovery. Following three and a half centuries of Dutch colonialism, Indonesia secured its independence after World War II. Indonesia's history has since been turbulent, with challenges posed by natural disasters, corruption, separatism, a democratization process, and periods of rapid economic change.

Across its many islands, Indonesia consists of distinct ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. The Javanese are the largest and politically dominant ethnic group. As a unitary state and a nation, Indonesia has developed a shared identity defined by a national language, a majority Muslim population, and a history of colonialism and rebellion against it. Indonesia's national motto, "*Bhinneka tunggal ika*" ("Unity in Diversity" lit. "many, yet one"), articulates the diversity that shapes the country. However, sectarian tensions and separatism have led to violent confrontations that have undermined political and economic stability. Despite its large population and densely populated regions, Indonesia has vast areas of wilderness that support the world's second highest level of biodiversity. The country is richly endowed with natural resources, yet poverty is a defining feature of contemporary Indonesia.

## Etymology

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<b><i>Republik Indonesia</i></b> <b>Republic of Indonesia</b>	
 Flag	 Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Bhinneka Tunggal Ika</i> (Old Javanese) Unity in Diversity National ideology: Pancasila	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Indonesia Raya</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Jakarta
<b>Official languages</b>	Indonesian
<b>Demonym</b>	Indonesian
<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic

The name *Indonesia* derives from the Latin *Indus*, meaning "India", and the Greek *nesos*, meaning "island". The name dates to the 18th century, far predating the formation of independent Indonesia. In 1850, George Earl, an English ethnologist, proposed the terms *Indunesians* — and, his preference, *Malayunesians* — for the inhabitants of the "Indian Archipelago or Malayan Archipelago". In the same publication, a student of Earl's, James Richardson Logan, used *Indonesia* as a synonym for *Indian Archipelago*. However, Dutch academics writing in East Indies publications were reluctant to use *Indonesia*. Instead, they used the terms *Malay Archipelago* (*Maleische Archipel*); the *Netherlands East Indies* (*Nederlandsch Oost Indië*), popularly *Indië*; *the East* (*de Oost*); and even *Insulinde*.

From 1900, the name Indonesia became more common in academic circles outside the Netherlands, and Indonesian nationalist groups adopted it for political expression. Adolf Bastian, of the University of Berlin, popularized the name through his book *Indonesien oder die Inseln des Malayischen Archipels, 1884–1894*. The first Indonesian scholar to use the name was Suwardi Suryaningrat (Ki Hajar Dewantara), when he established a press bureau in the Netherlands with the name *Indonesisch Pers-bureau* in 1913.

## History

- President	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
- Vice President	Jusuf Kalla
<b>Independence</b>	
- Declared	17 August 1945
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	1,919,440 km <sup>2</sup> ( 16th) 735,355 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.85
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 est. estimate	234,693,997 ( 4th)
- 2000 census	206,264,595
- Density	134/km <sup>2</sup> ( 84th) 347/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1,038 billion ( 15th)
- Per capita	\$4,356 ( 114th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$408 billion ( 21st)
- Per capita	\$1,812 ( 114th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	34.3
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.728 (medium) ( 107th)
<b>Currency</b>	Rupiah ( IDR)
<b>Time zone</b>	various ( UTC+7 to +9)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.id
<b>Calling code</b>	+62

Fossilized remains of *Homo erectus*, popularly known as the "Java Man", suggest the Indonesian archipelago was inhabited two million to 500,000 years ago. Austronesian people, who form the majority of the modern population, migrated to South East Asia from Taiwan. They arrived in Indonesia around 2000 BCE, and confined the native Melanesian peoples to the far eastern regions as they expanded. Ideal agricultural conditions, and the mastering of wet-field rice cultivation as early as the eighth century BCE, allowed villages, towns, and small kingdoms to flourish by the first century CE. Indonesia's strategic sea-lane position fostered inter-island and international trade. For example, trade links with both Indian kingdoms and China were established several centuries BCE. Trade has since fundamentally shaped Indonesian history.



The nutmeg plant is native to Indonesia's Banda Islands. Once one of the world's most valuable commodities, it drew the first European colonial powers to Indonesia.

From the seventh century CE, the powerful Srivijaya naval kingdom flourished as a result of trade and the influences of Hinduism and Buddhism that were imported with it. Between the eighth and 10th centuries CE, the agricultural Buddhist Sailendra and Hindu Mataram dynasties thrived and declined in inland Java, leaving grand religious monuments such as Sailendra's Borobudur and Mataram's Prambanan. The Hindu Majapahit kingdom was founded in eastern Java in the late 13th century, and under Gajah Mada, its influence stretched over much of Indonesia; this period is often referred to as a "Golden Age" in Indonesian history.

Although Muslim traders first traveled through South East Asia early in the Islamic era, the earliest evidence of Islamized populations in Indonesia dates to the 13th century in northern Sumatra. Other Indonesia areas gradually adopted Islam which became the dominant religion in Java and Sumatra by the end of the 16th century. For the most part, Islam overlaid and mixed with existing cultural and religious influences, which shaped the predominant form of Islam in Indonesia, particularly in Java. The first Europeans arrived in Indonesia in 1512, when Portuguese traders, led by Francisco Serrão, sought to monopolize the sources of nutmeg, cloves, and cubeb pepper in Maluku. Dutch and British traders followed. In 1602 the Dutch established the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and became the dominant European power. Following bankruptcy, the VOC was formally dissolved in 1800, and the government of the Netherlands established the Dutch East Indies as a nationalized colony.

For most of the colonial period, Dutch control over these territories was tenuous; only in the early 20th century did Dutch dominance extend to what was to become Indonesia's current boundaries. The Japanese invasion and subsequent occupation during World War II ended Dutch rule, and encouraged the previously suppressed Indonesian independence movement. Two days after the surrender of Japan in August 1945, Sukarno, an influential nationalist leader, declared independence and was appointed president. The Netherlands tried to reestablish their rule, and a bitter armed and diplomatic struggle ended in December 1949, when in the face of international pressure, the Dutch formally recognized Indonesian independence (with the exception of The Dutch territory of West New Guinea, which was incorporated following the 1962 New York Agreement, and UN—mandated Act of Free Choice).



As early as the first century CE Indonesian vessels made trade voyages as far as Africa. Picture: a ship carved on Borobudur, circa 800 CE.

Sukarno moved from democracy towards authoritarianism, and maintained his power base by balancing the opposing forces of the Military, Islam, and the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). An attempted coup on 30 September 1965 was countered by the army, who led a violent anti-communist purge, during which the PKI was blamed for the coup and effectively destroyed. Between 500,000 and one million people were killed. The head of the military, General Suharto, out-maneuvered the politically weakened Sukarno, and was formally appointed president in March 1968. His New Order administration was supported by the US government, and encouraged foreign direct investment in Indonesia, which was a major factor in the subsequent three decades of substantial economic growth. However, the authoritarian "New Order" was widely accused of corruption and suppression of political opposition.

In 1997 and 1998, Indonesia was the country hardest hit by the Asian Financial Crisis. This increased popular discontent with the New Order and led to popular protests. Suharto resigned on 21 May 1998. In 1999, East Timor voted to secede from Indonesia, after a twenty-five-year occupation, which was marked by international condemnation of repression and human rights abuses. The *Reformasi* era following Suharto's resignation, has led to a strengthening of democratic processes, including a regional autonomy program, and the first direct presidential election in 2004. Political and economic instability, social unrest, corruption, and terrorism have slowed progress. Although relations among different religious and ethnic groups are largely harmonious, acute sectarian discontent and violence remain problems in some areas. A political settlement to an armed separatist conflict in Aceh was achieved in 2005.

## Government and politics

Indonesia is a republic with a presidential system. As a unitary state, power is concentrated in the national government. Following the resignation of President Suharto in 1998, Indonesian political and governmental structures have undergone major reforms. Four amendments to the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia have revamped the executive, judicial, and legislative branches. The president of Indonesia is the head of state, commander-in-chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, and the director of domestic governance, policy-making, and foreign affairs. The president appoints a council of ministers, who are not required to be elected members of the legislature. The 2004 presidential election was the first in which the people directly elected the president and vice president. The president serves a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms.



Sukarno, Indonesia's founding president

The highest representative body at national level is the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR). Its main functions are supporting and amending the constitution, inaugurating the president, and formalizing broad outlines of state policy. It has the power to impeach the president. The MPR comprises two houses; the People's Representative Council (DPR), with 550 members, and the Regional Representatives Council (DPD), with 168 members. The DPR passes legislation and monitors the executive branch; party-aligned members are elected for five-year terms by proportional representation. Reforms since 1998 have markedly increased the DPR's role in national governance. The DPD is a new chamber for matters of regional management.

Most civil disputes appear before a State Court; appeals are heard before the High Court. The Supreme Court is the country's highest court, and hears final cassation appeals and conducts case reviews. Other courts include the Commercial Court, which handles bankruptcy and insolvency; a State Administrative Court to hear administrative law cases against the government; a Constitutional Court to hear disputes concerning legality of law, general elections, dissolution of political parties, and the scope of authority of state institutions; and a Religious Court to deal with specific religious cases.

## Foreign relations and military

In contrast to Sukarno's anti-imperialistic antipathy to western powers and tensions with Malaysia, Indonesia's foreign relations approach since the Suharto "New Order" has been one of economic and political cooperation with Western nations. Indonesia maintains close relationships with its neighbors in Asia, and is a founding member of ASEAN and the East Asia Summit. The nation restored relations with the People's Republic of China in 1990 following a freeze in place since anti-communist purges early in the Suharto era. Indonesia has been a member of the United Nations since 1950, and was a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Indonesia is signatory to the ASEAN Free Trade Area agreement, and a member of OPEC, the Cairns Group and the WTO. Indonesia has received humanitarian and development aid since 1966, in particular from the United States, western Europe, Australia, and Japan.

The Indonesian Government has worked with other countries to apprehend and prosecute perpetrators of major bombings linked to militant Islamism and Al-Qaeda. The deadliest killed 202 people (including 164 international tourists) in the Bali resort town of Kuta in 2002. The attacks, and subsequent travel warnings issued by other countries, have severely damaged Indonesia's tourism industry and foreign investment prospects.

Indonesia's 300,000-member armed forces (TNI) include the Army (TNI-AD), Navy (TNI-AL, which includes marines), and Air Force (TNI-AU). The army has about 233,000 active-duty personnel. Defense spending in the national budget was 4% of GDP in 2006, and is controversially supplemented by revenue from military commercial interests and foundations. In the post-Suharto period since 1998, formal TNI representation in parliament has been removed; though curtailed, its political influence remains extensive. Separatist movements in the provinces of Aceh and Papua have led to armed conflict, and subsequent allegations of human rights abuses and brutality from all sides. Following a sporadic thirty year guerrilla war between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian military, a ceasefire agreement was reached in 2005. In Papua, there has been a significant, albeit imperfect, implementation of regional autonomy laws, and a reported



A session of the People's Representative Council in Jakarta



National flags at the site of the 2002 terrorist bombing in Kuta, Bali



decline in the levels of violence and human rights abuses, since the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

## Administrative divisions

Administratively, Indonesia consists of 33 provinces, five of which have special status. Each province has its own political legislature and governor. The provinces are subdivided into regencies (*kabupaten*) and (*kota*), which are further subdivided into subdistricts (*kecamatan*), and again into village groupings (either *desa* or *kelurahan*). Following the implementation of regional autonomy measures in 2001, the regencies and cities have become the key administrative units, responsible for providing most government services. The village administration level is the most influential on a citizen's daily life, and handles matters of a village or neighbourhood through an elected *lurah* or *kepala desa* (village chief).



Aceh, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Papua, and West Papua provinces have greater legislative privileges and a higher degree of autonomy from the central government than the other provinces. The Acehese government, for example, has the right to create an independent legal system; in 2003, it instituted a form of *Sharia* (Islamic law). Yogyakarta was granted the status of Special Region in recognition of its pivotal role in supporting Indonesian Republicans during the Indonesian Revolution. Papua, formerly known as Irian Jaya, was granted special autonomy status in 2001. Jakarta is the country's special capital region.

### Indonesian provinces and their capitals

(Indonesian name in brackets where different from English)

† indicates provinces with Special Status

#### Sumatra

- Aceh<sup>†</sup> (*Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam*) - Banda Aceh
- North Sumatra (*Sumatera Utara*) - Medan
- West Sumatra (*Sumatera Barat*) - Padang
- Riau - Pekanbaru
- Riau Islands (*Kepulauan Riau*) - Tanjung Pinang
- Jambi - Jambi (city)
- South Sumatra (*Sumatera Selatan*) - Palembang
- Bangka-Belitung (*Kepulauan Bangka-Belitung*) - Pangkal Pinang
- Bengkulu - Bengkulu (city)
- Lampung - Bandar Lampung

#### Java

#### Kalimantan

- West Kalimantan (*Kalimantan Barat*) - Pontianak
- Central Kalimantan (*Kalimantan Tengah*) - Palangkaraya
- South Kalimantan (*Kalimantan Selatan*) - Banjarmasin
- East Kalimantan (*Kalimantan Timur*) - Samarinda

#### Sulawesi

- North Sulawesi (*Sulawesi Utara*) - Manado
- Gorontalo - Gorontalo (city)
- Central Sulawesi (*Sulawesi Tengah*) - Palu
- West Sulawesi (*Sulawesi Barat*) - Mamuju
- South Sulawesi (*Sulawesi Selatan*) - Makassar
- South East Sulawesi (*Sulawesi Tenggara*) - Kendari

- Jakarta<sup>†</sup> - Jakarta
- Banten - Serang
- West Java (*Jawa Barat*) - Bandung
- Central Java (*Jawa Tengah*) - Semarang
- Yogyakarta Special Region<sup>†</sup> - Yogyakarta (city)
- East Java (*Jawa Timur*) - Surabaya

### Lesser Sunda Islands

- Bali - Denpasar
- West Nusa Tenggara (*Nusa Tenggara Barat*) - Mataram
- East Nusa Tenggara (*Nusa Tenggara Timur*) - Kupang

## Geography

Indonesia consists of 17,508 islands, about 6,000 of which are inhabited. These are scattered over both sides of the equator. The five largest islands are Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan (the Indonesian part of Borneo), New Guinea (shared with Papua New Guinea), and Sulawesi. Indonesia shares land borders with Malaysia on the island of Borneo, Sebatik, Papua New Guinea on the island of New Guinea, and East Timor on the island of Timor. Indonesia also shares borders with Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines to the north and Australia to the south across narrow straits of water. The capital, Jakarta, is on Java and is the nation's largest city, followed by Surabaya, Bandung, Medan, and Semarang.

At 1,919,440 square kilometers (741,050 sq mi), Indonesia is the world's 16th-largest country in terms of land area. Its average population density is 134 people per square kilometer (347 per sq mi), 79th in the world, although Java, the world's most populous island, has a population density of 940 people per square kilometer (2,435 per sq mi). At 4,884 meters (16,024 ft), Puncak Jaya in Papua is Indonesia's highest peak, and Lake Toba in Sumatra its largest lake, with an area of 1,145 square kilometers (442 sq mi). The country's largest rivers are in Kalimantan, and include the Mahakam and Barito; such rivers are communication and transport links between the island's river settlements.

### Maluku islands

- Maluku - Ambon
- North Maluku (*Maluku Utara*) - Ternate

### Papua

- West Papua<sup>†</sup> (*Papua Barat*) - Manokwari
- Papua<sup>†</sup> - Jayapura





Mount Semeru and Mount Bromo in East Java. Indonesia's seismic and volcanic activity is among the world's highest.

Indonesia's location on the edges of the Pacific, Eurasian, and Australian tectonic plates, makes it the site of numerous volcanoes and frequent earthquakes. Indonesia has at least 150 active volcanoes, including Krakatoa and Tambora, both famous for their devastating eruptions in the 19th century. The eruption of the Toba supervolcano, approximately 70,000 years ago, was one of the largest eruptions ever, and a global catastrophe. Recent disasters due to seismic activity include the 2004 tsunami that killed an estimated 167,736 in northern Sumatra, and the Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006. However, volcanic ash is a major contributor to the high agricultural fertility that has historically sustained the high population densities of Java and Bali.

Lying along the equator, Indonesia has a tropical climate, with two distinct monsoonal wet and dry seasons. Average annual rainfall in the lowlands varies from 1,780–3,175 millimeters (70–125 in), and up to 6,100 millimeters (240 in) in mountainous regions. Mountainous areas—particularly in the west coast of Sumatra, West Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua—receive the highest rainfall. Humidity is generally high, averaging about 80%. Temperatures vary little throughout the year; the average daily temperature range of Jakarta is 26–30 °C (79–86 °F).

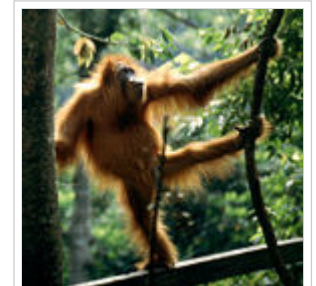
## Ecology

Indonesia's size, tropical climate, and archipelagic geography, support the world's second highest level of biodiversity (after Brazil), and its flora and fauna is a mixture of Asian and Australasian species. Once linked to the Asian mainland, the islands of the Sunda Shelf (Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Borneo, and Bali) have a wealth of Asian fauna. Large species such as the tiger, rhinoceros, orangutan, elephant, and leopard, were once abundant as far east as Bali, but numbers and distribution have dwindled drastically.

Forests cover approximately 60% of the country. In Sumatra and Kalimantan, these are predominantly of Asian species. However, the forests of the smaller, and more densely populated Java, have largely been removed for human habitation and agriculture. Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara, and Maluku—having been long separated from the continental landmasses—have developed their own unique flora and fauna. Papua was part of the Australian landmass, and is home to a unique fauna and flora closely related to that of Australia, including over 600 bird species.

Indonesia's 80,000 kilometers (50,000 mi) of coastline are surrounded by tropical seas that contribute to the country's high level of biodiversity. Indonesia has a range of sea and coastal ecosystems, including beaches, sand dunes, estuaries, mangroves, coral reefs, sea grass beds, coastal mudflats, tidal flats, algal beds, and small island ecosystems.

The British naturalist, Alfred Wallace, described a dividing line between the distribution of Indonesia's Asian and Australasian species. Known as the Wallace Line, it runs roughly north-south along the edge of the Sunda Shelf, between Kalimantan and Sulawesi, and along the deep Lombok Strait, between Lombok and Bali. West of the line the flora and fauna are more Asian; moving east from Lombok, they are increasingly Australian. In his 1869 book, *The Malay Archipelago*, Wallace described numerous species unique to the surrounding area, which is now termed Wallacea.



The critically endangered Sumatran Orangutan, a great ape endemic to Indonesia

Indonesia's high population and rapid industrialization present serious environmental issues, which are often given a lower priority due to high poverty levels and weak, under-resourced governance. Issues include large-scale deforestation (much of it illegal) and related wildfires causing heavy smog over parts of western Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore; over-exploitation of marine resources; and environmental problems associated with rapid urbanization and economic development, including air pollution, traffic congestion, garbage management, and reliable water and waste water services. Habitat destruction threatens the survival of indigenous and endemic species, including 140 species of mammals identified by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) as threatened, and 15 identified as critically endangered, including the Sumatran Orangutan.

## Economy

Indonesia's estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2007 is US\$408 billion (US\$1,038 bn PPP). In 2007, estimated nominal per capita GDP is US\$1,812, and per capita GDP PPP was US\$4,616 ( International Dollars). The services sector is the economy's largest and accounts for 45.3% of GDP (2005). This is followed by industry (40.7%) and agriculture (14.0%). However, agriculture employs more people than other sectors, accounting for 44.3% of the 95 million-strong workforce. This is followed by the services sector (36.9%) and industry (18.8%). Major industries include petroleum and natural gas, textiles, apparel, and mining. Major agricultural products include palm oil, rice, tea, coffee, spices, and rubber.

Indonesia's main export markets (2005) are Japan (22.3%), the United States (13.9%), China (9.1%), and Singapore (8.9%). The major suppliers of imports to Indonesia are Japan (18.0%), China (16.1%), and Singapore (12.8%). In 2005, Indonesia ran a trade surplus with export revenues of US\$83.64 billion and import expenditure of US\$62.02 billion. The country has extensive natural resources, including crude oil, natural gas, tin, copper, and gold. Indonesia's major imports include machinery and equipment, chemicals, fuels, and foodstuffs.



Using water buffalo to plough rice fields in Java. Agriculture has been the country's largest employer for centuries.



Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia and its largest commercial centre

In the 1960s, the economy deteriorated drastically as a result of political instability, a young and inexperienced government, and ill-disciplined economic nationalism, which resulted in severe poverty and hunger. Following President Sukarno's downfall in the mid-1960s, the New Order administration brought a degree of discipline to economic policy that quickly brought inflation down, stabilized the currency, rescheduled foreign debt, and attracted foreign aid and investment. Indonesia is Southeast Asia's only member of OPEC, and the 1970s oil price raises provided an export revenue windfall that contributed to sustained high economic growth rates. Following further reforms in the late 1980s, foreign investment flowed into Indonesia, particularly into the rapidly developing export-orientated manufacturing sector, and from 1989 to 1997, the Indonesian economy grew by an average of over 7%.

Indonesia was the country hardest hit by the East Asian financial crisis of 1997–98. Against the US dollar, the currency dropped from about Rp. 2,000 to Rp. 18,000, and the economy shrunk by 13.7%. The rupiah has since stabilized at around Rp. 10,000, and there has been a slow but significant economic recovery. Political instability since 1998, slow economic reform, and corruption at all levels of government and business, have contributed to the patchy nature of the recovery. ( Transparency International, for example, ranked Indonesia 143rd out of 180 countries in its 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index). GDP growth, however, exceeded 5% in both 2004 and 2005, and is

forecast to increase further. This growth rate, however, is not enough to make a significant impact on unemployment, and stagnant wages growth, and increases in fuel and rice prices have worsened poverty levels. As of 2006, an estimated 17.8% of the population live below the poverty line, and 49.0% of the population live on less than US\$2 per day.

## Demographics

The national population from the 2000 national census is 206 million, and the Indonesian Central Statistics Bureau and *Statistics Indonesia* estimate a population of 222 million for 2006. 130 million people live on the island of Java, the world's most populous island. Despite a fairly effective family planning program, which has been in place since the 1960s, the population is expected to grow to around 315 million in 2035, based on the current estimated annual growth rate of 1.25%.

Most Indonesians are descendant from Austronesian-speaking peoples, who originated from Taiwan. The other major grouping are Melanesians, who inhabit eastern Indonesia. There are around 300 distinct native ethnicities in Indonesia, and 742 different languages and dialects. The largest is the Javanese, who comprise 42% of the population, and are politically and culturally dominant. The Sundanese, ethnic Malays, and Madurese are the largest non-Javanese groups. A sense of Indonesian nationhood exists alongside strongly maintained regional identities. Society is largely harmonious, although social, religious and ethnic tensions have triggered horrendous violence. Chinese Indonesians are an influential ethnic minority comprising less than 2% of the population. Much of the country's privately-owned commerce and wealth is Chinese-controlled, which has contributed to considerable resentment, and even anti-Chinese violence.

The official national language, Indonesian, is universally taught in schools, and is spoken by nearly every Indonesian. It is the language of business, politics, national media, education, and academia. It was originally a lingua franca for most of the region, including present-day Malaysia, and is thus closely related to Malay. Indonesian was first promoted by nationalists in the 1920s, and declared the official language on independence in 1945. Most Indonesians speak at least one of the several hundred local languages (*bahasa daerah*), often as their first language. Of these, Javanese is the most widely-spoken, the language of the largest ethnic group. On the other hand, Papua has 500 or more indigenous Papuan and Austronesian languages, in a region of just 2.7 million people.



A Minangkabau woman in traditional dress



Medan's Masjid Raya ('Great Mosque'). Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population.

Although religious freedom is stipulated in the Indonesian constitution, the government officially recognizes only six religions: Islam; Protestantism; Roman Catholicism; Hinduism; Buddhism; and Confucianism. Although it is not an Islamic state, Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, with almost 86% of Indonesians declared Muslim according to the 2000 census. 11% of the population is Christian, 2% are Hindu, and 1% Buddhist. Most Indonesian Hindus are Balinese, and most Buddhists in modern-day Indonesia are ethnic Chinese. Though now minority religions, Hinduism and Buddhism remain defining influences in Indonesian culture. Islam was first adopted by Indonesians in northern Sumatra in the 13th century, through the influence of traders, and became the country's dominant religion by the 16th century. Roman Catholicism was brought to Indonesia by early Portuguese colonialists and missionaries, and the Protestant denominations are largely a result of Dutch Calvinist and Lutheran missionary efforts during the country's colonial period. A large proportion of Indonesians—such as the Javanese *abangan*, Balinese Hindus, and Dayak Christians—practice a less orthodox, syncretic form of their religion, which draws on local customs and beliefs.

## Culture

Indonesia has around 300 ethnic groups, each with cultural differences developed over centuries, and influenced by Arabic, Chinese, Malay, and European sources. Traditional Javanese and Balinese dances, for example, contain aspects of Hindu culture and mythology, as do *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) performances. Textiles such as batik, ikat and songket are created across Indonesia in styles that vary by region. The most dominant influences on Indonesian architecture have traditionally been Indian; however, Chinese, Arab, and European architectural influences have been significant. The most popular sports in Indonesia are badminton and football; Liga Indonesia is the country's premier football club league. Traditional sports include *sepak takraw*, and bull racing in Madura. In areas with a history of tribal warfare, mock fighting contests are held, such as, *caci* in Flores, and *pasola* in Sumba. *Pencak Silat* is an Indonesian martial art. Sports in Indonesia are generally male-orientated and spectator sports are often associated with illegal gambling.



A Wayang kulit shadow puppet performance as seen by the audience



A selection of Indonesian food, including *Soto Ayam* (chicken noodle soup), *sate kerang* (shellfish kebabs), *telur pindang* (preserved eggs), *perkedel* (fritter), and *es teh manis* (sweet iced tea)

Indonesian cuisine varies by region and is based on Chinese, European, Middle Eastern, and Indian precedents. Rice is the main staple food and is served with side dishes of meat and vegetables. Spices (notably chili), coconut milk, fish and chicken are fundamental ingredients. Indonesian traditional music includes *gamelan* and *keroncong*. *Dangdut* is a popular contemporary genre of pop music that draws influence from Arabic, Indian, and Malay folk music. The Indonesian film industry's popularity peaked in the 1980s and dominated cinemas in Indonesia, although it declined significantly in the early 1990s. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of Indonesian films released each year has steadily increased.

The oldest evidence of writing in Indonesia is a series of Sanskrit inscriptions dated to the 5th century CE. Important figures in modern Indonesian literature include: Dutch author Multatuli, who criticized treatment of the Indonesians under Dutch colonial rule; Sumatrans Muhammad Yamin and Hamka, who were influential pre-independence nationalist writers and politicians; and proletarian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia's most famous novelist. Many of Indonesia's peoples have strongly-rooted oral traditions, which help to define and preserve their cultural identities. Media freedom in Indonesia increased considerably after the end of President Suharto's rule, during which the now-defunct Ministry of Information monitored and controlled domestic media, and restricted foreign media. The TV market includes ten national commercial networks, and provincial networks that compete with public TVRI. Private radio stations carry their own news bulletins and foreign

broadcasters supply programs. At a reported 18 million users in 2005, Internet usage is limited to a minority of the population.

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# Japan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**Japan** (日本 Nihon or Nippon <sup>?</sup>, officially 日本国 Nippon-koku or Nihon-koku) is an island country in East Asia. Located in the Pacific Ocean, it lies to the east of China, Korea and Russia, stretching from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the East China Sea in the south. The characters that make up Japan's name mean "sun-origin", which is why Japan is sometimes identified as the "Land of the Rising Sun".

Japan comprises over 3,000 islands making it an archipelago. The largest islands are Honshū, Hokkaidō, Kyūshū and Shikoku, together accounting for 97% of Japan's land area. Most of the islands are mountainous, many volcanic; for example, Japan's highest peak, Mount Fuji, is a volcano. Japan has the world's tenth largest population, with about 128 million people. The Greater Tokyo Area, which includes the de facto capital city of Tokyo and several surrounding prefectures, is the largest metropolitan area in the world, with over 30 million residents.




Archaeological research indicates that people were living on the islands of Japan as early as the Upper Paleolithic period. The first written mention of Japan begins with brief appearances in Chinese history texts from the first century AD.

Influence from the outside world followed by long periods of isolation has characterized Japan's history. Since adopting its constitution in 1947, Japan has maintained a unitary constitutional monarchy with an emperor and an elected parliament, the Diet.

A major economic power, Japan has the world's second largest economy by nominal GDP. It is a member of the United Nations, G8, G4, OECD and APEC, with the world's fifth largest defense budget. It is also the world's fourth largest exporter and sixth largest importer and a world leader in technology and machinery.

## Etymology

The English word **Japan** is an exonym not used in the Japanese language. The Japanese names for **Japan** are **Nippon** (にっぽん) and **Nihon** (にほん). They are both written in Japanese using the kanji 日本. The Japanese name *Nippon* is used for most official purposes, including on Japanese money, postage stamps, and for many international sporting events. *Nihon* is a more casual term and the most frequently used in

日本国 <i>Nihon-koku</i> <b>Japan</b>	
 Flag	 Imperial Seal
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Kimi ga Yo</i> (君が代 <sup>?</sup> )	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Tokyo (de facto) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Official languages</b>	Japanese (de facto)
<b>Demonym</b>	Japanese
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
- Emperor	Akihito



contemporary speech.

Both *Nippon* and *Nihon* literally mean "the sun's origin" and are often translated as the *Land of the Rising Sun*. This nomenclature comes from Imperial correspondence with Chinese Sui Dynasty and refers to Japan's eastward position relative to China. Before Japan had relations with China, it was known as *Yamato* and *Hi no moto*, which means "source of the sun".

The English word for Japan came to the West from early trade routes. The early Mandarin Chinese or possibly Wu Chinese word for Japan was recorded by Marco Polo as *Cipangu*. The modern Shanghainese (a Wu Chinese dialect 吳語) pronunciation of characters 日本 (Japan) is still *Zeppen* [zəʔpən] (in Wu language, 日 has two pronunciations 白读: **niʔ** or 文读: **zəʔ**, in some regions in South Wu, it is pronounced as **niʔpən**, similar to that of Japanese). The old Malay word for Japan, *Jepang* (modern spelling *Jepun*, although Indonesian has retained the older spelling), was borrowed from a Chinese language, and this Malay word was encountered by Portuguese traders in Malacca in the 16th century. It is thought the Portuguese traders were the first to bring the word to Europe. It was first recorded in English in 1577 spelled *Giapan*.

## History

The first signs of occupation on the Japanese Archipelago appeared with a Paleolithic culture around 30,000 BC, followed from around 14,000 BC by the Jōmon period, a Mesolithic to Neolithic semi-sedentary hunter-gatherer culture of pit dwelling and a rudimentary form of agriculture. Decorated clay vessels from this period, often with plaited patterns, are some of the oldest surviving examples of pottery in the world.

The Yayoi period, starting around the third century BC, introduced new practices, such as wet-rice farming, iron and bronze-making and a new style of pottery, brought by migrants from China or Korea. With the development of Yayoi culture, a predominantly agricultural society emerged in Japan.

The Japanese first appear in written history in China's *Book of Han*. According to the Chinese *Records of Three Kingdoms*, the most powerful kingdom on the archipelago during the third century was called Yamataikoku.

- Prime Minister	Yasuo Fukuda
<b>Formation</b>	
- National Foundation Day	February 11, 660 BC <sup>3</sup>
- Meiji Constitution	November 29, 1890
- Current constitution	May 3, 1947
- Treaty of San Francisco	April 28, 1952
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	377,873 km <sup>2</sup> ( 62nd) 145,883 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.8
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	127,433,494 ( 10th)
- 2004 census	127,333,002
- Density	337/km <sup>2</sup> ( 30th) 872.8/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$4.346 trillion ( 3rd)
- Per capita	\$33,800 ( 24th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$4.886 trillion ( 2nd)
- Per capita	\$38,341 ( 14th)
<b>Gini</b>	38.1 (2002)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.953 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 8th)
<b>Currency</b>	International Symbol <span>¥</span> <i>Pronounced (Yen)</i> Japanese Symbol <span>円</span> <i>Pronounced (En)</i> ( <span>JPY</span> )



A middle Jōmon period vessel (3000 to 2000 BC).



The Great Buddha in Kamakura (1252).

Buddhism was first introduced to Japan from Baekje of the Korean Peninsula, but the subsequent development of Japanese Buddhism and Buddhist sculptures were primarily influenced by China. Despite early resistance, Buddhism was promoted by the ruling class and eventually gained growing acceptance since the Asuka period.

The Nara period of the eighth century marked the first emergence of a strong central Japanese state, centered around an imperial court in the city of Heijō-kyō, or modern day Nara. In

addition to the continuing adoption of Chinese administrative practices, the Nara period is characterized by the appearance of a nascent written literature with the completion of the massive chronicles *Kojiki* (712) and *Nihon Shoki* (720). (Nara was not the first capital city in Japan, though. Before Nara, Fujiwara-kyō and Asuka served as capitals of the Yamato state.)

In 784, Emperor Kammu moved the capital from Nara to Nagaoka-kyō for a brief ten-year period, before relocating it to Heian-kyō (modern day Kyoto) in 794, where it remained for more than a millennium. This marked the beginning of the Heian period, during which time a distinctly indigenous Japanese culture emerged, noted for its art, poetry and literature. Lady Murasaki's *The Tale of Genji* and the lyrics of modern Japan's national anthem, *Kimi ga Yo* were written during this time.

Japan's feudal era was characterized by the emergence of a ruling class of warriors, the samurai. In 1185, following the defeat of the rival Taira clan, Minamoto no Yoritomo was appointed Shogun and established a base of power in Kamakura. After Yoritomo's death, the Hōjō clan came to rule as regents for the shoguns. Zen Buddhism was introduced from China in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and became popular among the samurai class. The Kamakura shogunate managed to repel Mongol invasions in 1274 and 1281, aided by a storm that the Japanese interpreted as a *kamikaze*, or Divine Wind. The Kamakura shogunate was eventually overthrown by Emperor Go-Daigo, who was soon himself defeated by Ashikaga Takauji in 1336. The succeeding Ashikaga shogunate failed to control the feudal warlords (*daimyo*), and a civil war erupted (the Ōnin War) in 1467 which opened a century-long Sengoku period.

During the sixteenth century, traders and Jesuit missionaries from Portugal reached Japan for the first time, initiating active commercial and cultural exchange between Japan and the West (*Nanban trade*).

<b>Time zone</b>	JST ( UTC+9)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.jp
<b>Calling code</b>	+81
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Yokohama is the largest incorporated city.</li> <li>2 "World Factbook; Japan—Economy". CIA ( 2006- 12-19). Retrieved on 2006- 12-28.</li> <li>3 According to legend, Japan was founded on this date by the Emperor Jimmu, first emperor of Japan; it is seen as largely symbolic.</li> </ol>	



One of Japan's Red seal ships (1634), which were used for trade throughout Asia.



Samurai of the Satsuma clan during the Boshin War, circa 1867.

Oda Nobunaga conquered numerous other daimyo by using European technology and firearms and had almost unified the nation when he was assassinated in 1582. Toyotomi Hideyoshi succeeded Nobunaga and united the nation in 1590. Hideyoshi invaded Korea twice, but following several defeats by Korean and Ming China forces and Hideyoshi's death, Japanese troops were withdrawn in 1598.

After Hideyoshi's death, Tokugawa Ieyasu utilized his position as regent for Hideyoshi's son Toyotomi Hideyori to gain political and military support. When open war broke out, he defeated rival clans in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Ieyasu was appointed shōgun in 1603 and established the Tokugawa shogunate at Edo (modern Tokyo). The Tokugawa shogunate enacted a variety of measures such as *Buke shohatto* to control the autonomous daimyo. In 1639, the shogunate began the isolationist *sakoku* ("closed country") policy that spanned the two and a half centuries of tenuous political unity known as the Edo period. The study of Western sciences, known as *rangaku*, continued during this period through contacts with the Dutch enclave at Dejima in Nagasaki. The Edo period also gave rise to *kokugaku*, or literally "national studies", the study of Japan by the Japanese themselves.

On March 31, 1854, Commodore Matthew Perry and the "Black Ships" of the United States Navy forced the opening of Japan to the outside world with the Convention of Kanagawa. Subsequent similar treaties with the Western countries in the Bakumatsu period brought Japan into economic and political crises. The abundance of the prerogative and the resignation of the shogunate led to the Boshin War and the establishment of a centralized state unified under the name of the Emperor (Meiji Restoration). Adopting Western political, judicial and military institutions, the Cabinet organized the Privy Council, introduced the Meiji Constitution, and assembled the Imperial Diet. The Meiji Restoration transformed the Empire of Japan into an industrialized world power that embarked on a number of military conflicts to expand the nation's sphere of influence. After victories in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), Japan gained control of Taiwan, Korea, and the southern half of Sakhalin.

The early twentieth century saw a brief period of "Taisho democracy" overshadowed by the rise of expansionism and militarization. World War I enabled Japan, which joined the side of the victorious Allies, to expand its influence and territorial holdings. Japan continued its expansionist policy by occupying Manchuria in 1931. As a result of international condemnation for this occupation, Japan resigned from the League of Nations two years later. In 1936, Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Nazi Germany, joining the Axis powers in 1941.

In 1937, Japan invaded other parts of China, precipitating the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), after which the United States placed an oil embargo on Japan. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the United States naval base in Pearl Harbour and declared war on the United States, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. This act brought the United States into World War II. After the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, along with the Soviet Union joining the war against it, Japan agreed to an unconditional surrender on August 15 (Victory over Japan Day). The war cost Japan millions of lives and left much of the country's industry and infrastructure destroyed. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East, was convened by the Allies (on May 3, 1946) to prosecute Japanese leaders for war crimes such as the Nanking Massacre.

In 1947, Japan adopted a new pacifist constitution emphasizing liberal democratic practices. The Allied occupation ended by the Treaty of San Francisco in 1952 and Japan was granted membership in the United Nations in 1956. Japan later achieved spectacular growth to become the second largest economy in the world, with an annual growth rate averaging 10% for four decades. This ended in the mid-1990s when Japan suffered a major recession. Positive growth in the early twenty-first century has signaled a gradual recovery.



The 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki.

## Government and politics



The National Diet Building, in Nagatachō, Tokyo.

Japan is a constitutional monarchy where the power of the Emperor is very limited. As a ceremonial figurehead, he is defined by the constitution as "the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people". Power is held chiefly by the Prime Minister of Japan and other elected members of the Diet, while sovereignty is vested in the Japanese people. The Emperor effectively acts as the head of state on diplomatic occasions. Akihito is the current Emperor of Japan. Naruhito, Crown Prince of Japan, stands as next in line to the throne.

Japan's legislative organ is the National Diet, a bicameral parliament. The Diet consists of a House of Representatives, containing 480 seats, elected by popular vote every four years or when dissolved and a House of Councillors of 242 seats, whose popularly-elected members serve six-year terms. There is universal suffrage for adults over 20 years of age, with a secret ballot for all elective offices. The liberal conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been in power since 1955, except for a short-lived coalition government formed from opposition parties in 1993. The largest opposition party is the social liberal Democratic Party of Japan.

The Prime Minister of Japan is the head of government. The position is appointed by the Emperor of Japan after being designated by the Diet from among its members and must enjoy the confidence of the House of Representatives to remain in office. The Prime Minister is the head of the Cabinet (the literal translation of his Japanese title is "Prime Minister of the Cabinet") and appoints and dismisses the Ministers of State, a majority of whom must be Diet members. Yasuo Fukuda currently serves as the Prime Minister of Japan.

Historically influenced by Chinese law, the Japanese legal system developed independently during the Edo period through texts such as *Kujikata Osadamegaki*. However, since the late nineteenth century, the judicial system has been largely based on the civil law of Europe, notably France and Germany. For example, in 1896, the Japanese government established a civil code based on the German model. With post-World War II modifications, the code remains in effect in present-day Japan. Statutory law originates in Japan's legislature, the National Diet of Japan, with the rubber stamp approval of the Emperor. The current constitution requires that the Emperor promulgates legislation passed by the Diet, without specifically giving him the power to oppose the passing of the legislation. Japan's court system is divided into four basic tiers: the Supreme Court and three levels of lower courts. The main body of Japanese statutory law is a collection called the Six Codes.

## Foreign relations and military



Yasuo Fukuda with US President George W. Bush

Japan maintains close economic and military relations with its key ally the United States, with the U.S.-Japan security alliance serving as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. A member state of the United Nations since 1956, Japan has served as a non-permanent Security Council member for a total of 18 years, most recently in 2005–2006. It is also one of the G4 nations seeking permanent membership in the Security Council. As a member of the G8, the APEC, the "ASEAN Plus Three" and a participant in the East Asia Summit, Japan actively participates in international affairs. It is also the world's second-largest donor of official development assistance, donating US\$8.86 bn in 2004. Japan contributed non-combatant troops to the Iraq War but subsequently withdrew its forces from Iraq.

Japan is engaged in several territorial disputes with its neighbors: with Russia over the South Kuril Islands, with South Korea over the Liancourt Rocks, with the People's Republic of China and Taiwan over the Senkaku Islands, and with the PRC over the EEZ around Okinotorishima.

Japan also faces an ongoing dispute with North Korea over its abduction of Japanese citizens and its nuclear weapons and missile program (see also Six-party talks). As a result of the Kuril Islands dispute, Japan is technically still at war with Russia since no treaty resolving the issue was ever signed.

Japan's military is restricted by the Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which renounces Japan's right to declare war or use military force as a means of settling international disputes. Japan's military is governed by the Ministry of Defense, and primarily consists of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF). The forces have been recently used in peacekeeping operations and the deployment of Japanese troops to Iraq marked the first overseas use of its military since World War II.

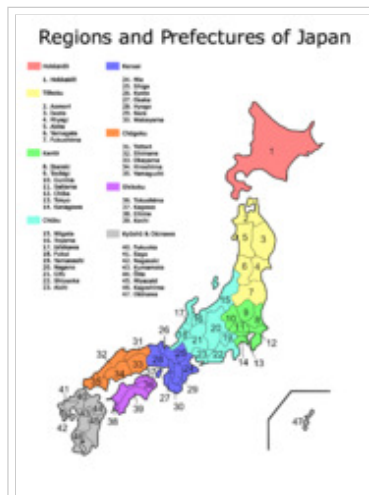
## Administrative divisions



The JMSDF Hyūga class helicopter carrier. The Japanese Navy maintains a large fleet of destroyers.



Japanese Air Force F-15s.



Map of the prefectures of **Japan** in ISO 3166-2:JP order and the regions of Japan.

While there exist eight commonly defined regions of Japan, administratively Japan consists of forty-seven prefectures, each overseen by an elected governor, legislature and administrative bureaucracy. The former city of Tokyo is further divided into twenty-three special wards, each with the same powers as cities.

The nation is currently undergoing administrative reorganization by merging many of the cities, towns and villages with each other. This process will reduce the number of sub-prefecture administrative regions and is expected to cut administrative costs.

Japan has dozens of major cities, which play an important role in Japan's culture, heritage and economy. Those in the list below of the ten most populous are all prefectural capitals and government ordinance cities, except where indicated:

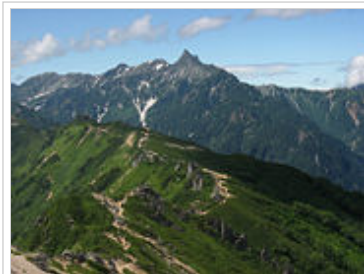
## Geography

Japan is a country of over three thousand islands extending along the Pacific coast of Asia. The main islands, running from north to south, are Hokkaidō, Honshū (the main island), Shikoku and Kyūshū. The Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, are a chain of islands south of Kyūshū. Together they are often known as the Japanese Archipelago.

About 70% to 80% of the country is forested, mountainous, and unsuitable for agricultural, industrial, or residential use. This is because of the generally steep elevations, climate and risk of landslides caused by earthquakes, soft ground and heavy rain. This has resulted in an extremely high population density in the habitable zones that are mainly located in coastal areas. Japan is one of the most densely populated countries in the world.

Its location on the Pacific Ring of Fire, at the juncture of three tectonic plates, gives Japan frequent low-intensity tremors and occasional volcanic activity. Destructive earthquakes, often resulting in tsunamis, occur several times each century. The most recent major quakes are the 2004 Chūetsu earthquake and the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995. Hot springs are numerous and have been developed as resorts.

The climate of Japan is predominantly temperate, but varies greatly from north to south. Japan's geographical features divide it into six principal climatic zones:



Mount Yari, Nagano Prefecture  
in August



Beach in Minnajima, Okinawa  
in September

- Hokkaidō: The northernmost zone has a temperate climate with long, cold winters and cool summers. Precipitation is not heavy, but the islands usually develop deep snow banks in the winter.
- Sea of Japan: On Honshū's west coast, the northwest wind in the wintertime brings heavy snowfall. In the summer, the region is cooler than the Pacific area, though it sometimes experiences extremely hot temperatures, because of the foehn wind phenomenon.

- Central Highland: A typical inland climate, with large temperature differences between

summer and winter, and between day and night. Precipitation is light.

- Seto Inland Sea: The mountains of the Chūgoku and Shikoku regions shelter the region from the seasonal winds, bringing mild weather throughout the year.
- Pacific Ocean: The east coast experiences cold winters with little snowfall and hot, humid summers because of the southeast seasonal wind.
- Ryukyu Islands: The Ryukyu Islands have a subtropical climate, with warm winters and hot summers. Precipitation is very heavy, especially during the rainy season. Typhoons are common.

The hottest temperature ever measured in Japan — 40.9 degrees Celsius — was recorded on August 16, 2007.

The main rainy season begins in early May in Okinawa, and the stationary rain front responsible for this gradually works its way north until it dissipates in northern Japan before reaching Hokkaidō in late July. In most of Honshū, the rainy season begins before the middle of June and lasts about six weeks. In late summer and early autumn, typhoons often bring heavy rain.



Japan from space, May 2003.



Mount Fuji



Japan is home to nine forest ecoregions which reflect the climate and geography of the islands. They range from subtropical moist broadleaf forests in the Ryūkyū and Bonin islands, to temperate broadleaf and mixed forests in the mild climate regions of the main islands, to temperate coniferous forests in the cold, winter portions of the northern islands.

## Environment

Japan's environmental history and current policies reflect a tenuous balance between economic development and environmental protection. In the rapid economic growth after the World War II, environmental policies were downplayed by the government and industrial corporations. As an inevitable consequence, some crucial environmental pollution (see Pollution in Japan) occurred in 1950s and 1960s. In the rising concern over the problem, the government introduced many environmental protection laws in 1970 and established the Ministry of the Environment in 1971. The Oil crisis in 1973 also encouraged the efficient use of energy due to Japan's lack of natural resources. Current priority environmental issues include urban air pollution ( NOx, suspended particulate matter, toxics), waste management, water eutrophication, nature conservation, climate change, chemical management and international co-operation for environmental conservation.

Today Japan is one of the world's leaders in the development of new environment-friendly technologies. Honda and Toyota hybrid electric vehicles were named to have the highest fuel economy and lowest emissions. This is due to the advanced technology in hybrid systems, biofuels, use of lighter weight material and better engineering.

Japan also takes issues surrounding climate change and global warming seriously. As a signatory of the Kyoto Protocol, and host of the 1997 conference which created it, Japan is under treaty obligations to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions and to take other steps related to curbing climate change. The Cool Biz campaign introduced under former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was targeted at reducing energy use through the reduction of air conditioning use in government offices. Japan is preparing to force industry to make big cuts in greenhouse gases, taking the lead in a country struggling to meet its Kyoto Protocol obligations.

Japan is ranked 30th best in the world in the Environmental Sustainability Index.

## Economy



Hi-tech industry such as the automobile and electronics industries are among the chief elements of the country's economy and exports.

Japan is the second largest economy in the world, after the United States, at around US\$4.5 trillion in terms of nominal GDP and third after the United States and China in terms of purchasing power parity. GDP per hour worked is the world's 18th highest as of 2006.

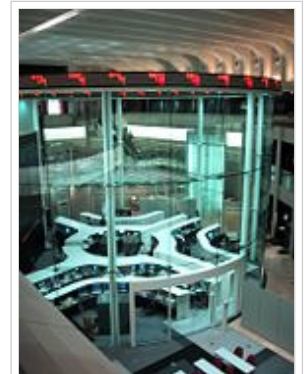
Banking, insurance, real estate, retailing, transportation and telecommunications are all major industries. Japan has a large industrial capacity and is home to some of the largest, leading and most technologically advanced producers of motor vehicles, electronic equipment, machine tools, steel and nonferrous metals, ships, chemicals, textiles and processed foods. Construction has long been one of Japan's largest industries, with the help of multi-billion dollar government contracts in the civil sector. Japan has high economic freedom, close government-industry cooperation for economic growth, emphasis on science and technology, and strong work ethic. Distinguishing characteristics of the Japanese economy have included the cooperation of manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and banks in closely-knit groups called *keiretsu* and relatively shallow international competition in domestic markets. There are many relationship-based - rather than productive - arrangements such as the guarantee of lifetime employment in big corporations. Recently, Japanese policy makers have encouraged reform and Japanese companies have begun to abandon some of these norms in an attempt to increase profitability. Japan is a low-tax overwhelmingly private enterprise economy. Overall tax burden is smaller than in any major Western country; it was 26.4% of

GDP as of 2007. Only a minority of Japanese employees pay any income tax, value-added tax is very low at 5%, while corporate tax rates are high.

Some of the largest companies in Japan include Toyota Motor, NTT DoCoMo, Canon, Honda, Takeda Pharmaceutical, Sony, Nippon Steel, Tepco, Mitsubishi Estate, and Seven & I Holding. It is home to the world's largest bank by assets, Japan Post Bank (US\$3.2 trillion) and others such as Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (US\$1.2 trillion), Mizuho Financial Group (US\$1.4 trillion) and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group (US\$1.3 trillion). The Tokyo Stock Exchange with a market capitalization of over 549.7 trillion Yen as of December 2006 stands as the second largest in the world.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, overall real economic growth has been called a "Japanese miracle": a 10% average in the 1960s, a 5% average in the 1970s and a 4% average in the 1980s. Growth slowed markedly in the 1990s, largely because of the after-effects of over-investment during the late 1980s and domestic policies intended to wring speculative excesses from the stock and real estate markets. Government efforts to revive economic growth met with little success and were further hampered in 2000 to 2001 by the deceleration of the global economy. However, the economy showed strong signs of recovery after 2005. GDP growth for that year was 2.8%, with an annualized fourth quarter expansion of 5.5%, surpassing the growth rates of the US and European Union during the same period.

Because only about 15% of Japan's land is suitable for cultivation, a system of terrace farming is used to build in small areas. This results in one of the world's highest levels of crop yields per unit area, while the agricultural subsidies and protection are expensive. Japan imports about 50% of its requirements of grain and fodder crops other than rice, and it relies on imports for most of its supply of meat. In fishing, Japan is ranked second in the world behind China in tonnage of fish caught. Japan maintains one of the world's largest fishing fleets and accounts for nearly 15% of the global catch. Japan relies on foreign countries for almost all oil and food.



The Tokyo Stock Exchange is the second largest in the world.

Transportation in Japan is highly developed. As of 2004, there are 1,177,278 km of paved roadways, 173 airports, and 23,577 km of railways. Private toll-collecting companies compete in highway market. Dozens of railway companies are competing in regional and local transport markets; some of the largest include the 7 companies under JR, Kintetsu Corporation, Seibu Railway, and Keio Corporation. The largest aviation companies are All Nippon Airways (ANA) and Japan Airlines (JAL). The largest ports include Port of Yokohama and Nagoya Port. Most energy in Japan is produced from oil, natural gas and coal. Nuclear power in Japan makes a third of electricity production and Japan would like to double it in coming decades.

Japan's main export partners are the United States 22.8%, the European Union 14.5%, China 14.3%, South Korea 7.8%, Taiwan 6.8% and Hong Kong 5.6% (for 2006). Japan's main exports are transport equipment, motor vehicles, electronics, electrical machinery and chemicals. With very limited natural resources to sustain economic development, Japan depends on other nations for most of its raw materials; thus it imports a wide variety of goods. Its main import partners are China 20.5%, U.S. 12.0%, the European Union 10.3%, Saudi Arabia 6.4%, UAE 5.5%, Australia 4.8%, South Korea 4.7% and Indonesia 4.2% (for 2006). Japan's main imports are machinery and equipment, fossil fuels, foodstuffs (in particular beef), chemicals, textiles and raw materials for its industries. Overall, Japan's largest trading partners are China and the United States.

## Science and technology

Japan is one of the leading nations in the fields of scientific research, particularly technology, machinery and biomedical research. Nearly 700,000 researchers share a US\$130 billion research and development budget, the third largest in the world. For instance some of Japan's more prominent technological contributions are found in the fields of electronics, automobiles, machinery, industrial robotics, optics, chemicals, semiconductors and metals. Japan leads the world in robotics production and use, possessing more than half (402,200 of 742,500) of the world's industrial robots used for manufacturing. It also produced QRIO, ASIMO and AIBO. Japan is the world's largest producer of automobiles and home to six of the world's fifteen largest automobile manufacturers and seven of the world's twenty largest semiconductor sales leaders as of today.

Japan has plans in space exploration, including building a moonbase by 2030. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) conducts space and planetary research, aviation research, and development of rockets and satellites. It is a participant in the International Space Station and the Japanese Experiment Module (Kibo) is slated to be added to the International Space Station during Space Shuttle assembly flights in 2008.

## Demographics



Sony Playstation 3.



Press release photo of the most recent ASIMO model.



A view of Shibuya crossing, an example of Tokyo's often crowded streets.



Shinto torii at Fushimi Inari-taisha, Kyoto.



Shinto Itsukushima Shrine UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Japan's population is estimated at around 127.3 million. For the most part, Japanese society is linguistically and culturally homogeneous with small populations of foreign workers, Zainichi Koreans, Zainichi Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese Brazilians and others. The most dominant native ethnic group is the Yamato people; the primary minority groups include the indigenous Ainu and Ryukyuan, as well as social minority groups like the *burakumin*.

Japan has one of the highest life expectancy rates in the world, at 81.25 years of age as of 2006. The Japanese

population is rapidly aging, the effect of a post-war baby boom followed by a decrease in births in the latter part of the twentieth century. In 2004, about 19.5% of the population was over the age of 65.

The changes in the demographic structure have created a number of social issues, particularly a potential decline in the workforce population and increases in the cost of social security benefits such as the public pension plan. Many Japanese youth are increasingly preferring not to marry or have families as adults. Japan's population is expected to drop to 100 million by 2050 and to 64 million by 2100. Demographers and government planners are currently in a heated debate over how to cope with this problem. Immigration and birth incentives are sometimes suggested as a solution to provide younger workers to support the nation's aging population.

The highest estimates for the amount of Buddhists and Shintoists in Japan is 84-96%, representing a large number of believers in a syncretism of both religions. However, these estimates are based on people with an association with a temple, rather than the number of people truly following the religion. Professor Robert Kisala (Nanzan University) suggests that only 30 percent of the population identify themselves as belonging to a religion.

Japanese religiosity	
religion	percent
Shinto and Buddhism	95%
Others	4%
Christianity	0.8%

Taoism and Confucianism from China have also influenced Japanese beliefs and customs. Religion in Japan tends to be syncretic in nature, and this results in a variety of practices, such as parents and children celebrating Shinto rituals, students praying before exams, couples holding a wedding at a Christian church and funerals being held at Buddhist temples. A minority (0.7%) profess to Christianity. In addition, since the mid-19th century, numerous religious sects (*Shinshūkyō*) have emerged in Japan, such as Tenrikyo and Aum Shinrikyo (or Aleph).

About 99% of the population speaks Japanese as their first language. It is an agglutinative language distinguished by a system of honorifics reflecting the hierarchical nature of Japanese society, with verb forms and particular vocabulary which indicate the relative status of speaker and listener. According to a Japanese dictionary *Shinsen-kokugojiten*, Chinese-based words comprise 49.1% of the total vocabulary, indigenous words are 33.8% and other loanwords are 8.8%. The writing system uses kanji (Chinese characters) and two sets of kana (syllabaries based on simplified Chinese characters), as well as the Latin alphabet and Arabic numerals. The Ryukyuan languages, also part of the Japonic language family to which Japanese belongs, are spoken in Okinawa, but few children learn these languages. The Ainu language is moribund, with only a few elderly native speakers remaining in Hokkaidō. Most public and private schools require students

to take courses in both Japanese and English.

## Largest cities of Japan

	Core City	Prefecture	Population
1	<b>Tokyo</b>	Tokyo	8,483,050
2	<b>Yokohama</b>	Kanagawa	3,579,133
3	<b>Osaka</b>	Osaka	2,628,776
4	<b>Nagoya</b>	Aichi	2,215,031
5	<b>Sapporo</b>	Hokkaidō	1,880,875
6	<b>Kobe</b>	Hyōgo	1,525,389

Source: 2005 Census



Tokyo



Yokohama

	Core City	Prefecture	Population
7	<b>Kyoto</b>	Kyoto	1,474,76
8	<b>Fukuoka</b>	Fukuoka	1,400,62
9	<b>Kawasaki</b>	Kanagawa	1,327,00
10	<b>Saitama</b>	Saitama	1,176,26
11	<b>Hiroshima</b>	Hiroshima	1,159,39
12	<b>Sendai</b>	Miyagi	1,028,21

## Education and health

Primary, secondary schools and universities were introduced into Japan in 1872 as a result of the Meiji Restoration. Since 1947, compulsory education in Japan consists of elementary school and middle school, which lasts for nine years (from age 6 to age 15). Almost all children continue their education at a three-year senior high school, and, according to the MEXT, about 75.9% of high school graduates attend a university, junior college, trade school, or other post-secondary institution in 2005. Japan's education is very competitive, especially for entrance to institutions of higher education. The two top-ranking universities in Japan are the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University. The Programme for International Student Assessment coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks Japanese knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds as the 6th best in the world.

In Japan, healthcare services are provided by national and local governments. Payment for personal medical services is offered through a universal health care insurance system that provides relative equality of access, with fees set by a government committee. People without insurance through employers can participate in a national health insurance program administered by local governments. Since 1973, all elderly persons have been covered by government-sponsored insurance. Patients are free to select physicians or facilities of their choice.



Yasuda Auditorium, University of Tokyo.

## Culture and recreation



*The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1832), an *ukiyo-e* from *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* by Hokusai.

Japanese culture has evolved greatly over the years, from the country's original Jōmon culture to its contemporary culture, which combines influences from Asia, Europe and North America. Traditional Japanese arts include crafts (ikebana, origami, ukiyo-e, dolls, lacquerware, pottery), performances (bunraku, dance, kabuki, noh, rakugo), traditions (games, tea ceremony, Budō, architecture, gardens, swords) and cuisine. The fusion of traditional woodblock printing and Western art led to the creation of manga, a typically Japanese comic book format that is now popular within and outside Japan. Manga-influenced animation for television and film is called anime. Japanese-made video game consoles have prospered since the 1980s.

Japanese music is eclectic, having borrowed instruments, scales and styles from neighboring cultures. Many instruments, such as the koto, were introduced in the ninth and tenth centuries. The accompanied recitative of the Noh drama dates from the fourteenth century and the popular folk music, with the guitar-like shamisen, from the sixteenth. Western music, introduced in the late nineteenth century, now forms an integral part of the culture. Post-war Japan has been heavily influenced by American and European modern music, which has led to the evolution of popular band music called J-pop.

Karaoke is the most widely practiced cultural activity. A November 1993 survey by the Cultural Affairs Agency found that more Japanese had sung karaoke that year than had participated in traditional cultural pursuits such as flower arranging or tea ceremony.

The earliest works of Japanese literature include two history books the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* and the eighth century poetry book *Man'yōshū*, all written in Chinese characters. In the early days of the Heian period, the system of transcription known as *kana* (Hiragana and Katakana) was created as phonograms. *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* is considered the oldest Japanese narrative. An account of Heian court life is given by *The Pillow Book* written by Sei Shōnagon, while *The Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki is often described as the world's first novel. During the Edo period, literature became not so much the field of the samurai aristocracy as that of the chōnin, the ordinary people. *Yomihon*, for example, became popular and reveals this profound change in the readership and authorship. The Meiji era saw the decline of traditional literary forms, during which Japanese literature integrated Western influences. Natsume Sōseki and Mori Ōgai were the first "modern" novelists of Japan, followed by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Yasunari Kawabata, Yukio Mishima and, more recently, Haruki Murakami. Japan has two Nobel Prize-winning authors — Yasunari Kawabata (1968) and Kenzaburo Oe (1994).



A Japanese garden

## Sports

Traditionally, sumo is considered Japan's national sport and it is one of the most popular spectator sports in Japan. Martial arts such as judo, karate and kendō are also widely practiced and enjoyed by spectators in the country. After the Meiji Restoration, many Western sports were introduced in Japan and began to spread through the education system.

Image:JapanSumoMatch.jpg  
Sumo, a traditional Japanese sport.

The professional baseball league in Japan was established in 1936. Today baseball is the most popular spectator sport in the country. One of the most famous Japanese baseball players is Ichiro Suzuki, who, having won Japan's Most Valuable Player award in 1994, 1995 and 1996, now plays in North American Major League Baseball. Prior to that, Sadaharu Oh was well-known outside Japan, having hit more home runs during his career in Japan

than his contemporary, Hank Aaron, did in America.

Since the establishment of the Japan Professional Football League in 1992, association football (soccer) has also gained a wide following. Japan was a venue of the Intercontinental Cup from 1981 to 2004 and co-hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup with South Korea. Japan is one of the most successful soccer teams in Asia, winning the Asian Cup three times.

Golf is also popular in Japan, as is auto racing, the Super GT sports car series and Formula Nippon formula racing. Twin Ring Motegi was completed in 1997 by Honda in order to bring IndyCar racing to Japan.

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# Kazakhstan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

SOS Children works in Kazakhstan. For more information see SOS Children in Kazakhstan

**Kazakhstan**, also spelled **Kazakstan** ( Kazakh: **Қазақстан**, *Qazaqstan*, IPA: [qɑzɑqˈstɑn]; Russian: **Казахстан**, *Kazakhstán*, Russian pronunciation: [kazəxˈstɑn]), officially the **Republic of Kazakhstan**, is a country in Central Asia and Europe. Ranked as the ninth largest country in the world as well as the world's largest landlocked country, it has a territory of 2,727,300 km<sup>2</sup> (greater than Western Europe). It is bordered by Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China. The country also borders on a significant part of the Caspian Sea.

Vast in size, the land in Kazakhstan is very diverse in types of terrain: flatlands, steppes, taigas, rock-canyons, hills, deltas, mountains, snow-capped mountains, and deserts. Kazakhstan has the 62nd largest population in the world, with a population density of less than 6 people per square kilometre (15 per sq. mi.).

For most of its history the territory of modern-day Kazakhstan has been inhabited by nomadic tribes. By the 16th century the Kazakhs emerged as a distinct group, divided into three hordes. The Russians began advancing into the Kazakh steppe in the 18th century, and by the mid-19th century all of Kazakhstan was part of the Russian Empire. Following the 1917 Russian Revolution, and subsequent civil war, the territory of Kazakhstan was reorganized several times before becoming the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic in 1936, a part of the USSR. During the 20th century, Kazakhstan was the site of major Soviet projects, including Khrushchev's Virgin Lands campaign, the Baikonur Cosmodrome, and the Semipalatinsk "Polygon", the USSR's primary nuclear weapon testing site.

Kazakhstan declared itself an independent country on December 16, 1991, the last Soviet republic to do so. Its communist-era leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, became the country's new president. Since independence, Kazakhstan has pursued a balanced foreign policy and worked to develop its economy, especially its hydrocarbon industry. While the country's economic outlook is improving, President Nazarbayev maintains strict control over the country's politics. Several opposition leaders and journalists have been killed in recent years, and Western observers generally do not consider Kazakhstan's elections to be free and fair. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's international prestige is building. It is now considered to

<b>Қазақстан Республикасы</b> <i>Qazaqstan Respublikası</i> <b>Republic of Kazakhstan</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> МЕНІҢ ҚАЗАҚСТАНЫМ ( Kazakh) <i>Meniñ Qazaqstanım</i> ( transcription) "My Kazakhstan"	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Astana
<b>Largest city</b>	Almaty
<b>Official languages</b>	Kazakh <sup>1</sup> Russian <sup>2</sup>
<b>Demonym</b>	Kazakhstani



be the dominant state in Central Asia. The country belongs to many international organizations, including the United Nations, NATO's Partnership for Peace, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In 2010, Kazakhstan will chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In 2011, it will form a customs union with Russia and Belarus.

Kazakhstan is ethnically and culturally diverse, in part due to mass deportations of many ethnic groups to the country during Stalin's rule. Kazakhs are the largest group, followed by Russians. Kazakhstan allows freedom of religion, and many different beliefs are represented in the country. Islam is the primary religion, followed by Orthodox Christianity. The official language is Kazakh, though Russian is still commonly used for everyday communication.

## History

### Kazakh Khanate



Ancient Taraz

Kazakhstan has been inhabited since the Stone Age: the region's climate and terrain are best suited for nomads practising pastoralism. Historians believe that humans first domesticated the horse in the region's vast steppes. While ancient cities Taraz (Aulie-Ata) and Hazrat-e Turkestan had long served as important way-stations along the Silk Road connecting East and West, real political consolidation only began with the Mongol invasion of the early thirteenth century AD. Under the Mongol Empire, administrative districts were established, and these eventually came under the emergent Kazakh Khanate.

Throughout this period traditional nomadic life and a livestock-based economy continued to dominate the steppe. In the 15th century, a distinct Kazakh identity began to emerge among the Turkic tribes, a process which was consolidated by the mid-16th century with the appearance of a distinctive Kazakh language, culture, and economy. Nevertheless, the region was the focus of ever-increasing disputes between the native Kazakh emirs and the neighboring Persian-speaking peoples to the south. By the early 17th century, the Kazakh Khanate was struggling with the impact of tribal rivalries, which has effectively divided the population into the Great, Middle and Little (or Small) Hordes (*jüz*). Political disunion, tribal rivalries, and the diminishing importance of overland trade routes between East and West weakened the Kazakh Khanate.

<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic
- President	Nursultan Nazarbayev
- Prime Minister	Karim Masimov
<b>Independence</b>	from the Soviet Union
- 1st Khanate	1361 as White Horde
- 2nd Khanate	1428 as Uzbek Horde
- 3rd Khanate	1465 as Kazakh Khanate
- Declared	December 16, 1991
- Finalized	December 25, 1991
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	2,724,900 km <sup>2</sup> ( 9th) 1,052,085 sq mi
- Water (%)	1.7
<b>Population</b>	
- January 2006 estimate	15,217,711 ( 62nd)
- 1999 census	14,953,100
- Density	5.4/km <sup>2</sup> ( 215th) 14.0/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	161,155\$ billion ( 56th)
- Per capita	\$10,658 ( 66th)
<b>Gini (2003)</b>	33.9 (medium)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.794 (medium) ( 73rd)
<b>Currency</b>	Tenge (₸) ( ₸Z₸)
<b>Time zone</b>	West/East ( UTC+5/+6)
- Summer ( DST)	<i>not observed</i> ( UTC+5/+6)

During the 17th century Kazakhs fought Oirats, a federation of western Mongol tribes, among which the Dzungars were particularly aggressive. The beginning of the 18th century marked the zenith of the Kazakh Khanate. During this period the Little Horde participated in the 1723–1730 war against the Dzungars, following their "Great Disaster" invasion of Kazakh territories. Under leadership Abul Khair Khan the Kazakhs won major victories over the Dzungar at the Bulanty River, in 1726, and at the Battle of Anrakay in 1729. Ablai Khan participated in the most significant battles against the Dzungars from the 1720s to the 1750s, for which he was declared a "batyr" ("hero") by the people. Kazakhs were also a victims of constant raids carried out by the Volga Kalmyks.

## Russian Empire

In the 19th century, the Russian Empire began to expand, and spread into Central Asia. The " Great Game" period is generally regarded as running from approximately 1813 to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The tsars effectively ruled over most of the territory belonging to what is now the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Russian Empire introduced a system of administration and built military garrisons and barracks in its effort to establish a presence in Central Asia in the so-called "Great Game" between it and the United Kingdom. The first Russian outpost, Orsk, was built in 1735. Russia enforced the Russian language in all schools and governmental organizations. Russian efforts to impose its system aroused the extreme resentment by the Kazakh people, and by the 1860s, most Kazakhs resisted Russia's annexation largely because of the disruption it wrought upon the traditional nomadic lifestyle and livestock-based economy, and the associated hunger which was rapidly wiping out some Kazakh tribes. The Kazakh national movement, which began in the late 1800s, sought to preserve the native language and identity by resisting the attempts of the Russian Empire to assimilate and stifle them.

From the 1890s onwards ever-larger numbers of Slavic settlers began colonising the territory of present-day Kazakhstan, in particular the province of Semirechye. The number of settlers rose still further once the Trans-Aral Railway from Orenburg to Tashkent was completed in 1906, and the movement was overseen and encouraged by a specially created Migration Department (Переселенческое Управление) in St. Petersburg.

The competition for land and water which ensued between the Kazakhs and the newcomers caused great resentment against colonial rule during the final years of Tsarist Russia, with the most serious uprising, the Central Asian Revolt, occurring in 1916. The Kazakhs attacked Russian and Cossack villages, killing indiscriminately. The Russians' revenge was merciless. A military force drove 300,000 Kazakhs to flee into the mountains or to China. When approximately 80,000 of them returned the next year, many of them were slaughtered by Tsarist forces. During the 1921–22 famine, another million Kazakhs died from starvation.

## Soviet Union

<b>Internet TLD</b>	.kz
<b>Calling code</b>	+7
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The state language.</li> <li>2 The language of interethnic communication.</li> </ol>	



Shokan Valikhanov (left) and Fyodor Dostoyevsky (right) in 1858.

Although there was a brief period of autonomy ( Alash Autonomy) during the tumultuous period following the collapse of the Russian Empire, many uprisings were brutally suppressed, and the Kazakhs eventually succumbed to Soviet rule. In 1920, the area of present-day Kazakhstan became an autonomous republic within R.S.F.S.R..

Soviet repression of the traditional elite, along with forced collectivization in late 1920s–1930s, brought mass hunger and led to unrest. Between 1926 and 1939, the Kazakh population declined by 22%, due to starvation, violence and mass emigration. Today, the estimates suggest that the population of Kazakhstan would be closer to 20 million if there was no starvation or massacre of Kazakhs. During the 1930s, many renowned Kazakh writers, thinkers, poets, politicians and historians were slaughtered on Stalin's orders, both as part of the repression and as a methodical pattern of suppressing Kazakh identity and culture. Soviet rule took hold, and a communist apparatus steadily worked to fully integrate Kazakhstan into the Soviet system. In 1936 Kazakhstan became a Soviet republic. Kazakhstan experienced population inflows of millions exiled from other parts of the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s; many of the deportation victims were deported to Siberia or Kazakhstan merely due to their ethnic heritage or beliefs, and were in many cases interned in some of the biggest Soviet labor camps. (See also: Population transfer in the Soviet Union, Involuntary settlements in the Soviet Union.) The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) contributed five national divisions to the Soviet Union's World War II effort. In 1947, two years after the end of the war, the Semipalatinsk Test Site, the USSR's main nuclear weapon test site was founded near the city of Semey.



Almaty, the Soviet-era capital of Kazakhstan.

The period of World War II marked an increase in industrialization and increased mineral extraction in support of the war effort. At the time of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's death, however, Kazakhstan still had an overwhelmingly agricultural-based economy. In 1953, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev initiated the ambitious " Virgin Lands" program to turn the traditional pasture lands of Kazakhstan into a major grain-producing region for the Soviet Union. The Virgin Lands policy brought mixed results. However, along with later modernizations under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, it accelerated the development of the agricultural sector which remains the source of livelihood for a large percentage of Kazakhstan's population. By 1959, Kazakhs made up 30% of the population. Ethnic Russians accounted for 43%.

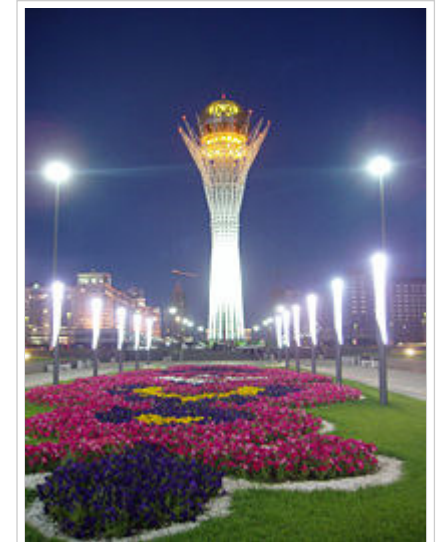
Growing tensions within Soviet society led to a demand for political and economic reforms, which came to a head in the 1980s. A factor that has contributed to this immensely was Lavrentii Beria's decision to test a nuclear bomb on the territory of Kazakh SSR in Semipalatinsk (also known as Semey) in 1949. This had a catastrophic ecological and biological effect which was felt generations later, and Kazakh anger toward the Soviet system has escalated. In December 1986, mass demonstrations by young ethnic Kazakhs, later called Jeltoksan riot, took place in Almaty to protest the replacement of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR Dinmukhamed Konayev with Gennady Kolbin from the Russian SFSR. Governmental troops suppressed the unrest, several people were killed and many demonstrators were jailed. In the waning days of Soviet rule, discontent continued to grow and find expression under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*.

## Independence

Caught up in the groundswell of Soviet republics seeking greater autonomy, Kazakhstan declared its sovereignty as a republic within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in October 1990. Following the August 1991 aborted coup attempt in Moscow and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan declared independence on December 16, 1991. It was the last of the Soviet republics to declare independence.

The years following independence have been marked by significant reforms to the Soviet-style economy and political monopoly on power. Under Nursultan Nazarbayev, who initially came to power in 1989 as the head of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and was eventually elected President in 1991, Kazakhstan has made significant progress toward developing a market economy. The country has enjoyed significant economic growth since 2000, partly due to its large oil, gas, and mineral reserves.

Democracy, however, has not gained much ground since 1991. "In June 2007, Kazakhstan's parliament passed a law granting President Nursultan Nazarbayev lifetime powers and privileges, including access to future presidents, immunity from criminal prosecution, and influence over domestic and foreign policy. Critics say he has become a de facto "president for life." Over the course of his ten years in power, Nazarbayev has repeatedly censored the press through arbitrary use of "slander" laws, blocked access to opposition web sites ( 9 November 1999), banned the Wahhabi religious sect ( 5 September 1998), drawn criticism from Amnesty International for excessive executions following specious trials ( March 21, 1996) and harsh prison conditions ( 13 August 1996), and refused demands that the governors of Kazakhstan's 14 provinces be elected, rather than appointed by the president ( April 7, 2000)."



Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan

## Politics

## Political system

Kazakhstan is a presidential republic. The president is the head of state. The president also is the commander in chief of the armed forces and may veto legislation that has been passed by the Parliament. The prime minister chairs the Cabinet of Ministers and serves as Kazakhstan's head of government. There are three deputy prime ministers and 16 ministers in the Cabinet. Karim Masimov has served as the Prime Minister since 10 January 2007.

Kazakhstan has a bicameral Parliament, made up of the lower house (the Majilis) and upper house (the Senate). Single mandate districts popularly elect 67 seats in the Majilis; there also are ten members elected by party-list vote rather than by single mandate districts. The Senate has 39 members. Two senators are selected by each of the elected assemblies ( Maslikhats) of Kazakhstan's 16 principal administrative divisions (14 provinces, plus the cities of Astana and Almaty). The president appoints the remaining seven senators. Majilis deputies and the government both have the right of legislative initiative, though the government proposes most legislation considered by the Parliament.



Nursultan Nazarbayev

## Elections

Elections to the Majilis in September 2004 yielded a lower house dominated by the pro-government Otan party, headed by President Nazarbayev. Two other parties considered sympathetic to the president, including the agrarian-industrial bloc AIST and the Asar party, founded by President Nazarbayev's daughter, won most of the remaining seats. Opposition parties, which were officially registered and competed in the elections, won a single seat during elections that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said fell short of international standards.

In 1999, Kazakhstan applied for observer status at the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. The official response of the Assembly was that Kazakhstan could apply for full membership, because it is partially located in Europe, but that they would not be granted any status whatsoever at the Council until their democracy and human rights records improved.

On December 4, 2005, Nursultan Nazarbayev was reelected in a landslide victory. The electoral commission announced that he had won over 90% of the vote. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded the election did not meet international standards despite some improvements in the administration of the election. Xinhua News Agency reported that observers from the People's Republic of China, responsible in overseeing 25 polling stations in Astana, found that voting in those polls was conducted in a "transparent and fair" manner. Furthermore, Western governments did not express much criticism.

On August 17, 2007, elections to the lower house of parliament were held with the ruling Nur-Otan coalition winning every seat with 88% of the vote. None of the opposition parties have reached the benchmark 7% level of the seats. This has led some in the local media to question the competence and charisma of the



A sign for the Otan (Fatherland) Party, the former ruling party of Kazakhstan.

opposition party leaders. Opposition parties made accusations of serious irregularities in the election.

## Kazakh Intelligence Services

Kazakhstan's National Security Committee (KNB) was established on 13 June 1992. It includes the Service of Internal Security, Military Counterintelligence, Border Guard, several Commando units, and Foreign Intelligence (Barlau). The latter is considered by many as the most important part of KNB. Its director is Major General Omirtai Bitimov.

## Geography

With an area of 2.7 million square kilometers (1.05 million sq. mi), Kazakhstan is the ninth-largest country in the world and the largest landlocked country in the world. It is equivalent to the size of Western Europe. It shares borders of 6,846 kilometers (4,254 mi) with Russia, 2,203 kilometers (1,369 mi) with Uzbekistan, 1,533 kilometers (953 mi) with China, 1,051 kilometers (653 mi) with Kyrgyzstan, and 379 kilometers (235 mi) with Turkmenistan. Major cities include Astana, Almaty, Karagandy, Shymkent, Atyrau and Oskemen. While located primarily in Asia, a small portion of Kazakhstan is also located west of the Urals in Eastern Europe.



Burabay National Park in Akmola Province.

The terrain extends west to east from the Caspian Sea to the Altay Mountains and north to south from the plains of Western Siberia to the oases and deserts of Central Asia. The Kazakh Steppe(plain), with an area of around 804,500 square kilometres (310,600 sq. mi), occupies one-third of the country and is the world's largest dry steppe region. The steppe is characterized by large areas of grasslands and sandy regions. Important rivers and lakes include: the Aral Sea, Ili River, Irtysh River, Ishim River, Ural River, Syrdariya, Charyn River and gorge, Lake Balkhash, and Lake Zaysan.

The climate is continental, with hot summers and colder winters. Precipitation varies between arid and semi-arid conditions.

The Charyn Canyon is 150–300 metres deep and 80 kilometres long, cutting through the red sandstone plateau and stretching along the Charyn River gorge in northern Tian Shan ("Heavenly Mountains", 200 km east of Almaty) at . The steep canyon slopes, columns and arches rise to heights of 150–300 m. The inaccessibility of the canyon provided a safe haven for a rare ash tree that survived the Ice Age and is nowadays also grown in some other areas. Bigach crater is a Pliocene or Miocene impact asteroid crater, 8 kilometres (5 mi) in diameter and estimated at  $5 \pm 3$  million years old at .

## Provinces

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 206 of 537



Map of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is divided into 14 provinces (*облыстар*). The provinces are subdivided into districts (*аудандар*).

Province	Capital	Area (km. <sup>2</sup> )	Population
Akmola	Kokshetau	121,400	829,000
Aktobe	Aktobe	300,600	661,000
<i>Almaty</i> <sup>(1)</sup>	Almaty	324.8	1,226,300
Almaty Province	Taldykorgan	224,000	860,000
<i>Astana</i> <sup>(1)</sup>	Astana	710.2	600,200
Atyrau	Atyrau	118,600	380,000
<i>Baikonur</i> <sup>(2)</sup>	Baikonur	57	70,000
East Kazakhstan	Oskemen	283,300	897,000
Karagandy	Karagandy	428,000	1,287,000
Kostanay	Kostanay	196,000	975,000
Kyzylorda	Kyzylorda	226,000	590,000
Mangystau	Aktau	165,600	316,847
North Kazakhstan	Petropavl	123,200	586,000
Pavlodar	Pavlodar	124,800	851,000
South Kazakhstan	Shymkent	118,600	1,644,000
West Kazakhstan	Oral	151,300	599,000
Zhambyl	Taraz	144,000	962,000



Notes:

- (1) Almaty and Astana cities have the status of State importance and do not relate to any province.
- (2) Baikonur city has a special status because it is currently being leased to Russia with Baikonur cosmodrome through the year 2050.

Each province is headed by an Akim (provincial governor) appointed by the president. Municipal Akims are appointed by province Akims. The Government of Kazakhstan transferred its capital from Almaty to Astana on December 10, 1997.

## Economy

The government of Kazakhstan plans to double its Gross domestic product (GDP) by 2008 and triple it by 2015 as compared to 2000. GDP growth has been stable in the last five years, at a rate higher than 9%. Buoyed by high world crude oil prices, GDP growth figures were in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005: 9.8%, 13.2%, 9.5%, 9.2%, 9.4%, and 9.2%, respectively. Other major exports of Kazakhstan include wheat, textile, and livestock. Kazakhstan forecasts that it will become the world's leading exporter of uranium by the year 2010.

Kazakhstan's monetary policy is generally considered by outside observers to be well-managed. Its principal challenge since 2002 has been to manage strong foreign currency inflows without sparking inflation. Since that time, inflation has not been under control, registering at 6.6% in 2002, 6.8% in 2003, and 6.4% in 2004, higher than forecast levels of 5.3%-6.0%. In 2000 Kazakhstan became the first former Soviet republic to repay all of its debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 7 years ahead of schedule. In March 2002, the U.S. Department of Commerce granted Kazakhstan market economy status under U.S. trade law. This change in status recognized substantive market economy reforms in the areas of currency convertibility, wage rate determination, openness to foreign investment, and government control over the means of production and allocation of resources.

In September 2002 Kazakhstan became the first country in the CIS to receive an investment-grade credit rating from a major international credit rating agency. As of late December 2003, Kazakhstan's gross foreign debt was about \$22.9 billion. Total governmental debt was \$4.2 billion. This amounts to 14% of GDP. There has been a noticeable reduction in the ratio of debt to GDP observed in past years; the ratio of total governmental debt to GDP in 2000 was 21.7%, in 2001 it was 17.5%, and in 2002 it was 15.4%.

The upturn in economic growth, combined with the results of earlier tax and financial sector reforms, has dramatically improved government finances from the 1999 budget deficit level of 3.5% of GDP to a deficit of 1.2% of GDP in 2003. Government revenues grew from 19.8% of GDP in 1999 to 22.6% of GDP in 2001, but decreased to 16.2% of GDP in 2003. In 2000, Kazakhstan adopted a new tax code in an effort to consolidate these gains. On November 29, 2003 the Law on Changes to Tax Code was adopted, which reduced tax rates. The value added tax fell from 16% to 15%, the social tax from 21% to 20%, and the personal income tax from 30% to 20%. (On July 7, 2006 the personal income tax was reduced even further to a flat rate of 5% for personal income in the form of dividends and 10% for other personal income.) Kazakhstan furthered its reforms by adopting a new land code on June 20, 2003, and a new customs code on April 5, 2003.



Baykonur is the world's oldest and largest operational space launch facility





Headquarter of KazMunayGaz, the national oil and gas company

Energy is the leading economic sector. Production of crude oil and natural gas condensate in Kazakhstan amounted to 51.2 million tons in 2003, which was 8.6% more than in 2002. Kazakhstan raised oil and gas condensate exports to 44.3 million tons in 2003, 13% higher than in 2002. Gas production in Kazakhstan in 2003 amounted to 13.9 billion cubic meters (491 billion cu. ft), up 22.7% compared to 2002, including natural gas production of 7.3 billion cubic meters (258 billion cu. ft); Kazakhstan holds about 4 billion tons of proven recoverable oil reserves and 2,000 cubic kilometers (480 cu mi) of gas. Industry analysts believe that planned expansion of oil production, coupled with the development of new fields, will enable the country to produce as much as 3 million barrels (477,000 m<sup>3</sup>) per day by 2015, lifting Kazakhstan into the ranks of the world's top 10 oil-producing nations. Kazakhstan's 2003 oil exports were valued at more than \$7 billion, representing 65% of overall exports and 24% of the GDP. Major oil and gas fields and their recoverable oil reserves are Tengiz with 7 billion barrels (1.1 km<sup>3</sup>); Karachaganak with 8 billion barrels (1.3 km<sup>3</sup>) and 1,350 km<sup>3</sup> of natural gas; and Kashagan with 7 to 9 billion barrels (1.1 to 1.4 km<sup>3</sup>).

Kazakhstan instituted an ambitious pension reform program in 1998. As of January 1, 2005, the pension assets were about \$4.1 billion. There are 16 saving pension funds in the republic. The State Accumulating Pension Fund, the only state-owned fund, could be privatized as early as 2006. The country's unified financial regulatory agency oversees and regulates the pension funds. The pension funds' growing demand for quality investment outlets triggered rapid development of the debt securities market. Pension fund capital is being invested almost exclusively in corporate and government bonds, including Government of Kazakhstan Eurobonds. The Kazakhstani banking system is developing rapidly. The banking system's capitalization now exceeds \$1 billion. The National Bank has introduced deposit insurance in its campaign to strengthen the banking sector. Several major foreign banks have branches in Kazakhstan, including ABN AMRO, Citibank, and HSBC. Raiffeisen Zentralbank and UniCredit have both recently entered the Kazakhstan's financial services market through acquisitions and stakebuilding.

## Foreign relations and armed forces



Kazakhstan within Europe  
(light blue represents  
territory considered to be  
located in Asia)

Kazakhstan has stable relationships with all of its neighbors. Kazakhstan is also a member of the United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). It is an active participant in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Partnership for Peace program. Kazakhstan is also a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The nations of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan established the Eurasian Economic Community in 2000 to re-energize earlier efforts at harmonizing trade tariffs and the creation of a free trade zone under a customs union. On the December 1 of 2007, it was revealed that Kazakhstan has been chosen to chair OSCE for the year 2010.

Since independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has pursued what is known as the multidimensional foreign policy (многовекторная внешняя политика), seeking equally good relations with two large neighbors, Russia and China, and the United States and the West generally. The policy has yielded results in the oil and gas sector, where companies from the U.S., Russia, China, and Europe are present at all major fields, and in the multidimensional directions of oil export pipelines out of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan also enjoys strong, and rapidly developing, political and economic ties with Turkey.

Additionally, Russia currently leases approximately 6,000 km<sup>2</sup> (2,300 mi<sup>2</sup>) of territory enclosing the Baikonur Cosmodrome space launch site in south central Kazakhstan, where the first man was launched in space as well as Soviet space shuttle Buran and the well-known space station Mir.



Kazakhstani soldier

Most of Kazakhstan's military was inherited from the the Soviet Armed Forces' Turkestan Military District. These units became the core of Kazakhstan's new military which acquired all the units of the 40th Army (the former 32nd Army) and part of the 17th Army Corps, including 6 land force divisions, storage bases, the 14th and 35th air-landing brigades, 2 rocket brigades, 2 artillery regiments and a large amount of equipment which had been withdrawn from over the Urals after the signing of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The largest expansion of the Kazakhstan Army has been focused on armored units in recent years. Since 1990, armored units have expanded from 500, to and 1,613 in 2005.

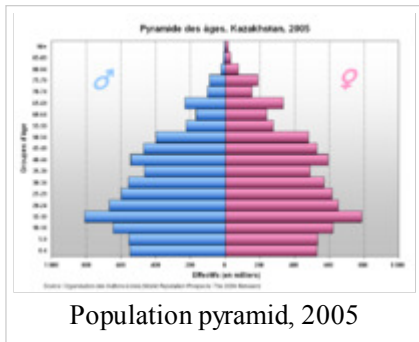
The Kazakh air force is composed mostly of Soviet-era planes, including 40 MiG-29s, 33 MiG-31s, 25 Su-24s and Su-27. A small naval force is also maintained on the Caspian Sea.

Kazakhstan sent 29 military engineers to Iraq under Polish command to assist the US occupation in Iraq.

## Demographics



Kazakhstani President  
Nursultan Nazarbayev  
with U.S. President  
George W. Bush



The US Census Bureau International Database list the current population of Kazakhstan as 16,763,795, while United Nations sources such as the World Bank give a 2002 estimate of 14,794,830.

The ethnic Kazakhs represent 59.2% of the population and ethnic Russians 25.6%, with a rich array of other groups represented, including Tatars, Uzbeks, Bashkirs, Uyghurs and Ukrainians. Some minorities such as Russian Germans (esp. Volga Germans), Ukrainians and Russian political opponents of the regime had been deported to Kazakhstan in the 1930s and 1940s by Stalin; some of the bigger Soviet labor camps existed in the country. Significant Russian immigration also connected with Virgin Lands Campaign and Soviet space program during Khrushchev era. There is also a small but active Jewish community. Before 1991 there were one million Volga Germans in Kazakhstan; most of them emigrated to Germany following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Most members of the smaller Pontian Greek minority have emigrated to Greece.

Kazakhstan is a bilingual country: the Kazakh language, spoken by 64.4% of the population, has the status of the "state" language, while Russian, which is spoken by almost all Kazakhstanis, is declared the "official" language, and is used routinely in business.

The 1990s were marked by the emigration of many of the country's Russians and Volga Germans, a process that began in the 1970s; this was a major factor in giving the autochthonous Kazakhs a majority along with higher Kazakh birthrates and ethnic Kazakh immigration from the People's Republic of China, Mongolia, and Russia. In the early twenty first century, Kazakhstan has become one of the leading nations in international adoptions. This has recently sparked some criticism in the Parliament of Kazakhstan, due to the concerns about safety and treatment of the children abroad and the questions regarding the low level of population in Kazakhstan.

### Kazakhs and Kazakhstanis (terminology)

The Kazakh term **қазақстандықтар** (Russian: **казахстанцы**) (Kazakhstanis) was coined to describe all citizens of Kazakhstan, including non-Kazakhs. The word "Kazakh" is generally used to refer to people of actual Kazakh descent (including those living in China, Afghanistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan and other countries).

The ethnonym Kazakh is derived from an ancient Turkic word "independent, a free spirit". It is the result of Kazakhs' nomadic horseback culture and is related to the term "cossack". The Avestan/ Old Persian (See Indo-European languages) word "stan" means "land" or "place of".

### Religion



Aitys, a competition of akyns in performing songs



Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmet  
Yasawi

Islam is the largest religion in Kazakhstan, followed by Russian Orthodox Christianity.

By tradition the Kazaks are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school, and the Russians are Russian Orthodox. In 1994, some 47 percent of the population was Muslim, 44 percent was Russian Orthodox, and 2 percent was Protestant, mainly Baptist.

Based on a 2007 data of, The Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the UK, Islam was practiced by 57% of the population, Christianity 40% and other religions 3%.

The country has historically hosted a wide variety of ethnic groups with varying religions. Tolerance to other societies has become a part of the Kazakh culture. The foundation of an independent republic, following the disintegration of the USSR, has launched a great deal of changes in every aspect of people's lives. Religiosity of the population, as an essential part of any cultural identity, has undergone dynamic transformations as well.

After decades of suppressed culture, the people were feeling a great need for exhibiting their ethnic identity – in part through religion. Quantitative research shows that for the first years after the establishment of the new laws, waiving any restrictions on religious beliefs and proclaiming full freedom of confessions, the country experienced a huge spike in religious activity of its citizens. Hundreds of mosques, synagogues, churches, and other religious structures were built in a matter of years. All represented religions benefited from increased number of members and facilities. Many confessions that were absent before independence made their way into the country, appealing to hundreds of people. The government supported this activity, and has done its best to provide equality among all religious organizations and their followers. In late 1990's, however, a slight decline in religiosity occurred.

Radical religious organizations, despite a popular belief, are of little danger to the national security. The few organizations that were uncovered are being investigated thoroughly by the proper committee. Therefore, Kazakhstan has a very diverse, stable, and safe religious background – a truly exceptional occurrence.

However, some reported occurrences of persecution against Hare Krishnas and Jehovah's Witnesses for proselytizing has raised concern in the international community. Despite popular belief, the 'persecution' amounts to nothing more than legal action caused by questionable documentation related to the houses which were built by the groups.



Mosque in Pavlodar; Kazakhs  
predominately follow Sunni Islam

## Education



KIMEP in Almaty

Education is universal and mandatory through to the secondary level and the adult literacy rate is 99.5%. Education consists of three main educational phases: primary education (forms 1–4), basic general education (forms 5–9) and senior level education (forms 10–11 or 12) divided into continued general education and professional education. (Primary education is preceded by one year of pre-school education.) These three levels of education can be followed in one institution or in different ones (e.g. primary school, then secondary school). Recently, several secondary schools, specialized schools, magnet schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, linguistic and technical gymnasiums, have been founded. Secondary professional education is offered in special professional or technical schools, lyceums or colleges and vocational schools.

At present, there are universities, academies, and institutes, conservatories, higher schools and higher colleges. There are three main levels: basic higher education that provides the fundamentals of the chosen field of study and leads to the award of the Bachelor's degree; specialized higher education after which students are awarded the Specialist's Diploma; and scientific-pedagogical higher education which leads to the Master's Degree. Postgraduate education leads to the *Kandidat Nauk* (Candidate of Sciences) and the Doctor of Sciences. With the adoption of the Laws on Education and on Higher Education, a private sector has been established and several private institutions have been licensed.

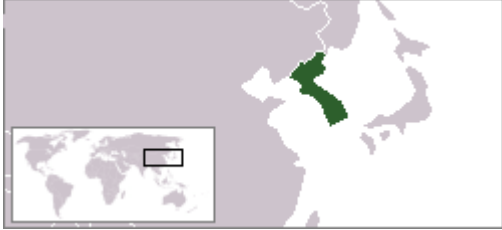
The Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan runs a highly successful *Bolashak* scholarship, which is annually awarded to approximately three hundred applicants. The scholarship funds their education in institutions abroad, including the prestigious Oxford and Ivy League universities. The terms of the program include mandatory return to Kazakhstan for at least five years of employment.

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# Korea

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries**

<b>Korea</b>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Pyongyang, Seoul
<b>Largest conurbation (population)</b>	Seoul
<b>Official languages</b>	Korean
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	220,186 km <sup>2</sup> ( 84th if ranked) 85,020 sq mi
- Water (%)	2.8
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	72,326,462 ( 18th if ranked)
- Density	328.48/km <sup>2</sup> 850.7/sq mi
<b>Currency</b>	Won ( ₩ ) ( N/ S)
<b>Time zone</b>	KST ( UTC+9)

**Korea** is a geographic area, civilization, and a former state situated on the Korean Peninsula in East Asia. It borders China to the west and Russia to the north, with Japan situated to the east. The Korean Peninsula is divided into two separate states, North Korea and South Korea. However, the name "Korea" is often used to refer to South Korea due to its greater economic significance and influence in the world.

The history of Korea began with the legendary founding of Gojoseon in 2333 BC by Dangun. Limited linguistic evidence suggests probable Altaic origins of these people, whose northern Mongolian steppe culture absorbed migration and trade with the peoples of Manchuria and China. The adoption of the Chinese writing system ("hanja" in Korean) in the 2nd century BC, and Buddhism in the 4th century AD, had profound effects on the Three Kingdoms of Korea. Baekje later passed on a modified version of these cultural advances to Japan.

Since the Goryeo Dynasty, Korea was ruled by a single government and maintained political and cultural independence until the nineteenth century, despite the Mongol invasions of the Goryeo Dynasty in the 13th century and Japanese invasions of the Joseon Dynasty in the 16th century. In 1377, Korea produced the Jikji, the world's oldest movable metal print document. In the 15th century, the turtle ships, possibly the world's first ironclad warships, were deployed, and King Sejong the Great promulgated the Korean alphabet han-geul to increase literacy among his people who could not read nor write hanja (Chinese characters).

During the latter part of the Joseon Dynasty, Korea's isolationist policy earned it the Western nickname the "Hermit Kingdom". By the late 19th century, the country became the object of the colonial designs of Japan and Europe. In 1910, Korea was forcibly annexed by Japan and remained occupied until the end of World War II in August 1945.

In 1945, the Soviet Union and the United States agreed on the surrender and disarming of Japanese troops in Korea; the Soviet Union accepting the surrender of Japan north of the 38th parallel and the United States taking the surrender south of it. This led to division of Korea by the two superpowers, exacerbated by their inability to agree on the terms of Korean independence. The two Cold War rivals then established governments sympathetic to their own ideologies, leading to Korea's current division into two political entities: North Korea and South Korea.

## Names of Korea

The name "Korea" derives from the Goryeo period of Korean history, which in turn referred to the ancient kingdom of Goguryeo. Merchants of the Middle East called it *Cauli* (from the Chinese pronunciation), which then came to be spelled Coreia and Korea. Korea is now commonly used in English contexts by both North and South Korea.

In the Korean language, Korea as a whole is referred to as *Han-guk* (abbreviation of *Dae Han Min Guk*) (Hangul: 한국; Hanja: 韓國; RR: *Hanguk*; MR: *Han'guk*) in South Korea, and *Chosŏn* (Chosŏn'gŭl: 조선; Hancha: 朝鮮; MR: *Chosŏn*; RR: *Joseon*) in North Korea. "The Land of the Morning Calm" is an English language nickname loosely derived from the hanja characters for Joseon, the name derived from the Joseon Dynasty and the earlier Gojoseon. (Choson



Entrance to Gyeongbokgung



Joseon dynasty royal throne



and Joseon are two Romanizations of the same name.)

## History

### Prehistory and Gojoseon

The earliest known Korean pottery goes back to around 10000 BCE, and the Neolithic period begins around 6000 BCE. Gojoseon's founding legend describes Dangun, a descendent of heaven, as establishing the kingdom in 2333 BCE. Archaeological and contemporary written records indicate it developed from a federation of walled cities into a centralized kingdom sometime between the 7th and 4th centuries BCE.



Goguryeo roof tile

The original capital may have been at the Manchuria-Korea border, but was later moved to what is today Pyongyang, North Korea. In 108 BCE, the Chinese Han Dynasty defeated Wiman Joseon and installed four commanderies in the area of Liaoning and the northern Korean peninsula. Subsequent Chinese immigrations from Yan and Qi brought elements of Chinese culture to the peninsula. By 75 BCE, three of those commanderies had fallen, but the Lelang Commandery remained under successive Chinese control until 313.

### Three Kingdoms

The Three Kingdoms of Korea ( Goguryeo, Silla, and Baekje) dominated the peninsula and parts of Manchuria during the early Common Era. They competed with each other both economically and militarily.

Goguryeo united Buyeo, Okjeo, Dongye and other states in the former Gojoseon territory, in addition to destroying the last Chinese commandery. Goguryeo was the most dominant power, Goguryeo reached its zenith in the fifth century, when reign of the King Gwanggaeto and his son, King Jangsu expanded territory into almost all of Manchuria and part of inner Mongolia, and took the Seoul region from Baekje. Gwanggaeto and Jangsu subdued Baekje and Silla during their times. After the 7th Century, Goguryeo was constantly at war with the Sui and Tang dynasties of China.

Founded around modern day Seoul, the southwestern kingdom Baekje expanded far beyond Pyongyang during the peak of its powers in the 4th century. It had absorbed all of the Mahan states and subjugated most of the western Korean peninsula (including the modern



The Three Kingdoms of Korea in the 5th century.



### History of Korea

#### Prehistory

Jeulmun period

Mumun period

**Gojoseon** 2333-108 BC

Jin state

**Proto-Three Kingdoms:** 108-57 BC

Buyeo, Okjeo, Dongye

Samhan: Ma, Byeon, Jin

**Three Kingdoms:** 57 BC - 668 AD

Goguryeo 37 BC - 668 AD

*Sui wars*

Baekje 18 BC - 660 AD

Silla 57 BC - 935 AD

Gaya 42-562

**North-South States:** 698-935

Unified Silla 668-935

Balhae 698-926

Later Three Kingdoms 892-935

**Goryeo** 918-1392

*Khitan wars*

*Mongol invasions*

**Joseon** 1392-1897

*Japanese invasions* 1592-1598

*Manchu invasions*

**Korean Empire** 1897–1910

provinces of Gyeonggi, Chungcheong, and Jeolla, as well as part of Hwanghae and Gangwon) to a centralized government. Baekje acquired Chinese culture and technology through contacts with the Southern Dynasties during the expansion of its territory.



Silla crown

Although later records claim that Silla, in the southeast, was the oldest of the three kingdoms, it is now believed to have been the last kingdom to develop. By the 2nd century, Silla existed as a large state, occupying and influencing nearby city states. Silla began to gain power when it annexed the Gaya confederacy in 562 AD. The Gaya confederacy was located between Baekje and Silla. The three kingdoms of Korea often warred with each other and Silla often faced pressure from Baekje and Goguryeo but at various times Silla also allied with Baekje and Goguryeo in order to gain dominance over the peninsula.

In 660, King Muyeol of Silla ordered his armies to attack Baekje. General Kim Yu-shin, aided by Tang forces, conquered Baekje. In 661, Silla and Tang moved on Goguryeo but were repelled.

King Munmu, son of Muyeol and nephew of General Kim launched another campaign in 667 and Goguryeo fell in the following year.

## Unified Silla and Balhae

In the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries, Silla's power gradually extended across the Korean Peninsula. Silla first annexed the adjacent Gaya confederacy. By the 660s, Silla formed an alliance with the Tang Dynasty of China to conquer Baekje and later Goguryeo. After repelling Chinese forces, Silla partially unified the Peninsula, beginning a period often called Unified Silla.

In the north, former Goguryeo General Dae Joyeong led a group of Goguryeo refugees to the Jilin area in Manchuria and founded Balhae (698 AD - 926 AD) as the successor to Goguryeo. At its height, Balhae's territory extended from northern Manchuria down to the northern provinces of modern-day Korea. Balhae was destroyed by the Khitans in 926.

Unified Silla fell apart in the late 9th century, giving way to the tumultuous Later Three Kingdoms period (892-935). Goryeo unified the Later Three Kingdoms and absorbed Balhae refugees.

*Japanese rule* 1910–1945

Provisional Gov't 1919-1948

*Division of Korea* 1945–1948

**North, South Korea** 1948–present

*Korean War* 1950–1953

- List of monarchs
- Timeline
- Military history
- Naval history
- Science and technology in Korea

Korea Portal

## Goryeo

The country Goryeo was founded in 918 and replaced Silla as the ruling dynasty of Korea. ("Goryeo" is a short form of "Goguryeo" and the source of the English name "Korea.") The dynasty lasted until 1392. During this period laws were codified, and a civil service system was introduced. Buddhism flourished, and spread throughout the peninsula. The development of celadon industry flourished in 12th and 13th century. The publication of Tripitaka Koreana onto 80,000 wooden blocks and the invention of the world's first metal printing press in 13th century attest to Goryeo's cultural achievements. Their dynasty was threatened by Mongol invasion from the 1230s into the 1270s, but the dynastic line continued to survive until 1392 since they negotiated a treaty with the Mongols that kept its sovereign power. In 1350s, King Gongmin was free at last to reform a Goryeo government. Gongmin had various problems that needed to be dealt with, which included the removal of pro-Mongol aristocrats and military officials, the question of land holding, and quelling the growing animosity between the Buddhists and Confucian scholars.

## Joseon dynasty

In 1392, the general Yi Seong-gye established the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) with a largely bloodless coup. The Joseon Dynasty is believed to have been the longest-lived actively ruling dynasty in East Asia. He named it the Joseon Dynasty in honour of the previous Joseon before (Gojoseon is the first Joseon. "Go", meaning "old", was added to distinguish between the two). King Taejo moved the capital to Hanseong (formerly Hanyang; modern-day Seoul) and built the Gyeongbokgung palace. In 1394 he adopted Confucianism as the country's official religion, resulting in much loss of power and wealth by the Buddhists. The prevailing philosophy was Neo-Confucianism, which was developed by Zhu Xi. Joseon experienced advances in science and culture. King Sejong the Great (1418-1450) promulgated hangul, the Korean alphabet. The period saw various other cultural and technological advances as well as the dominance of neo-Confucianism over the entire peninsula. Between 1592 and 1598, Japan invaded Korea. Toyotomi Hideyoshi led the forces and tried to invade the Asian continent through Korea, but was eventually repelled before even getting through Korea. This war also saw the rise of the career of Admiral Yi Sun-shin and his "turtle ship" or gubukseon. In the 1620s and 1630s Joseon suffered invasions by the Manchu who eventually also conquered the Chinese Ming Dynasty. After that, the Joseon dynasty swore allegiance to the Qing Court. During the Joseon dynasty, Koreans brought Roman Catholicism (and other forms of Christianity in Korea followed shortly thereafter) into Korea, at first in secret.

## Japanese occupation



Cheongja unhak sanggam mun maeyeong, the 68th national treasure of South Korea.



Hunmin jeong-eum, afterwards called hangul.

Beginning in the 1870s, Japan began to force Korea to move out of China's sphere of influence into its own. Japan forced Korea to engage in foreign trade through the Treaty of Ganghwa in 1876. In 1895, Empress Myeongseong of Korea was assassinated by the Japanese under Miura Gorō's directive (Kim et al. 1976). In Manchuria on 1909, An Jung-geun assassinated the former Resident-General of Korea, Itō Hirobumi for his role in trying to force Korea into occupation. In 1908, the Russo-Japanese War pushed the Russians out of the fight for Korea. In 1910, an already militarily occupied Korea was a forced party to the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty. This is a controversial treaty since the treaty was never ratified by the Korean Emperor and the required Korean Imperial seal was absent.

Even before formal Japanese colonial rule, the Korean Independence Movement was already in existence. Korean resistance to the brutal Japanese occupation was manifested in the nonviolent March 1st Movement of 1919, where 7,000 demonstrators were killed by Japanese police and military. The Korean liberation movement also spread to neighboring Manchuria and Siberia.

Over five million Koreans were conscripted for labor beginning in 1939, and tens of thousands of men were forced into Japan's military. Approximately 200,000 girls and women, mostly from Korea and China, were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military. In 1993, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono acknowledged the terrible injustices faced by these euphemistically named "comfort women". However, the Japanese tend to underestimate the sufferings of them.

During Japanese Colonial rule, the Korean language was suppressed in an effort to eradicate Korean national identity. Koreans were forced to take Japanese surnames, known as Sōshi-kaimei. Traditional Korean culture suffered heavy losses, as numerous Korean cultural artifacts were destroyed or taken to Japan. To this day, valuable Korean artifacts can often be found in Japanese museums or among private collections. One investigation by the South Korean government identified 75,311 cultural assets that were taken from Korea, 34,369 of which are in Japan, and 17,803 of which are in the United States. However, experts estimate that over 100,000 artifacts remains in Japan. Japanese people regarded the retuning Korean cultural properties are over after 1965 and seem to have no desire to return such artifacts to the owners of Korea. Besides, Korean-Japan has disputed over the ownership of Liancourt Rocks, a small island located east of the Korean peninsula, is their land and as of 2008, the Japanese government decided to teach Japanese middle-school students that the islet is their rightful land.

## Korean War



*Go Fishing*, Georges Ferdinand Bigot, *Tobae*, February 1887. It shows Korea as a fish which China, Russia, and Japan are all trying to catch.

With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the United Nations developed plans for a trusteeship administration, the Soviet Union administering the peninsula north of the 38th parallel and the United States administering the south. The politics of the Cold War resulted in the 1948 establishment of two separate governments, North Korea and South Korea.

In June of 1950 North Korea invaded the South, using Russian tanks and weaponry. During the Korean War (1950-1953), millions of civilians died and the three years of fighting throughout the nation effectively destroyed most cities. Around 171,000 POWs were captured and held by the Americans and South Koreans on Geojedo (an island in the south) The war ended in a ceasefire agreement at approximately the Military Demarcation Line (Korea).

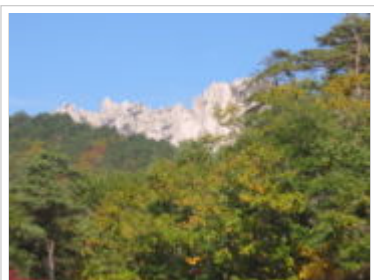
## Split Nation

After the split state of Korea, the superpowers of Asia were determined to keep it that way. The benefits from having a split Korea were having to spend less on defence as the North and South strove to annex one another. Such countries were and are China, Japan, and Russia. Currently, China enjoys a beneficial friendship with North Korea as they are both Communist nations. In order for the split country to unify, it will require much pain, sacrifice, money, and time as seen with its predecessor: Germany.

## Geography



The earliest surviving depiction of the Korean / South Korean flag was printed in a U.S. Navy book *Flags of Maritime Nations* in July 1882.



A view of Seoraksan.

Korea is located on the Korean Peninsula in North-East Asia. To the northwest, the Amnok River ( Yalu River) separates Korea from China and to the northeast, the Duman River ( Tumen River) separates Korea from China and Russia. The Yellow Sea is to the west, the East China Sea is to the south, and the Sea of Japan (East Sea) is to the east of Korea. Notable islands include Jeju-do, Ulleung-do, and Liancourt Rocks (*Dokdo* in Korean).

The southern and western parts of the peninsula have well-developed plains, while the eastern and northern parts are mountainous. The highest mountain in Korea is Baekdusan (2744 m), through which runs the border with China. The southern extension of Baekdusan is a highland called Gaema Heights. This highland was mainly raised during the Cenozoic orogeny and partly covered by volcanic matter. To the south of Gaema Gowon, successive

high mountains are located along the eastern coast of the peninsula. This mountain range is named Baekdudaegan. Some significant mountains include Sobaeksan (2,184 m), Baeksan (1,724 m), Geumgangsan (1,638 m), Seoraksan (1,708 m), Taebaeksan (1,567 m), and Jirisan (1,915 m). There are several lower, secondary mountain series whose direction is almost perpendicular to that of Baekdudaegan. They are developed along the tectonic line of Mesozoic orogeny and their directions are basically northwest.

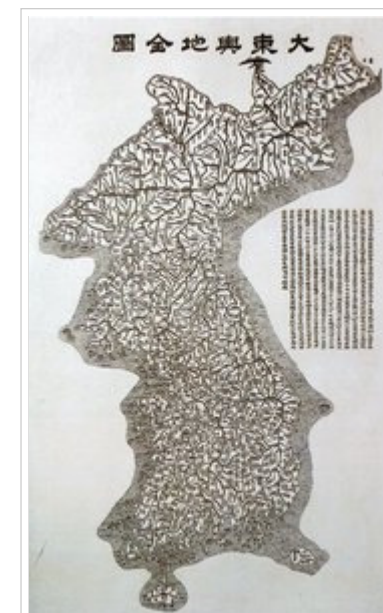
Unlike most older mountains on the mainland, many important islands in Korea were formed by volcanic activity in the Cenozoic orogeny. Jeju-do, situated off the southern coast, is a large volcanic island whose main mountain Hallasan (1950 m) is the highest in South Korea. Ulleung-do is a volcanic island in the Sea of Japan, whose composition is more felsic than Jeju-do. The volcanic islands tend to be younger, the more westward.

Because the mountainous region is mostly on the eastern part of the peninsula, the main rivers tend to flow westwards. Two exceptions are the southward-flowing Nakdonggang and Seomjingang. Important rivers running westward include the Amnok River ( Yalu), the Cheong-cheongang, the Daedonggang, the Han River, the Geumgang, and the Yeongsangang. These rivers have vast flood plains and provide an ideal environment for wet-rice cultivation.

The southern and southwestern coastlines of Korea form a well-developed ria coastline, known as *Dadohae-jin* in Korean. Its convoluted coastline provides mild seas, and the resulting calm environment allows for safe navigation, fishing, and seaweed farming. In addition to the complex coastline, the western coast of the Korean Peninsula has an extremely high tidal amplitude (at Incheon, around the middle of the western coast. It can get as high as 9 m). Vast tidal flats have been developing on the south and west coastlines

## Demographics

The combined population of the Koreas is about 73 million (North Korea: 23 million, South Korea: 50 million). Korea is chiefly populated by a highly homogeneous ethnic group, the Koreans, who speak the Korean language. The number of foreigners living in Korea has also steadily increased since the late 20th century, particularly in South Korea, where more than 1 million foreigners currently reside. A minority population of ethnic Chinese (roughly 440,000 as of



Daedongyeojido, a map of Korea

August 2007) live in South Korea and small communities of ethnic Chinese and Japanese are also found in North Korea.

## Language

Korean is the official language of both North and South Korea, and of Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture in Manchuria area of China. Worldwide, there are up to 80 million speakers of the Korean Language. South Korea has around 50 million speakers while North Korea around 23 million. Other large groups of Korean speakers are found in the United States (around 2.5 million speakers), China (around 2 million speakers), the former Soviet Union (around 500,000), Japan (around 900,000), Canada (100,000), Philippines (70,000) and Australia (150,000). It is estimated that there are around 700,000 people scattered across the world who are able to speak Korean because of job requirements (for example, salespersons or businessmen with Korean contacts), marriages to Koreans or out of pure interest in the language.

The genealogical classification of Korean is debated. Some linguists place it in the Altaic language family; others consider it to be a language isolate. Korean is agglutinative in its morphology and SOV in its syntax. Like Japanese and Vietnamese, Korean has borrowed much vocabulary from the genetically unrelated Chinese or created vocabulary on Chinese models.

Modern Korean is written almost exclusively in the hangul script, which was invented in the 15th century. While hangul may appear logographic, it is actually a phonemic alphabet organized into syllabic blocks. Each block consists of at least two of the 24 hangul letters (*jamo*): at least one each of the 14 consonants and 10 vowels. Historically, the alphabet had several additional letters (see obsolete jamo). For a phonological description of the letters, see Korean phonology. Hanja (Chinese characters) and Latin alphabets are sometimes included within hangul texts, particularly in South Korea.

## Culture and arts

In ancient Chinese texts, Korea is referred to as "Rivers and Mountains Embroidered on Silk" (금수강산, 錦繡江山) and "Eastern Nation of Decorum" (동방예의지국, 東方禮儀之國). During the 7th and 8th centuries, the silk road connected Korea to Arabia. In 845, Arab traders wrote, "Beyond China is a land where gold abounds and which is named Silla. The Muslims who have gone there have been charmed by the country and tend to settle there and abandon all idea of leaving."

Korean festivities often showcase vibrant colors, which have been attributed to Mongolian influences: bright red, yellow, and green often mark traditional Korean motifs. These bright colors are sometimes seen in the traditional dress known as hanbok.

One peculiarity of Korean culture is its age reckoning system. Individuals are regarded as one year old when they are born, and their age increments on New Year's Day rather than on the anniversary of their birthday. Thus, one born on December the 31st would be aged two on the day after they were born. Accordingly, a Korean person's stated age will be one or two years more than their age expressed in the Western tradition.

## Literature

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Korean Buddhist architecture

Korean literature written before the end of the Joseon Dynasty is called "Classical" or "Traditional." Literature, written in Chinese characters (hanja), was established at the same time as the Chinese script arrived on the peninsula. Korean scholars were writing poetry in the classical Chinese style as early as the 2nd century BCE, reflecting Korean thoughts and experiences of that time. Classical Korean literature has its roots in traditional folk beliefs and folk tales of the peninsula, strongly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

Modern literature is often linked with the development of hangul, which helped spread literacy from the aristocracy to the common people and women. Hangul, however, only reached a dominant position in Korean literature in the second half of the 19th century, resulting in a major growth in Korean literature. *Sinsoseol*, for instance, are novels written in hangul.

The Korean War led to the development of literature centered around the wounds and chaos of war. Much of the post-war literature in South Korea deals with the daily lives of ordinary people, and their struggles with national pain. The collapse of the traditional Korean value system is another common theme of the time.

## Religion

Confucian tradition has dominated Korean thought, along with contributions by Buddhism, Taoism, and Korean Shamanism. Since the middle of the 20th century, however, Christianity has competed with Buddhism in South Korea, while religious practice has been suppressed in North Korea.

According to 2003 statistics compiled by the South Korean government, about 46% of citizens profess to follow no particular religion. Christians account for 27.3% of the population (of which half are Catholics and half are various denominations of Protestantism) and Buddhists 25.3%.

Koreans valued scholarship and rewarded education and study of Chinese classic texts; Yangban boys were highly educated in hanja. In Silla, the bone rank system defined a person's social status, and a similar system persisted through the end of the Joseon Dynasty. In addition, the gwageo civil service examination provided paths of upward mobility.

Islam in South Korea is comprised of about 45,000 in addition to some 100,000 foreign workers from Muslim countries.

## Cuisine

Korean cuisine is probably best known for kimchi( 한글: 김치), which uses a distinctive fermentation process of preserving vegetables, most commonly cabbage. Pepper (chilli) paste( 한글: 고추장 - pronounced go-choo-jang) is also commonly used, often as pepper (chilli) powder, earning the cuisine a reputation for being spicy.

Bulgogi( 한글: 불고기) (roasted marinated meat, usually beef), galbi (ribs, 한글: 갈비), and samgyeopsal (pork belly, 한글: 삼겹살) are popular meat entrees. Meals are usually accompanied by a soup or stew, such as galbitang (stewed ribs) and doenjang jjigae( 한글: 된장찌개)

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*Amitabha and Eight Great Bodhisattvas, Goryeo scroll from the 1300s*



(fermentated bean paste stew). The centre of the table is filled with a shared collection of sidedishes called banchan.

Other popular dishes include bibimbap( 한글: 비빔밥)which literally means "mixed rice" (rice mixed with meat, vegetables, and pepper paste) and naengmyeon( 한글: 냉면, 冷麵) (cold noodles with soup).

## Education

The modern Korean school system consists of 6 years in elementary school, 3 years in middle school, and 3 years in high school. Students are supposed to go to elementary and middle school, and do not have to pay for it.(The teachers are paid from taxes) Most public middle school and high school students have to wear uniforms, and are not supposed to grow their hair more than a particular length. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks South Korea's science education as the 11th best in the world, being significantly higher than the OECD average. Although South Korean students often rank high on international comparative tests, the education system is sometimes criticized for its emphasis on passive learning and memorization. The Korean education system is much more strict and structured than most western societies and Korean students rarely have free time to spend enjoying themselves as they are under a lot of pressure to perform and gain entrance to university.

## Science and technology

One of the best known artifacts of Korea's history of science and technology is Cheomseongdae (첨성대, 瞻星臺), a 9.4-meter high observatory built in 634. It is considered to be one of the world's oldest surviving astronomical observatories.

The world's first metal mechanical movable type printing was developed in Korea in 1232 by Choe Yun-ui during the Goryeo Dynasty, modeled after widespread Chinese clay ( Bi Sheng in 1041), several hundred years before Johann Gutenberg developed his metal letterset type (Cumings 1997: 65). Though the block printing was used much earlier, metal movable type printing press marked a significant development in printing allowing the same tools to be used for more diverse printings. The Jikji is the world's earliest remaining movable metal printed book, printed in Korea in 1377. The world's earliest known surviving example of woodblock printing is the Mugujeonggwang Great Dharani Sutra. It is believed to have been printed in Korea in 750-751 AD which, if correct, would make it older than the Diamond Sutra. Goryeo silk was highly regarded by China, and Korean pottery made with blue-green celadon was of the highest quality in the world and sought after by even Arabian merchants. Goryeo had a bustling economy with a capital that was frequented by merchants from all over the known world.

During the Joseon period the earliest ironclad warships, the Geobukseon ( Turtle Ship) were invented, as well as other weapons such as the Bigyeokjincheolloe (비격진천뢰, 飛擊震天雷) and the hwacha.

The Korean alphabet hangul was also invented during this time by Sejong the Great.

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Cheomseongdae, one of the world's oldest surviving astronomical observatories

# Kyrgyzstan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

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**Kyrgyzstan** (pronounced /'kɪɡɪzˌtɑːn/ (AmE) or /'kɜːɡəzˌtɑːn/ (BrE), Kyrgyz: Кыргызстан [qɯrɣɪzˈstɑn]; Russian: Киргизия [kirˈgʲizija] or Киргизстан [ˈkʲɪrɡʲɪstɑn] or Кыргызстан [ˈkʲɪrɡʲɪzˌstɑn], variously transliterated, also **Kirgizia** or **Kirghizia**), officially the **Kyrgyz Republic**, is a country in Central Asia. Landlocked and mountainous, it is bordered by Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest and China to the east.

## History

### Early history

According to recent historical findings, Kyrgyz history dates back to 201 BC. The early Kyrgyz lived in the upper Yenisey River valley, central Siberia. The discovery of the Pazyryk and Tashtyk cultures show them as a blend of Turkic nomadic tribes. Chinese and Muslim sources of the 7th–12th centuries AD describe the Kyrgyz as red-haired, in addition, blond-haired with a fair complexion and green or blue eyes.

The descent of the Kyrgyz from the indigenous Siberian population is confirmed on the other hand by recent genetic studies. Remarkably, 63% of the modern Kyrgyz men share Haplogroup R1a1 (Y-DNA) with Tajiks (64%), Ukrainians (54%), Poles (56%) and even Icelanders (25%). Haplogroup R1a1 (Y-DNA) is believed to be a marker of the Proto-Indo-European language speakers.

The Kyrgyz state reached its greatest expansion after defeating the Uyghur Khanate in 840 A.D. Then Kyrgyz quickly moved as far as the Tian Shan range and maintained their dominance over this territory for about 200 years. In the 12th century, however, the Kyrgyz domination had shrunk to the Altay Range and the Sayan Mountains as a result of the rising Mongol expansion. With the rise of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century, the Kyrgyz migrated south.

<p><b>Кыргыз Республикасы</b>  <i><b>Kyrgyz Respublikasi</b></i>  <b>Кыргызская Республика</b>  <i><b>Kyrgyzskaya Respublika</b></i>  <b>Kyrgyz Republic</b></p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> none	
<b>Anthem:</b> National Anthem of the Kyrgyz Republic	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Bishkek
<b>Official languages</b>	Kyrgyz, Russian

## Russian influence

In the early 19th century, the southern part of what is today Kyrgyzstan came under the control of the Khanate of Kokand. The territory, then known in Russian as "Kirgizia", was formally incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1876. The Russian takeover was met with numerous revolts against tsarist authority, and many of the Kyrgyz opted to move to the Pamirs and Afghanistan. In addition, the suppression of the 1916 rebellion in Central Asia caused many Kyrgyz to migrate to China. Since many ethnic groups in the region were (and still are) split between neighbouring states, at a time when borders were more porous and less regulated, it was common to move back and forth over the mountains, depending on where life was perceived as better; this might mean better rains for pasture or better government after oppression.

## Soviet era

<b>Demonym</b>	Kyrgyz Kyrgyzstani
<b>Government</b>	Republic
<span> </span> - President	Kurmanbek Bakiyev
<span> </span> - Prime Minister	Igor Chudinov
<b>Independence</b>	from the Soviet Union
<span> </span> - Declared	31 August 1991
<span> </span> - Completed	25 December 1991
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	199,900 km <sup>2</sup> ( 86th) 77,181 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	3.6
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - July 2005 estimate	5,264,000 ( 111th)
<span> </span> - 1999 census	4,896,100
<span> </span> - Density	26/km <sup>2</sup> ( 176th) 67/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$10.764 billion ( 134th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$2,150 ( 140th)
<b>Gini (2003)</b>	30.3 (medium)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span>▼</span> 0.696 (medium) ( 116th)
<b>Currency</b>	Som ( ₸)
<b>Time zone</b>	KGT ( UTC+6)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.kg
<b>Calling code</b>	+996

Soviet power was initially established in the region in 1919 and the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast was created within the Russian SFSR (the term Kara-Kirghiz was used until the mid-1920s by the Russians to distinguish them from the Kazakhs, who were also referred to as Kirghiz). On December 5, 1936, the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic was established as a full republic of the Soviet Union.

During the 1920s, Kyrgyzstan developed considerably in cultural, educational, and social life. Literacy was greatly improved, and a standard literary language was introduced by imposing Russian on the populace. Economic and social development also was notable. Many aspects of the Kyrgyz national culture were retained despite the suppression of nationalist activity under Stalin, and, therefore, tensions with the all-Union authorities were constant.

The early years of glasnost had little effect on the political climate in Kyrgyzstan. However, the Republic's press was permitted to adopt a more liberal stance and to establish a new publication, *Literaturny Kirghizstan*, by the Union of Writers. Unofficial political groups were forbidden, but several groups that emerged in 1989 to deal with the acute housing crisis were permitted to function.

In June 1990, ethnic tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz surfaced in the Osh Oblast, where Uzbeks form a majority of the population. Violent confrontations ensued, and a state of emergency and curfew were introduced. Order was not restored until August 1990.

The early 1990s brought considerable change to Kyrgyzstan. By then, the Kyrgyzstan Democratic Movement (KDM) had developed into a significant political force with support in Parliament. In an upset victory, Askar Akayev, the liberal President of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences, was elected to the Presidency in October 1990. The following January, Akayev introduced new government structures and appointed a new government composed mainly of younger, reform-oriented politicians.

In December 1990, the Supreme Soviet voted to change the republic's name to the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. (In 1993, it became the Kyrgyz Republic.) In February 1991, the name of the capital, Frunze, was changed back to its prerevolutionary name of Bishkek. Despite these aesthetic moves toward independence, economic realities seemed to work against secession from the Soviet Union. In a referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union in March 1991, 88.7% of the voters approved the proposal to retain the Soviet Union as a "renewed federation."

On August 19, 1991, when the State Emergency Committee assumed power in Moscow, there was an attempt to depose Akayev in Kyrgyzstan. After the coup collapsed the following week, Akayev and Vice President German Kuznetsov announced their resignations from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and the entire bureau and secretariat resigned. This was followed by the Supreme Soviet vote declaring independence from the Soviet Union on August 31, 1991.

## Independence

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Bishkek



Displays in the former Lenin Museum (now part of the National Museum) celebrated Kyrgyzstan's membership in the Soviet Union

In October 1991, Akayev ran unopposed and was elected president of the new independent Republic by direct ballot, receiving 95% of the votes cast. Together with the representatives of seven other Republics that same month, he signed the Treaty of the New Economic Community. Finally, on December 21, 1991, Kyrgyzstan joined with the other four Central Asian Republics to formally enter the new Commonwealth of Independent States. In 1992, Kyrgyzstan joined the UN and the CSCE.

The " Tulip Revolution," after the parliamentary elections in March 2005, forced President Akayev's resignation on April 4, 2005. Opposition leaders formed a coalition and a new government was formed under President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and Prime Minister Feliks Kulov. The nation's capital was also looted during the protests.

Political stability appears to be elusive, however, as various groups and factions allegedly linked to organized crime are jockeying for power. Three of the 75 members of Parliament elected in March 2005 were assassinated, and another member was assassinated on 10 May 2006 shortly after winning his murdered brother's seat in a by-election. All four are reputed to have been directly involved in major illegal business ventures.

Current concerns in Kyrgyzstan include: privatization of state-owned enterprises, expansion of democracy and political freedoms, inter-ethnic relations, and terrorism.

## Politics



President Kurmanbek Bakiyev

The 1993 constitution defines the form of government as a democratic republic. The executive branch includes a president and prime minister. The parliament currently is unicameral. The judicial branch comprises a Supreme Court, a Constitutional Court, local courts, and a Chief Prosecutor.

In March 2002, in the southern district of Aksy, five people protesting the arbitrary arrest of an opposition politician were shot dead by police, sparking nationwide protests. President Akayev initiated a constitutional reform process which initially included the participation of a broad range of government, civil, and social representatives in an open dialogue, leading to a February 2003 referendum marred by voting irregularities. The amendments to the constitution approved by the referendum resulted in stronger control by the president and weakened the parliament and the Constitutional Court. Parliamentary elections for a new, 75-seat unicameral legislature were held on February 27 and March 13, 2005, but were widely viewed as corrupt. The subsequent protests led to a bloodless coup on March 24, after which Akayev fled the country and was replaced by acting president Kurmanbek Bakiyev. (see: Tulip Revolution).

Interim government leaders are developing a new governing structure for the country and working to resolve outstanding constitutional issues. On July 10, 2005, acting president Bakiyev won the presidential election in a landslide, with 88.9% of the vote, and was inaugurated on 14 August. However, initial public support for the new administration substantially declined in subsequent months as a result of its apparent inability to solve the corruption problems that have plagued the country since its independence from the Soviet Union, along with the murders of several members of parliament. Largescale protests against president Bakiyev took place in Bishkek in April and November of 2006, with opposition leaders accusing the president of failing to

live up to his election promises to reform the country's constitution and transfer many of his presidential powers to parliament.

## Provinces and districts

Kyrgyzstan is divided into seven provinces (sing. *oblast* (область), pl. *oblasttar* (областтар)) administered by appointed governors. The capital, Bishkek, and the second large city Osh are administratively the independent cities (*shaar*) with a status equal to a province.

The provinces, and independent cities, are as follows:

1. Bishkek (city)
2. Batken
3. Chui
4. Jalal-Abad
5. Naryn
6. Osh (province)
7. Talas
8. Issyk-Kul
9. Osh (city)

Each province comprises a number of districts (*raions*), administered by government-appointed officials (*akim*). Rural communities (*ayıl ökmötü*), consisting of up to twenty small settlements, have their own elected mayors and councils.



## Geography

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country in Central Asia, bordering Kazakhstan, China, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The mountainous region of the Tian Shan covers over 80% of the country (Kyrgyzstan is occasionally referred to as "the Switzerland of Central Asia", as a result), with the remainder made up of valleys and basins. Lake Issyk-Kul in the north-western Tian Shan is the largest lake in Kyrgyzstan and the second largest mountain lake in the world after Titicaca. The highest peaks are in the Kakshaal-Too range, forming the Chinese border. Peak Jengish Chokusu, at 24,400 feet (7,439 m), is the highest point and is considered by geologists (though not mountaineers) to be the northernmost 23,000 foot (7,000 m) peak in the world. Heavy snowfall in winter leads to spring floods which often cause serious damage downstream. The runoff from the mountains is also used for hydro-electricity.



Map of Kyrgyzstan

The climate varies regionally. The south-western Fergana Valley is subtropical and extremely hot in summer, with temperatures reaching 40°C (104°F.) The northern foothills are temperate and the Tian Shan varies from dry continental to polar climate, depending on elevation. In the coldest areas temperatures are sub-zero for around 40 days in winter, and even some desert areas experience constant snowfall in this period.



Ala Archa gorge near Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan has significant deposits of metals including gold and rare earth metals. Due to the country's predominantly mountainous terrain, less than 8% of the land is cultivated, and this is concentrated in the northern lowlands and the fringes of the Fergana Valley.

Bishkek in the north is the capital and largest city, with approximately 900,000 inhabitants (as of 2005). The second city is the ancient town of Osh, located in the Fergana Valley near the border with Uzbekistan. The principal river is the Naryn, flowing west through the Fergana Valley into Uzbekistan, where it meets another of Kyrgyzstan's major rivers, the Kara Darya, forming the Syr Darya which eventually flows into the Aral Sea — although the massive extraction of water for irrigating Uzbekistan's cotton fields now causes the river to dry up long before reaching the Sea. The Chu River also briefly flows through Kyrgyzstan before entering Kazakhstan.



## Enclaves and exclaves

There is one exclave, the tiny village of Barak, Kyrgyzstan, (population 627) in the Fergana valley. The village is surrounded by Uzbek territory and located between the towns of Margilan and Fergana.

There are four Uzbek enclaves within Kyrgyzstan. Two of them are the towns of Sokh (area 125 sq. mi/325 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 42,800 in 1993, although some estimates go as high as 70,000; 99% are Tajiks, the remainder Uzbeks), and Shakhrimardan (also known as Shakirmardon or Shah-i-Mardan, area 35 sq. mi/90 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 5,100 in 1993; 91% are Uzbeks, the remainder Kyrgyz); the other two are the tiny territories of Chuy-Kara (or Kalacha, roughly 3 km long by 1 km wide or 2 mi by 0.6 mi) and Dzhangail (a dot of land barely 2 or 3 km across). Chuy-Kara is on the Sokh river, between the Uzbek border and the Sokh enclave.

There also are two enclaves belonging to Tajikistan: Vorukh (exclave area between 95 and 130 km<sup>2</sup> [37–50 sq. mi], population estimated between 23,000 and

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29,000, 95% Tajiks and 5% Kyrgyz, distributed among 17 villages), located 45 kilometres (28 mi) south of Isfara on the right bank of the Karafshin river, and a small settlement near the Kyrgyz railway station of Kairagach.

## Economy

Despite the backing of major Western lenders, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, Kyrgyzstan has had economic difficulties following independence. Initially, these were a result of the breakup of the Soviet trading bloc and resulting loss of markets, which impeded the republic's transition to a free market economy. The government has reduced expenditures, ended most price subsidies, and introduced a value-added tax. Overall, the government appears committed to the transition to a market economy. Through economic stabilization and reform, the government seeks to establish a pattern of long-term consistent growth. Reforms led to Kyrgyzstan's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) on December 20, 1998.

The Kyrgyz economy was severely affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting loss of its vast market. In 1990, some 98% of Kyrgyz exports went to other parts of the Soviet Union. Thus, the nation's economic performance in the early 1990s was worse than any other former Soviet republic except war-torn Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan, as factories and state farms collapsed with the disappearance of their traditional markets in the former Soviet Union. While economic performance has improved considerably in the last few years, and particularly since 1998, difficulties remain in securing adequate fiscal revenues and providing an adequate social safety net.

Agriculture is an important sector of the economy in Kyrgyzstan (see agriculture in Kyrgyzstan). By the early 1990s, the private agricultural sector provided between one-third and one-half of some harvests. In 2002 agriculture accounted for 35.6% of GDP and about half of employment. Kyrgyzstan's terrain is mountainous, which accommodates livestock raising, the largest agricultural activity, so the resulting wool, meat, and dairy products are major commodities. Main crops include wheat, sugar beets, potatoes, cotton, tobacco, vegetables, and fruit. As the prices of imported agrichemicals and petroleum are so high, much farming is being done by hand and by horse, as it was generations ago. Agricultural processing is a key component of the industrial economy, as well as one of the most attractive sectors for foreign investment.

Kyrgyzstan is rich in mineral resources but has negligible petroleum and natural gas reserves; it imports petroleum and gas. Among its mineral reserves are substantial deposits of coal, gold, uranium, antimony, and other valuable metals. Metallurgy is an important industry, and the government hopes to attract foreign investment in this field. The government has actively encouraged foreign involvement in extracting and processing gold. The country's plentiful water resources and mountainous terrain enable it to produce and export large quantities of hydroelectric energy.

On a local level, the economy is primarily kiosk in nature. A large amount of local commerce occurs at bazaars and small village kiosks. Commodities such as gas (petrol) are often sold road-side in gallon jugs. A significant amount of trade is unregulated. There is also a scarcity of common everyday consumer items in remote villages. Thus a large number of homes are quite self-sufficient with respect to food production. There is a distinct differentiation between urban and rural economies.

The principal exports are nonferrous metals and minerals, woolen goods and other agricultural products, electric energy, and certain engineering goods. Imports

include petroleum and natural gas, ferrous metals, chemicals, most machinery, wood and paper products, some foods, and some construction materials. Its leading trade partners include Germany, Russia, and neighboring China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

## Demographics

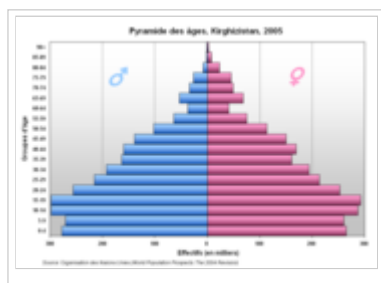
*The World Almanac 2005* reported that Kyrgyzstan's population is slightly more than five million, estimating it at 5,081,429. Of those, 34.4% are under the age of 15 and 6.2% are over the age of 65. The country is rural; only about one-third (33.9%) of Kyrgyzstan's population live in urban areas. The average population density is 69 people per square mile (29 people per km<sup>2</sup>).

The nation's largest ethnic group is the Kyrgyz, a Turkic people. The Kyrgyz comprise 69.5% of the population and have historically been semi-nomadic herders, living in round tents called yurts and tending sheep, horses and yaks. This nomadic tradition continues to function seasonally (see transhumance) as herding families return to the high mountain pasture (or *jailoo*) in the summer. The retention of this nomadic heritage and the freedoms that it assumes continue to have an impact on the political atmosphere in the country. The name Kyrgyz, both for the people and for the nation itself, is said to mean "forty girls", a reference to the Manas of folklore unifying forty tribes against the Mongols.



Traditional graves

Other ethnic groups include ethnic Russians (9.0%) concentrated in the North and Uzbeks (14.5%) living in the South. Small but noticeable minorities include Tatars (1.9), Uyghurs (1.1%), Tajiks (1.1%), Kazakhs (0.7%) and Ukrainians (0.5%), and other smaller ethnic minorities (1.7%). Of the formerly sizable Volga German community, exiled here by Stalin from their earlier homes in the Volga German Republic, most have returned to Germany, and only a few small groups remain. A small percentage of the population are also Soviet Koreans, meaning descendents of the former Korean residents of Vladivostok, whom Stalin had exiled to Central Asia (and the Caucasus) during the Second World War.



## Languages

Kyrgyzstan is one of two of the five former Soviet republics in Central Asia to retain Russian as an official language (Kazakhstan is the other country to retain

Russian). It added the Kyrgyz language to become an officially bilingual country in September 1991. This sent a clear signal to the ethnic Russians that they were welcome in the new independent state, in an effort to avoid a brain drain. Kyrgyz is a member of the Turkic group of languages and was written in the Arabic alphabet until the 20th century. Latin script was introduced and adopted in 1928, and was subsequently replaced by Cyrillic script in 1941.

Generally, people all over the country understand and speak Russian, except for some remote mountain areas. Russian is the mother tongue of the majority of Bishkek dwellers, and most business and political affairs are carried out in this language. Until recently, Kyrgyz remained a language spoken at home, and was rarely used during meetings or other events. However, most parliamentary meetings today are conducted in Kyrgyz, with simultaneous interpretation available for those not speaking Kyrgyz.

## Culture

- *Manas*, an epic poem
- *Komuz*, a three-stringed lute
- *Tush kyiz*, large, elaborately embroidered wall hangings
- *Shirdak*, flat cushions made in shadow-pairs
- other textiles, especially made from felt
- Falconry

## Traditions

Illegal, but still practiced, is the tradition of bride kidnapping.

It is debatable whether bride kidnapping is actually traditional. Some of the confusion may stem from the fact that arranged marriages were traditional, and one of the ways to escape an arranged marriage was to arrange a consensual "kidnapping."

## Religion



Musicians



Karakol Dungan Mosque

During Soviet times, state atheism was encouraged. Today, however, Kyrgyzstan is a secular state though Islam has exerted growing influence in politics.. For instance, there have been various attempts to decriminalize polygamy, and to arrange for officials to travel on *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca) under a tax-free arrangement. Kyrgyzstan is an overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim nation, and adheres to the Hanafi school of thought.

While Islam in Kyrgyzstan is more of a cultural background than a devout daily practice for many, public figures have expressed support for restoring religious values. For example, human rights ombudsman Tursunbay Bakir-Ulu noted, "In this era of independence, it is not surprising that there has been a return to spiritual roots not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in other post-communist republics. It would be immoral to develop a market-based society without an ethical dimension." Additionally, Bermet Akayeva, the daughter of Askar Akayev, the former President of Kyrgyzstan, stated during a July 2007 interview that Islam is increasingly taking root across the nation. She emphasized that many mosques have been built and that the Kyrgyz are increasingly devoting themselves to Islam, which she noted was "not a bad thing in itself. It keeps our society more moral, cleaner."

The other faiths practiced in Kyrgyzstan include Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox versions of Christianity, practiced primarily by Russians and Ukrainians respectively. A small minority of Germans are Protestant Christians, mostly Lutherans and Baptists. A few Animistic traditions survive, as do influences from Buddhism such as the tying of prayer flags onto sacred trees, though some view this practice rooted within Sufi Islam. There are also a small number of Bukharian Jews living in Kyrgyzstan, but during the collapse of the Soviet Union most fled to other countries, mainly the United States and Israel.

## Flag

The 40-rayed yellow sun in the centre of the flag represents 40 warriors of the mythical hero Manas. The lines inside the sun represent the crown or *tündük* (Kyrgyz түндүк) of a yurt, a symbol replicated in many facets of Kyrgyz architecture. The red portion of the flag represents peace and openness of Kyrgyzstan.

## Education

Educational institutions in Kyrgyzstan include:

- University of Central Asia
- American University of Central Asia
- Bishkek Humanities University
- International Ataturk-Alatoo University



American University of Central Asia

- International University of Kyrgyzstan
- Kyrgyz National University
- Arabaev Kyrgyz State University
- Kyrgyz Russian Slavonic University
- Kyrgyz-Russian State University
- Kyrgyz-Turkish MANAS University
- Kyrgyz Uzbek University
- Moskov Institute of Law and Enterprise
- Osh State University
- Osh Technological University

## Horse riding

The traditional national sports reflect the importance of horse riding in Kyrgyz culture.

Very popular, as in all of Central Asia, is *Ulak Tartysh*, a team game resembling a cross between polo and rugby in which two teams of riders wrestle for possession of the headless carcass of a goat, which they attempt to deliver across the opposition's goal line, or into the opposition's goal: a big tub or a circle marked on the ground.

Other popular games on horseback include:

- *Aht Chabysh* - a long-distance horse race, sometimes over a distance of more than 50 km
- *Jumby Atmai* - a large bar of precious metal (the "jumby") is tied to a pole by a thread and contestants attempt to break the thread by shooting at it, while at a gallop
- *Kyz Kuumai* - a man chases a girl in order to win a kiss from her, while she gallops away; if he is not successful she may beat him with her "kamchi" (horsewhip)
- *Oodarysh* - two contestants wrestle on horseback, each attempting to be the first to throw the other from his horse
- *Tyin Enmei* - picking up a coin from the ground at full gallop

## Transport

Transport in Kyrgyzstan is severely constrained by the country's alpine topography. Roads have to snake up steep valleys, cross passes of 3,000 metre (9,000 ft) altitude and more, and are subject to frequent mud slides and snow avalanches. Winter travel is close to impossible in many of the more remote and high-altitude regions. Additional problems are due to the fact that many roads and railway lines built during the Soviet period are today intersected by international boundaries, requiring time-consuming border formalities to cross where they are not completely closed. Horses are still a much-used transport option, especially in more rural areas; Kyrgyzstan's road infrastructure is not extensive, so horses are able to reach locations that motor vehicles cannot, and they do not require expensive, imported fuel.

## Airports

At the end of the Soviet period there were about 50 airports and airstrips in Kyrgyzstan, many of them built primarily to serve military purposes in this border region so close to China. Only a few of them remain in service today.

- Manas Airport near Bishkek is the main international airport, with services to Moscow, Tashkent, Urumqi, Istanbul, Baku, Delhi and London.
- Osh Airport is the main air terminal in the South, with daily connections to Bishkek.
- Jalal-Abad Airport is linked to Bishkek by two flights per week.
- Other facilities built during the Soviet era are either closed down, used only occasionally or restricted to military use (e.g., Kant airbase, now a Russian air base near Bishkek)

## Railways

The Chui valley in the north and the Ferghana valley in the south were endpoints of the Soviet Union's rail system in Central Asia. Following the emergence of independent post-Soviet states, the rail lines which were built without regard for administrative boundaries have been cut by borders, and traffic is therefore severely curtailed. The small bits of rail lines within Kyrgyzstan, about 370 km (1,520 mm broad gauge) in total, have little economic value in the absence of the former bulk traffic over long distances to and from such centers as Tashkent, Almaty and the cities of Russia.

There are vague plans about extending rail lines from Balykchy in the north and/or from Osh in the south into the People's Republic of China, but the cost of construction would be enormous.

### Rail links with adjacent countries

- Kazakhstan - yes - Bishkek branch - same gauge
- Uzbekistan - yes - Osh branch - same gauge
- Tajikistan - no - same gauge
- China - no - Break of gauge 1524mm/1435mm



Bishkek West Bus Terminal

## Highways



A road in Osh

With support from the Asian Development Bank, a major road linking the north and southwest from Bishkek to Osh has recently been completed. This considerably eases communication between the two major population centers of the country -- the Chui Valley in the north and the Fergana Valley in the South. An offshoot of this road branches off across a 3,500 meter pass into the Talas Valley in the northwest. Plans are now being formulated to build a major road from Osh into the People's Republic of China.

*total:* 30,300 km (including 140 km of expressways)

*paved:* 22,600 km (includes some all-weather gravel-surfaced roads)

*unpaved:* 7,700 km (these roads are made of unstabilized earth and are difficult to negotiate in wet weather) (1990)

## Pipelines

Natural gas 200 km

## Waterways

Water transport exists only on Lake Issyk Kul, and has drastically shrunk since the end of the Soviet Union.

## Ports and harbours

Balykchy (Ysyk-Kol or Rybach'ye), on Lake Issyk Kul.

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan>"

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# Laos

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**Laos** (pronounced /ˈlɑːoʊs/ or /ˈlaʊs/), officially the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, is a landlocked country in southeast Asia, bordered by Burma (Myanmar) and China to the northwest, Vietnam to the east, Cambodia to the south, and Thailand to the west. Laos traces its history to the Kingdom of Lan Xang or *Land of a Million Elephants*, which existed from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century. After a period as a French protectorate, it gained independence in 1949. A long civil war ended officially when the communist Pathet Lao movement came to power in 1975 but the protesting between factions continued for several years.

Private enterprise has increased since the late 1990s when economic reforms including rapid business licensing were introduced. Laos is still ranked among the lowest countries in terms of economic and political freedom. The economy of Laos grew at 7.2% in 2006, 35th fastest in the world. Eighty percent of the employed practice subsistence agriculture. The country's ethnic make-up is diverse, with around 70% belonging to the largest ethnic group, the Lao.

## Etymology

In the Lao language, the country's name is "Meuang Lao". The Imperial French, who made the country part of French Indochina in 1893, spelled it with a final silent "s", i.e. "Laos" (The Lao language itself has no final 's' sound, so Lao people do not pronounce the word Laos). The usual adjectival form is "Lao", e.g. "the Lao economy", not the "Laotian" economy--although "Laotian" is used to describe the people of Laos to avoid confusion with the Lao ethnic group.

## History

### ສາທາລະນະລັດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ ປະຊາຊົນລາວ *Sathalanalat Paxathipatai Paxaxon Lao* Lao People's Democratic Republic



Flag



Coat of arms

**Motto:** ສັນຕິພາບ ເອກະລາດ ປະຊາທິປະໄຕ  
ເອກະພາບ ວັດທະນາຖາວອນ  
"Peace, Independence, Democracy, Unity and Prosperity"

**Anthem:** *Pheng Xat Lao*



**Capital**  
(and largest city) Vientiane

**Official languages** Lao





The Mekong river at Luang Prabang

Laos traces its history to the kingdom of Lan Xang, founded in the fourteenth century by Fa Ngum, himself descended from a long line of Lao kings, tracking back to Khoun Boulom. Lan-Xang prospered until the eighteenth century, when the kingdom was divided into three principalities, which eventually came under Siamese suzerainty. In the 19th century, Luang Prabang was incorporated into the 'Protectorate' of French Indochina, and shortly thereafter, the kingdom of Champassack and the territory of Vientiane were also added to the protectorate. The French saw Laos as a useful buffer state between the two expanding empires of France and Britain. Under the French, Vientiane once again became the capital of a unified Lao state.

Following a brief Japanese occupation during World War II, the country declared its independence in 1945, but the French under De Gaulle re-asserted their control and only in 1950 was Laos granted semi-autonomy as an "associated state" within the French Union. Moreover, the French remained in *de facto* control until 1954, when Laos gained full independence as a constitutional monarchy. Under a special exemption to the Geneva Convention, a French military training mission continued to support the Royal Laos Army. In 1955, the U.S. Department of Defense created a special Programs Evaluation Office to replace French support of the Royal Lao Army against the communist Pathet Lao as part of the U.S. containment policy.

Laos was dragged into the Vietnam War, and the eastern parts of the country were invaded and occupied by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), which used Laotian territory as a staging ground and supply route for its war against the South. In response, the United States initiated a bombing campaign against the North Vietnamese, supported regular and irregular anticommunist forces in Laos and supported a South Vietnamese invasion of Laos. The result of these actions were a series of coups d'état and, ultimately, the Laotian Civil War between the Royal Laotian government and the communist Pathet Lao.

In the Civil War, the NVA, with its heavy artillery and tanks, was the real power behind the Pathet Lao insurgency. In 1968, the North Vietnamese Army launched a multi-division attack against the Royal Lao Army. The attack resulted in the army largely demobilizing and leaving the conflict to irregular forces raised by the United States and Thailand.

Massive aerial bombardment by the United States followed as it attempted to eliminate North Vietnamese bases in Laos in order to disrupt supply lines on the Ho Chi Minh/Trường Sơn Trail. Between 1971 and 1973 the USAF dropped more ordnance on Laos than was dropped worldwide during World War II (1939–45). In total more than 2 million tonnes of bombs were dropped (almost 1/2 a tonne per head of population at the time).

<b>Demonym</b>	Laotian, Lao
<b>Government</b>	Socialist Republic
<span> </span> - President	Lt. Gen. Choummaly Sayasone
<span> </span> - Prime Minister	Bouasone Bouphavanh
<b>Independence</b>	from France
<span> </span> - Date	19 July 1949
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	236,800 km <sup>2</sup> ( 83rd) 91,429 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	2
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - 2007 estimate	6,521,998 ( 106th)
<span> </span> - 1995 census	4,574,848
<span> </span> - Density	25/km <sup>2</sup> ( 177th) 65/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$13.75 billion ( 129th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$2,200 ( 138th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	34.6 ( <b>medium</b> )
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.601 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 130th)
<b>Currency</b>	Kip ( <span style="font-size: small;">LAK</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+7)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.la
<b>Calling code</b>	[[+ 856]]



Pha That Luang in Vientiane, the national symbol of Laos.

In 1975, the communist Pathet Lao, backed by the Soviet Union and the North Vietnamese Army (justified by the communist ideology of "proletarian internationalism"), overthrew the royalist government, forcing King Savang Vatthana to abdicate on December 2, 1975. He later died in captivity.

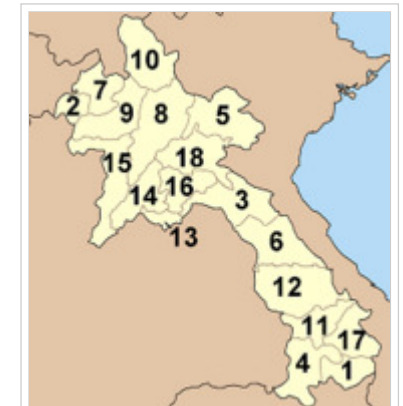
After taking control of the country, Pathet Lao's government renamed the country as the "Lao People's Democratic Republic" and signed agreements giving Vietnam the right to station military forces and to appoint advisers to assist in overseeing the country. Laos was ordered in the late 1970s by Vietnam to end relations with the People's Republic of China which cut the country off from trade with any country but Vietnam. Control by Vietnam and socialization were slowly replaced by a relaxation of economic restrictions in the 1980s and admission into ASEAN in 1997.

The Tai Dam are an ethnic group from Laos that escaped the country as a group. After thousands of years of political oppression, the Tai Dam people vowed to unite as one group and find a country they could call their own. The Tai Dam are known as "the people without a country." More than 90 percent of Tai Dam refugees emigrated to the state of Iowa after the governor agreed to take the Tai Dam as a group and have organizations sponsor families. In 2005, the United States established Normal Trade Relations with Laos, ending a protracted period of punitive import taxes.

## Provinces and districts

Laos is divided into sixteen provinces (*qwang*) and Vientiane Capital (*Na Kone Luang Vientiane*):

1. Attapu
2. Bokeo
3. Bolikhamxai
4. Champasak
5. Houaphan
6. Khammouan
7. Loung Namtha
8. Louangphabang
9. Oudomxai
10. Phongsali
11. Salavan
12. Savannakhet
13. Vientiane Capital
14. Vientiane Province
15. Xaignabouli
16. Xiangkhoang
17. Xekong



Provinces of Laos

The country is further divided into districts (*muang*).

## Geography

Laos is a landlocked country in Southeast Asia and the thickly forested landscape consists mostly of rugged mountains, the highest of which is Phou Bia at 2,817 m (9,242 feet), with some plains and plateaus. The Mekong River forms a large part of the western boundary with Thailand, whereas the mountains of the Annamite Chain form most of the eastern border with Vietnam.



Landscape in Vang Vieng

The climate is tropical and monsoonal. There is a distinct rainy season from May to November, followed by a dry season from December to April. Local tradition holds that there are three seasons (rainy, cold and hot) as the latter two months of the climatologically defined dry season are noticeably hotter than the earlier four months. The capital and largest city of Laos is Vientiane, and other major cities include Luang Prabang, Savannakhet and Pakxe.

In 1993, the government set aside 21% of the nation's land area as National Biodiversity Conservation Areas (NBCA), which may be developed into a national park system.

Laos is the home to the Indochinese tiger, the giant gaur, and the Asian elephant. A number of animal species have been discovered or re-discovered in Laos in recent years. These include the striped or Annamite rabbit, the saola, and most recently the Laotian rock rat or *kha-nyou*.

The country is one of four in the opium poppy growing region known as the "Golden Triangle". According to the October 2007 UNODC fact book "Opium Poppy Cultivation in South East Asia", the poppy cultivation area was 15 square kilometres (3,700 acres), down from 18 square kilometres (4,400 acres) in 2005.

## Economy



Map of Laos

The government of Laos — one of the few remaining official communist states — began decentralising control and encouraging private enterprise in 1986. The results, starting from an extremely low base, were striking: growth averaged 6% in 1988-2004 except during the short drop caused by the Asian financial crisis beginning in 1997. Major urban centers have experienced the most growth. The economies of Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Savannakhet in particular have experienced significant booms in recent years. The Lao economy is heavily dependent on investment and trade with its larger and richer neighbors, Thailand, Vietnam, and, especially in the north, China. Pakxe has also experienced growth based on cross-border trade with Thailand and Vietnam.

Much of the country, however, lacks adequate infrastructure. Laos has no railways, although a short link to connect Vientiane with Thailand over the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge is currently under construction. The major roads connecting the major urban centres, in particular Route 13 South, have been significantly upgraded in recent years, but villages far from major roads are accessible only through unpaved roads that may not be accessible year-round. There is limited external and internal telecommunication, particularly of the wire line sort, but mobile cellular phone use has become widespread in urban centres. In many rural areas electricity is unavailable or offered only during scheduled periods. Songthaews (pick-up trucks with benches) are used in the country for long-distance and local public transport.



The Nam Ou river is an important transportation route in Laos.

Subsistence agriculture still accounts for half of GDP and provides 80% of total employment. Laos has the lowest percentage of arable land and permanent crop land in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Only 4.01% of Laos is arable land, and only 0.34% of the country is planted with permanent crops. Rice dominates agriculture, with about 80% of the arable land area used for growing rice. Approximately 77% of Lao farm households are self-sufficient in rice. Through the development, release and widespread adoption of improved rice varieties, and through economic reforms, Lao PDR achieved a net balance of rice imports and exports for the first time in 1999. Between 1990 and 2005, rice production increased from 1.5 million tons to 2.5 million tons : an average annual growth rate of more than 5%. This increase in production has been valued at \$8 million to \$19 million per year. Lao PDR may have the greatest number of rice varieties in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Since 1995 the Lao government has been working with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to collect seed samples of each of the thousands of rice varieties found in Laos.

The economy receives aid from the IMF and other international sources and from new foreign investment in food processing and mining, most notably of copper and gold. Tourism is the fastest-growing industry in the country. However, economic development in general is hampered by a serious case of brain drain. A 2005 World Bank study reported that 37% of educated Laotians lived abroad, putting the country in fifth place for worst brain drain.

In late 2004, Laos gained Normal Trade Relations status with the US, allowing Laos-based producers to face lower tariffs on their exports; this may help spur growth.

## Demographics

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Wattay International Airport in Vientiane.



The Mekong at Luang Prabang.

69% of the country's people are ethnic Lao, the principal lowland inhabitants and the politically and culturally dominant group. The Lao belong to the Tai linguistic group who began migrating southward from China in the first millennium AD. A further 8% belong to other "lowland" groups, which together with the Lao people make up the Lao Loum.



In Luang Prabang, a young girl at the time of a Hmong Meeting Festival.

Hill people and minority cultures of Laos such as the Hmong (Miao), Yao (Mien), Tai dumm, Dao, Shan, and several Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples have lived in isolated regions of Laos for many years. Mountain/hill tribes of mixed ethno/cultural-linguistic heritage are found in northern Laos which include the Lua (Lua) and Khammu people who are indigenous to Laos. Today, the Lua people are considered endangered. Collectively, they are known as Lao Soung or highland Laotians. In the central and southern mountains, Mon- Khmer tribes, known as Lao Theung or mid-slope Laotians, predominate. Some Vietnamese and Chinese minorities remain, particularly in the towns, but many left in two waves; after independence in the late 1940s and again after 1975.

The term "Laotian" does not necessarily refer to the ethnic Lao language, ethnic Lao people, language or customs, but is a political term that also includes the non-ethnic Lao groups within Laos and identifies them as "Laotian" because of their political citizenship. In a similar vein, the word "Lao" can also describe the people, cuisine, language and culture of the people of Northeast Thailand (Isan) who are ethnic Lao.

The predominant religion in Laos is Theravada Buddhism which, along with the common Animism practiced among the mountain tribes, coexists peacefully with spirit worship. There also are a small number of Christians, mostly restricted to the Vientiane area, and Muslims, mostly restricted to the Myanmar border region. Christian missionary work is regulated by the government.

The official and dominant language is Lao, a tonal language of the Tai linguistic group. Midslope and highland Lao speak an assortment of tribal languages. French, still common in government and commerce, has declined in usage, while knowledge of English, the language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has increased in recent years.

## Culture



Patuxay, was built with USAID funds in Vientiane in the 1960s to celebrate the independence struggle.



Budda statues at Vat Aham in Luang Prabang

Theravada Buddhism is a dominant influence in Lao culture. It is reflected throughout the country from language to the temple and in art, literature, performing arts, etc. Many elements of Lao culture predate Buddhism, however. For example, Laotian music is dominated by its national instrument, the khaen, a type of bamboo pipe that has prehistoric origins. The khaen traditionally accompanied the singer in *lam*, the dominant style of folk music. Among the various *lam* styles, the *lam saravane* is probably the most popular.

The country has two World Heritage Sites: Luang Prabang and Vat Phou. The government is seeking the same status for the Plain of Jars.

The People's Republic of China has recently allowed its citizens to travel more freely to Laos. As such, Chinese tourists are expected to account for 25% of the total number of visitors to Laos (up from only a few percent) in 2006. Pressures to modernize tourist infrastructure, particularly to cater to package tourism, are expected to significantly impact Luang Prabang and other culturally important Laotian cities.

The people of Laos have a reputation for being very kind and welcoming to all visitors.

Rice is the staple food and has cultural and religious significance. There are many traditions and rituals associated with rice production in different environments, and among many ethnic groups. For example, Khammu farmers in Luang Prabang plant the rice variety Khao Kam in small quantities near the hut in memory of dead parents, or at the edge of the rice field to indicate that parents are still alive.

## International rankings

Organisation	Survey	Ranking
Heritage Foundation/ <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	Index of Economic Freedom	149 out of 157
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index	156 out of 167
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index	111 out of 163
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	130 out of 177

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# Malaysia




## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**Malaysia** (pronounced /məˈleɪzə/ or /məˈleɪziə/) is a country that consists of thirteen states and three federal territories in Southeast Asia with a total landmass of 329,847 square kilometres (127,355 sq mi). The capital city is Kuala Lumpur, while Putrajaya is the seat of the federal government. The population stands at over 25 million. The country is separated into two regions — Peninsular Malaysia and Malaysian Borneo — by the South China Sea. Malaysia borders Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. The country is located near the equator and experiences a tropical climate. Malaysia is headed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and politically led by a Prime Minister. The government is closely modeled after the Westminster parliamentary system.

Malaysia as a unified state did not exist until 1963. Previously, a set of colonies were established by the United Kingdom from the late eighteenth century, and the western half of modern Malaysia was composed of several separate kingdoms. This group of colonies was known as British Malaya until its dissolution in 1946, when it was reorganized as the Federation of Malaya and later recognized as an independent nation in 1957. Singapore, Sarawak, British North Borneo and the Federation of Malaya joined to form Malaysia on 16 September 1963. The early years of the new union were marred by an armed conflict with Indonesia and the expulsion of Singapore. The Southeast Asian nation experienced an economic boom and underwent rapid development during the late 20th century. With a GDP per capita standing at USD13,000, it has, from time to time, been considered a newly industrialized country. As one of three countries that control the Strait of Malacca, international trade plays a large role in its economy. At one time, it was the largest producer of tin, rubber and palm oil in the world. Manufacturing has a large influence in the country's economy.

The Malays form the majority of the population. Some Malays are of Arab descent and there are sizable Chinese and Indian communities. Islam is the largest as well as the official religion of the federation. The Malay language is the official language. Malay was originally written in Jawi, based on Arabic script, but nowadays, the Roman alphabet (Rumi) is more often used.

Malaysia is a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and participates in many international organizations such as the United Nations. As a former British colony, it is also a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. It is also a member of the Developing 8 Countries.

<b>Malaysia</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of Arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Bersekutu Bertambah Mutu</i> "Unity Is Strength" <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Negaraku</i> "My Country" <sup>1</sup>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Kuala Lumpur
<b>Official languages</b>	Malay <sup>2</sup>
<b>Demonym</b>	Malaysian
<b>Government</b>	Federal constitutional monarchy and Parliamentary democracy

## Etymology



The word Malaysia is visible on a 1914 map published in Chicago, United States.

The name "Malaysia" was adopted in 1963 when the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak formed a 14-state federation. However the name itself had been vaguely used to refer to areas in Southeast Asia prior to that. A map published in 1914 in Chicago has the word Malaysia printed on it referring to certain territories within the Malay Archipelago. The Philippines once contemplated naming their state "Malaysia", but Malaysia adopted the name first in 1963 before the Philippines could act further on the matter. Other names were contemplated for the 1963 federation. Among them was Langkasuka ( Langkasuka was an old kingdom located at the upper section of the Malay Peninsula in the first millennium of the common era).

Even farther back into history, the English ethnologist George Samuel Windsor Earl in volume IV of *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* in 1850 proposed to name the islands of Indonesia as *Melayunesia* or *Indunesia* though he favored the former.

## History

### Prehistory

Archaeological remains have been found throughout Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. The Semang have a deep ancestry within the Malay Peninsula, dating to the initial settlement from Africa over 50,000 years ago. The Senoi appear to be a composite group, with approximately half of the maternal lineages tracing back to the ancestors of the Semang and about half to Indochina. This is in agreement with the suggestion that they represent the descendants of early Austronesian speaking agriculturalists, who brought both their language and their technology to the southern part of the peninsula approximately 5,000 years ago and coalesced with the indigenous population. The Aboriginal Malays are more diverse, and although they show some connections with island Southeast Asia, some also have an ancestry in Indochina around the time of the Last Glacial Maximum, followed by an early-Holocene dispersal through the Malay Peninsula into island Southeast Asia.

### Early history

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- Yang di-Pertuan Agong	Mizan Zainal Abidin
- Prime Minister	Abdullah Ahmad Badawi
<b>Independence</b>	
- from the United Kingdom ( Malaya only)	31 August 1957
- Federation (with Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore <sup>4</sup> )	16 September 1963
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	329,847 km <sup>2</sup> ( 67th) 127,355 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.3
<b>Population</b>	
- Feb 2008 estimate	27,496,000 ( 43rd)
- 2000 census	24,821,286
- Density	83/km <sup>2</sup> ( 110th) 216/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$357.9 billion ( 29th)
- Per capita	\$14,400 ( 57th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$165 billion ( 41st)
- Per capita	\$6,648 ( 63rd)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	46.1
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.811 (high) ( 63rd)
<b>Currency</b>	Ringgit (RM) ( MYR)
<b>Time zone</b>	MST ( UTC+8)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC+8)



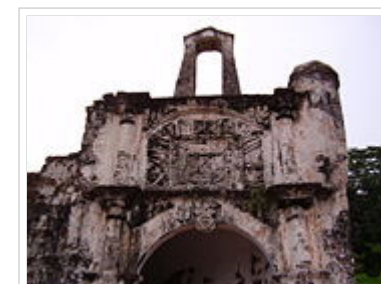
Ptolemy showed the Malay Peninsula on his early map with a label that translates as "*Golden Chersonese*", the Straits of Malacca were referred to as "*Sinus Sabaricus*". From the mid to the late first millennium, much of the Peninsula as well as the Malay Archipelago were under the influence of Srivijaya.

There were numerous Malay kingdoms in the 2nd and 3rd century CE—as many as 30 according to Chinese sources. Kedah—known as Kedaram, Cheh-Cha (according to I-Ching) or Kataha, in ancient Pallava or Sanskrit—was in the direct route of invasions of Indian traders and kings. Rajendra Chola, Tamil Emperor who is now thought to have laid Kota Gelanggi to waste, put Kedah to heel in 1025 but his successor, Vir Rajendra Chola, had to put down a Kedah rebellion to overthrow the invaders. The coming of the Chola reduced the majesty of Srivijaya which had exerted influence over Kedah and Pattani and even as far as Ligor.

The Buddhist kingdom of Ligor took control of Kedah shortly after, and its King Chandrabhanu used it as a base to attack Sri Lanka in the 11th century, an event noted in a stone inscription in Nagapattinum in Tamil Nadu and in the Sri Lankan chronicles, *Mahavamsa*. During the first millennium, the people of the Malay Peninsula adopted Hinduism and Buddhism and the use of the Sanskrit language until they eventually converted to Islam.

There are reports of other areas older than Kedah—the ancient kingdom of Gangga Negara, around Beruas in Perak, for instance, pushes Malaysian history even further into antiquity. If that is not enough, a Tamil poem, *Pattinapillai*, of the second century CE, describes goods from Kadaram heaped in the broad streets of the Chola capital. A seventh century Sanskrit drama, *Kaumudhimahotsva*, refers to Kedah as *Kataha-nagari*. The *Agnipurana* also mentions a territory known as *Anda-Kataha* with one of its boundaries delineated by a peak, which scholars believe is Gunung Jerai. Stories from the *Katasaritasagaram* describe the elegance of life in *Kataha*.

<b>Internet TLD</b>	.my
<b>Calling code</b>	+60
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Malaysian Flag and Crest from www.gov.my.</li> <li>2 The current terminology as per government policy is <i>Bahasa Malaysia</i> (literally Malaysian language) <sup>ref</sup> but legislation continues to refer to the official language as <i>Bahasa Melayu</i> (literally Malay language).</li> <li>3 Putrajaya is the primary seat of government.</li> <li>4 Singapore became an independent country on 9 August 1965.</li> </ol>	



A Famosa in Malacca. It was built by the Portuguese in the 15th century.

In the early 15th century, the Malacca Sultanate was established under a dynasty founded by Parameswara or Sultan Iskandar Shah, a prince from Palembang with bloodline related to the royal house of Srivijaya, who fled from Temasek (now Singapore). Parameswara decided to establish his kingdom in Malacca after witnessing an astonishing incident where a white mouse deer kicked one of his hunting dogs into a nearby river. He took this show of bravery by the mouse deer as a good sign and named his kingdom "Melaka" after the tree under which he was resting at the time. At its height, the sultanate controlled the areas which are now Peninsular Malaysia, southern Thailand ( Patani), and the eastern coast of Sumatra. It existed for more than a century, and within that time period Islam spread to most of the Malay Archipelago. Malacca was the foremost trading port at the time in Southeast Asia.

The first evidence of Islam in the Malay Peninsula dates from the 14th century in Terengganu, but according to the Kedah Annals, the 9th sultan of Kedah, Maharaja Derbar Raja, converted to Islam and changed his name to Sultan Muzaffar Shah. In 1511, Malacca was conquered by Portugal, which established a colony there. The sons of the last Sultan of Malacca established two sultanates elsewhere in the peninsula—the Sultanate of Perak to the north, and the Sultanate of Johor (originally a continuation of the old Malacca sultanate) to the south. After the fall of Malacca, three nations struggled for the control of Malacca Strait: the Portuguese (in Malacca), the Sultanate of Johor, and the Sultanate of Aceh. This conflict went on until 1641, when the Dutch (allied to the Sultanate of Johor) gained control of Malacca.

## British arrival

Britain established its first colony in the Malay peninsula in 1786, with the lease of the island of Penang to the British East India Company by the Sultan of Kedah. In 1824, the British took control of Malacca following the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 which divided the Malay Archipelago between Britain and the Netherlands, with Malaya in the British zone. In 1826, Britain established the crown colony of the Straits Settlements, uniting its three possessions in Malaya: Penang, Malacca and Singapore. The Straits Settlements were administered under the East India Company in Kolkata until 1867, when they were transferred to the Colonial Office in London.

During the late 19th century, many Malay states decided to obtain British help in settling their internal conflicts. The commercial importance of tin mining in the Malay states to merchants in the Straits Settlements led to British government intervention in the tin-producing states in the Malay Peninsula. British gunboat diplomacy was employed to bring about a peaceful resolution to civil disturbances caused by Chinese gangsters and Malay gangsters, and the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 paved the way for the expansion of British influence in Malaya. By the turn of the 20th century, the states of Pahang, Selangor, Perak, and Negeri Sembilan, known together as the Federated Malay States (not to be confused with the Federation of Malaya), were under the *de facto* control of British Residents appointed to advise the Malay rulers. The British were "advisers" in name, but in reality they exercised substantial influence over the Malay rulers.

The remaining five states in the peninsula, known as the Unfederated Malay States, while not directly under rule from London, also accepted British advisers around the turn of the 20th century. Of these, the four northern states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu had previously been under Siamese control. The other unfederated state, Johor, was the only state which managed to preserve its independence throughout most of the 19th century. Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor and Queen Victoria were personal acquaintances, and recognized each other as equals. It was not until 1914 that Sultan Abu Bakar's successor,



Sultan Abdul Samad Building in Kuala Lumpur houses the High Court of Malaya and the Trade Court. Kuala Lumpur was the capital of the Federated Malay States and is the current Malaysian capital.

Sultan Ibrahim accepted a British adviser.

On the island of Borneo, Sabah was governed as the crown colony of British North Borneo, while Sarawak was acquired from Brunei as the personal kingdom of the Brooke family, who ruled as White Rajahs.

Following the Japanese Invasion of Malaya its occupation during World War II, popular support for independence grew. Post-war British plans to unite the administration of Malaya under a single crown colony called the Malayan Union foundered on strong opposition from the Malays, who opposed the emasculation of the Malay rulers and the granting of citizenship to the ethnic Chinese. The Malayan Union, established in 1946 and consisting of all the British possessions in Malaya with the exception of Singapore, was dissolved in 1948 and replaced by the Federation of Malaya, which restored the autonomy of the rulers of the Malay states under British protection.

During this time, rebels under the leadership of the Malayan Communist Party launched guerrilla operations designed to force the British out of Malaya. The Malayan Emergency, as it was known, lasted from 1948 to 1960, and involved a long anti-insurgency campaign by Commonwealth troops in Malaya. Although the insurgency quickly stopped there was still a presence of Commonwealth troops, with the backdrop of the Cold War. Against this backdrop, independence for the Federation within the Commonwealth was granted on 31 August 1957.

## Post independence

In 1963, Malaya along with the then-British crown colonies of Sabah (British North Borneo), Sarawak and Singapore, formed Malaysia. The Sultanate of Brunei, though initially expressing interest in joining the Federation, withdrew from the planned merger due to opposition from certain segments of its population as well as arguments over the payment of oil royalties and the status of the Sultan in the planned merger.

The early years of independence were marred by conflict with Indonesia (*Konfrontasi*) over the formation of Malaysia, Singapore's eventual exit in 1965, and racial strife in the form of racial riots in 1969. The Philippines also made an active claim on Sabah in that period based upon the Sultanate of Brunei's cession of its north-east territories to the Sulu Sultanate in 1704. The claim is still ongoing. After the 13 May racial riots of 1969, the controversial New Economic Policy—intended to increase proportionately the share of the economic pie of the bumiputras ("indigenous people", which includes the majority Malays, but not always the indigenous population) as compared to other ethnic groups—was launched by Prime Minister Abdul Razak. Malaysia has since maintained a delicate ethno-political balance, with a system of government that has attempted to combine overall economic development with political and economic policies that promote equitable participation of all races.

Between the 1980s and the mid 1990s, Malaysia experienced significant economic growth under the premiership of Mahathir bin Mohamad. The period saw a shift from an agriculture-based economy to one based on manufacturing and industry in areas such as computers and consumer electronics. It was during this period, too, that the physical landscape of Malaysia has changed with the emergence of numerous mega-projects. The most notable of these projects are the Petronas Twin Towers (at the time the tallest building in the world), KL International Airport (KLIA), North-South Expressway, the Sepang F1 Circuit, the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), the Bakun hydroelectric dam and Putrajaya, a new federal administrative capital.



Kuala Lumpur, the capital and largest city in Malaysia

In the late 1990s, Malaysia was shaken by the Asian financial crisis as well as political unrest caused by the sacking of the deputy prime minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim. In 2003, Dr Mahathir, Malaysia's longest serving prime minister, retired in favour of his deputy, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. On November 2007 Malaysia was rocked by two anti-government rallies. The 2007 Bersih Rally numbering 40,000 strong was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on November 10 campaigning for electoral reform. It was precipitated by allegations of corruption and discrepancies in the Malaysian election system that heavily favour the ruling political party, Barisan Nasional, which has been in power since Malaysia achieved its independence in 1957. The 2007 HINDRAF rally was held in Kuala Lumpur on 25 November. The rally organizer, the Hindu Rights Action Force, had called the protest over alleged discriminatory policies which favour ethnic Malays. The crowd was estimated to be between 5,000 to 30,000. In both cases the government and police were heavy handed and tried to prevent the gatherings from taking place.

## Government and politics

Malaysia is a federal constitutional elective monarchy. The federal head of state of Malaysia is the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, commonly referred to as the King of Malaysia. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is elected to a five-year term among the nine hereditary Sultans of the Malay states; the other four states, which have titular Governors, do not participate in the selection.

The system of government in Malaysia is closely modeled on that of Westminster parliamentary system, a legacy of British colonial rule. In practice however, more power is vested in the executive branch of government than in the legislative, and the judiciary has been weakened by sustained attacks by the government during the Mahathir era. Since independence in 1957, Malaysia has been governed by a multi-party coalition known as the Barisan Nasional (formerly known as the Alliance).

Legislative power is divided between federal and state legislatures. The bicameral parliament consists of the lower house, the House of Representatives or *Dewan Rakyat* (literally the "Chamber of the People") and the upper house, the Senate or *Dewan Negara* (literally the "Chamber of the Nation"). The 222-member House of Representatives are elected from single-member constituencies that are drawn based on population for a maximum term of five years. All 70 Senators sit for three-year terms; 26 are elected by the 13 state assemblies, two representing the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur, one each from federal territories of Labuan and Putrajaya, and 40 are appointed by the king. Besides the Parliament at the federal level, each state has a unicameral state legislative chamber ( Malay: *Dewan Undangan Negeri*) whose members are elected from single-member constituencies. Parliamentary elections are held at least once every five years, with the last general election being in March 2008. The cabinet is chosen from among members of both houses of Parliament and is responsible to that body.

State governments are led by Chief Ministers ( *Menteri Besar* in Malay states or *Ketua Menteri* in states without hereditary rulers), who is a state assembly member from the majority party in the Dewan Undangan Negeri. In each of the states with a hereditary ruler, the Chief Minister is required to be a Malay Muslim, although this rule is subject the rulers' discretions.

## Citizenship

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The Parliament building, symbol of democracy in Malaysia.



Malaysia PM's office, Putrajaya

Most Malaysians are granted citizenship by *lex soli*. All Malaysians are Federal citizens with no formal citizenships within the individual states, except for the states of Sabah and Sarawak and the federal territory of Labuan in East Malaysia, where state citizenship is a privilege and distinguishable from the Peninsula. Every citizen is issued a biometric smart chip identity card, known as *MyKad*, at the age of 12, and must carry the card at all times. A citizen is required to present his or her identity card to the police, or in the case of an emergency, to any military personnel, to be identified. If the card cannot be produced immediately, the person technically has 24 hours under the law to produce it at the nearest police station.

## Administrative divisions

Administratively, Malaysia consists of 13 states (11 in Peninsular Malaysia and 2 in Malaysian Borneo) and 3 federal territories.

## Geography

The two distinct parts of Malaysia, separated from each other by the South China Sea, share a largely similar landscape in that both West and East Malaysia feature coastal plains rising to often densely forested hills and mountains, the highest of which is Mount Kinabalu at 4,095.2 metres (13,435.7 ft) on the island of Borneo. The local climate is equatorial and characterized by the annual southwest (April to October) and northeast (October to February) monsoons.

Tanjung Piai, located in the southern state of Johor, is the southernmost tip of continental Asia.

The Strait of Malacca, lying between Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia, is arguably the most important shipping lane in the world.

Putrajaya is the newly created administrative capital for the federal government of Malaysia, aimed in part to ease growing congestion within Malaysia's capital city, Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur remains the seat of parliament, as well as the commercial and financial capital of the country. Other major cities include George Town, Ipoh, Johor Bahru, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Miri, Alor Star, Malacca Town, and Klang.

## Demographics



Map of the states of Malaysia



Map of Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Malaysian Borneo)

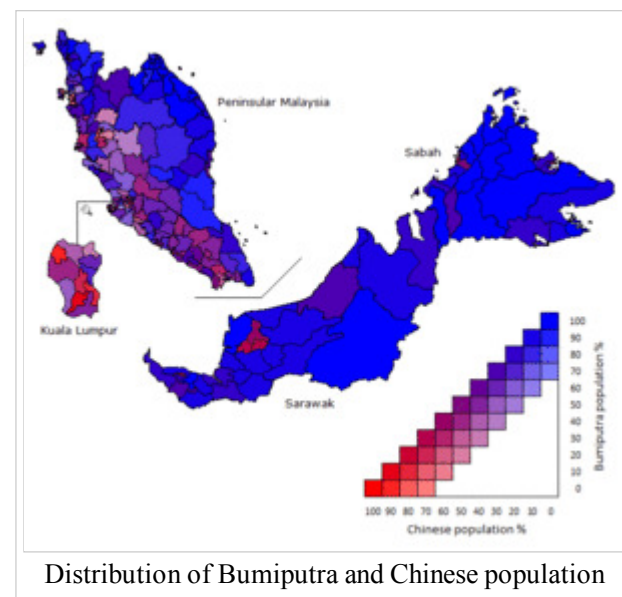
Malaysia's population comprises many ethnic groups, with the Malays and other bumiputra groups in Sabah and Sarawak making up the majority, at 65% of the population. By constitutional definition, Malays are Muslims who practice Malay customs (*adat*) and culture. Therefore, technically, a Muslim of any race who practices Malay customs and culture can be considered a Malay and have equal rights when it comes to Malay rights as stated in the constitution. Non-Malay bumiputra groups make up more than half of the state of Sarawak's population (of which 30% are Ibans), and close to 60% of Sabah's population (of which 18% are Kadazan-Dusuns, and 17% are Bajaus). There also exist aboriginal groups in much smaller numbers on the Peninsula, where they are collectively known as Orang Asli.

26% of the population are Malaysians of Chinese descent, while Malaysians of Indian descent comprise 8% of the population. The majority of the Indian community are Tamils but various other groups are also present, including Malayalis, Punjabis and Gujaratis. Other Malaysians also include those whose origin, inter alia, can be traced to the Middle East, Thailand and Indonesia. Europeans and Eurasians include British who settled in Malaysia since colonial times, and a strong Portuguese community in Malacca. A small number of Cambodians and Vietnamese also settled in Malaysia as Vietnam War refugees.

Population distribution is uneven, with some 20 million residents concentrated on the Malay Peninsula, while East Malaysia is relatively less populated. Due to the rise in labour intensive industries, Malaysia has 10 to 20% foreign workers with the uncertainty due in part to the large number of illegal workers, mostly Indonesian. There are a million legal foreign workers and perhaps another million unauthorized foreigners. The state of Sabah alone has nearly 25% of its 2.7 million population listed as illegal foreign workers in the last census. However, this figure of 25% is thought to be less than half the figure speculated by NGOs.

Additionally, according to the *World Refugee Survey 2008*, published by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Malaysia hosts a population of refugees and asylum seekers numbering approximately 155,700. Of this population, approximately 70,500 refugees and asylum seekers are from the Philippines, 69,700 from Myanmar, and 21,800 from Indonesia. The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants named Malaysia as one of the Ten Worst Places for Refugees on account of the country's discriminatory practices toward refugees. Malaysian officials are reported to have turned deportees directly over to human smugglers in 2007, and Malaysia employs the RELA, a volunteer militia, to enforce its immigration law.

## Religion



Distribution of Bumiputra and Chinese population

Malaysia is a multi-religious society and Islam is the official religion. According to the Population and Housing Census 2000 figures, approximately 60.4 percent of the population practiced Islam; 19.2 percent Buddhism; 9.1 percent Christianity; 6.3 percent Hinduism; and 2.6 percent traditional Chinese religions. The remaining 2 percent was accounted for by other faiths, including Animism and Sikhism. Until the twentieth century, most practiced traditional beliefs, which arguably still linger on to a greater degree than Malaysian officialdom is prepared to acknowledge.

Although the Malaysian constitution theoretically guarantees religious freedom, in practice the situation is restricted. All ethnic Malays are Muslim as defined in the Malaysian constitution. Additionally, all non-Muslims who marry a Muslim must renounce their religion and convert to Islam. Meanwhile, non-Muslims experience restrictions in activities such as construction of religious buildings and the celebration of certain religious events in some states. Muslims are obliged to follow the decisions of Sharia courts when it comes to matters concerning their religion. The jurisdiction of Sharia court is limited only to Muslims over matters of Faith and Obligations as a Muslim, which includes marriage, inheritance, apostasy, conversion, and custody among others. No other criminal or civil offences are under the jurisdiction of the Sharia Courts. As a rule, the Civil Courts cannot overrule any decision made by the Sharia Courts - not even the Federal Court. The Sharia Courts have a similar hierarchy to the Civil Courts.

## Education



Masjid Ubudiah is a well-known historical mosque in Kuala Kangsar.



Christ Church in Malacca Town was constructed in the 18th century by the Dutch.

Education in Malaysia is monitored by the federal government Ministry of Education.

Most Malaysian children start schooling between the ages of three to six, in kindergarten. Most kindergartens are run privately, but there are a few government-operated kindergartens.

Children begin primary schooling at the age of seven for a period of six years. There are two major types of government-operated or government-assisted primary schools. They are the national schools (*Sekolah Kebangsaan*) which use Malay as the medium of instruction, and the national-type schools (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan*) which use either Chinese or Tamil as the medium of instruction. Before progressing to the secondary level of education, students in Year 6 used to be required to sit for the *Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR)*, or Primary School Assessment Examination. An exam called *Penilaian Tahap Satu (PTS)*, First Level Assessment, was used to measure the ability of bright students, and to allow them to move from Year 3 to 5, skipping Year 4. However, this exam was removed in 2001.

Secondary education in government secondary schools lasts for five years. Government secondary schools use Malay as the main medium of instruction. The only exceptions are the Maths and Science subjects as well as languages other than Malay. At the end of the third year or Form Three, students sit for the *Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR)*, Lower Secondary Assessment. The combination of subjects available to Form 4 students vary from one school to another. In the last year (Form 5), students sit for *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)*, Malaysian Certificate of Education, which is equivalent to the British Ordinary or 'O' Levels (now referred to as GCSE). The oldest in Malaysia is Penang Free School. Penang Free School is also the oldest school in South East Asia.

Mathematics and Science subjects in government primary and secondary schools such as Biology, Physics, and Chemistry are taught in English. The reasoning was that students would no longer be hindered by the language barrier during their tertiary education in fields such as medicine and engineering.

There are also 60 Chinese Independent High Schools in Malaysia, where most subjects are taught in Chinese. Chinese Independent High Schools are monitored and standardised by the United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM, more commonly referred to by its Chinese name, Dong Zong 董总), however, unlike government schools, every independent school is free to make its own decisions. Studying in independent schools takes 6 years to complete, divided into Junior Middle (3 years) and Senior Middle (3 years). Students sit for a standardised test by Dong Zong known as the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) in Junior Middle 3 (equivalent to PMR) and Senior Middle 3 (equivalent to AO level). A number of independent schools conduct classes in Malay and English in addition to Chinese, enabling the students to sit for the PMR and SPM as well.

Malaysia's secondary schools are grouped into a few types, namely national schools which include daily schools and religious schools, Chinese independent schools, technical schools, residential schools, Mara Junior Science College and private-funding schools such as religious schools, international schools and private schools.

Students who wish to enter public universities must complete one and a half more years of secondary schooling in Form Six and sit for the *Sijil Tinggi*



Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) is one of the earliest boarding schools to be established in British Malaya.



University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus.



*Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM)*, Malaysian Higher School Certificate; equivalent to the British Advanced or 'A' levels.

As for tertiary education, there are public universities such as University of Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. In addition, five international reputable universities have set up their branch campuses in Malaysia since 1998. A branch campus can be seen as an 'off-shore campus' of the foreign university, which offers the same courses and awards as the main campus. Both local and international students can acquire these identical foreign qualifications in Malaysia for a cheaper price. The foreign university branch campuses in Malaysia are: Monash University Malaysia Campus, Curtin University of Technology Sarawak Campus, Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus and University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus.

Students also have the option of enrolling in private colleges after secondary studies. Most colleges have educational links with overseas universities especially in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. Malaysian students abroad study mostly in the UK, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Singapore, and Japan.

In addition to the National Curriculum, Malaysia has many international schools. International schools offer students the opportunity to study the curriculum of another country. These schools mainly cater to the growing expatriate population in the country. International schools include: the Australian International School, Malaysia (Australian curriculum), The Alice Smith School (British Curriculum), etc International school (British Curriculum), The Garden International School (British Curriculum), Lodge International School (British Curriculum), The International School of Kuala Lumpur (International Baccalaureate and American Curriculum), The Japanese School of Kuala Lumpur (Japanese Curriculum), The International School of Penang (International Baccalaureate and British Curriculum), Lycée Français de Kuala Lumpur (French Curriculum) amongst others.

## Healthcare

Malaysian society places importance on the expansion and development of health care, putting 5% of the government social sector development budget into public health care—an increase of more than 47% over the previous figure. This has meant an overall increase of more than RM 2 billion. With a rising and aging population, the Government wishes to improve in many areas including the refurbishment of existing hospitals, building and equipping new hospitals, expansion of the number of polyclinics, and improvements in training and expansion of telehealth. Over the last couple of years they have increased their efforts to overhaul the systems and attract more foreign investment.

The Malaysian health care system requires doctors to perform a compulsory three years service with public hospitals to ensure the manpower of these hospitals is maintained. Recently foreign doctors have also been encouraged to take up employment here. There is still, however, a compound shortage of medical workforce, especially that of highly trained specialists resulting in certain medical care and treatment only available in large cities. Recent efforts to bring many facilities to other towns have been hampered by lack of expertise to run the available equipment made ready by investments.

The majority of private hospitals are in urban areas and, unlike many of the public hospitals, are equipped with the latest diagnostic and imaging facilities. Private hospitals have not generally been seen as an ideal investment—it has often taken up to ten years before companies have seen any profits. However, the situation has now changed and companies are now looking into this area again, particularly in view of the increasing interest by foreigners in coming to Malaysia for medical care and the recent government focus to develop the health tourism industry.

Currently, private Malaysia Hospitals are looking at international healthcare accreditation, which may be Australian, British or American sourced.

## Economy

See Also: Gas Subsidies

The Malay Peninsula and indeed Southeast Asia has been a centre of trade for centuries. Various items such as porcelain and spices were actively traded even before Malacca and Singapore rose to prominence.

In the 17th century, they were found in several Malay states. Later, as the British started to take over as administrators of Malaya, rubber and palm oil trees were introduced for commercial purposes. Over time, Malaya became the world's largest major producer of tin, rubber, and palm oil. These three commodities, along with other raw materials, firmly set Malaysia's economic tempo well into the mid-20th century.

Instead of relying on the local Malays as a source of labour, the British brought in Chinese and Indians to work on the mines and plantations. Although many of them returned to their respective home countries after their agreed tenure ended, some remained in Malaysia and settled permanently.

As Malaya moved towards independence, the government began implementing economic five-year plans, beginning with the First Malayan Five Year Plan in 1955. Upon the establishment of Malaysia, the plans were re-titled and renumbered, beginning with the First Malaysia Plan in 1965.

In 1970s, Malaysia began to imitate the four Asian Tiger economies (Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore) and committed itself to a transition from being reliant on mining and agriculture to an economy that depends more on manufacturing. With Japanese investment, heavy industries flourished and in a matter of years, Malaysian exports became the country's primary growth engine. Malaysia consistently achieved more than 7% GDP growth along with low inflation in the 1980s and the 1990s.

During the same period, the government tried to eradicate poverty with the controversial New Economic Policy (NEP), after the May 13 Incident of racial rioting in 1969. Its main objective was the elimination of the association of race with economic function, and the first five-year plan to begin implementing the NEP was the Second Malaysia Plan. The success or failure of the NEP is the subject of much debate, although it was officially retired in 1990 and replaced by the National Development Policy (NDP). Recently much debate has surfaced once again with regards to the results and relevance of the NEP. Some have argued that the NEP has indeed successfully created a Middle/Upper Class of Malay businessmen and professionals. Despite some improvement in the economic power of Malays in general, the Malaysian government maintains a policy of discrimination that favors ethnic Malays over other races—including preferential treatment in employment, education, scholarships, business, access to cheaper housing and assisted savings. This special treatment has sparked envy and resentment between non-Malays and Malays.



Rubber latex.



The Malaysian government Ministry of Finance building in Putrajaya.

The Chinese control of the locally-owned sector of the country's economy, meanwhile, has been ceded largely in favour of the Bumiputras/Malays in many essential or strategic industries such as petroleum retailing, transportation, agriculture and etc. The minority of Indian descent has by and large been the most adversely affected by this policy. Indicators point to a higher incidence of crime and gang related activities among the Indians in recent years.

The rapid economic boom led to a variety of supply problems, however. Labour shortages soon resulted in an influx of millions of foreign workers, many illegal. Cash-rich PLCs and consortia of banks eager to benefit from increased and rapid development began large infrastructure projects. This all ended when the Asian Financial Crisis hit in the fall of 1997, delivering a massive shock to Malaysia's economy.

As with other countries affected by the crisis, there was speculative short-selling of the Malaysian currency, the ringgit. Foreign direct investment fell at an alarming rate and, as capital flowed out of the country, the value of the ringgit dropped from MYR 2.50 per USD to, at one point, MYR 4.80 per USD. The Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange's composite index plummeted from approximately 1300 points to around 400 points in a matter of weeks. After the controversial sacking of finance minister Anwar Ibrahim, a National Economic Action Council was formed to deal with the monetary crisis. Bank Negara imposed capital controls and pegged the Malaysian ringgit at 3.80 to the US dollar. Malaysia refused economic aid packages from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, however, surprising many analysts.

In March 2005, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published a paper on the sources and pace of Malaysia's recovery, written by Jomo K.S. of the applied economics department, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. The paper concluded that the controls imposed by Malaysia's government neither hurt nor helped recovery. The chief factor was an increase in electronics components exports, which was caused by a large increase in the demand for components in the United States, which was caused, in turn, by a fear of the effects of the arrival of the year 2000 ( Y2K) upon older computers and other digital devices.

However, the post Y2K slump of 2001 did not affect Malaysia as much as other countries. This may have been clearer evidence that there are other causes and effects that can be more properly attributable for recovery. One possibility is that the currency speculators had run out of finance after failing in their attack on the Hong Kong dollar in August 1998 and after the Russian ruble collapsed. (See George Soros)

Regardless of cause/effect claims, rejuvenation of the economy also coincided with massive government spending and budget deficits in the years that followed the crisis. Later, Malaysia enjoyed faster economic recovery compared to its neighbours. In many ways, however, the country has yet to recover to the levels of the pre-crisis era.

While the pace of development today is not as rapid, it is seen to be more sustainable. Although the controls and economic housekeeping may not have been the principal reason for recovery, there is no doubt that the banking sector has become more resilient to external shocks. The current account has also settled into a structural surplus, providing a cushion to capital flight. Asset prices are now a fraction of their pre-crisis heights.

The fixed exchange rate was abandoned in July 2005 in favour of a managed floating system within an hour of China's announcing of the same move. In the same week, the ringgit strengthened a percent against various major currencies and was expected to appreciate further. As of December 2005, however, expectations of further appreciation were muted as capital flight exceeded USD 10 billion.

In September 2005, Sir Howard J. Davies, director of the London School of Economics, at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur, cautioned Malaysian officials that if they want a flexible capital market, they will have to lift the ban on short-selling put into effect during the crisis. In March 2006, Malaysia removed the ban on short selling. Currently, Malaysia is considered a newly industrialized country.

## Infrastructure

Malaysia has extensive roads that connect all major cities and towns on the western coast of Peninsular Malaysia. As of 2006, the total length of the Malaysian expressway network is 1471.6 kilometres (914.4 miles). The network connects all major cities and conurbations such as Klang Valley, Johor Bahru and Penang to each other. The major expressway, the North-South Expressway spans from the northern and the southern tips of Peninsular Malaysia at Bukit Kayu Hitam and Johor Bahru respectively. It is a part of the Asian Highway Network, which also connects into Thailand and Singapore.

Roads in the East Malaysia and the eastern coast of Peninsular Malaysia are still relatively undeveloped. Those are highly curved roads passing through mountainous regions and many are still unsealed, gravel roads. This has resulted in the continued use of rivers and the necessary use of airplanes as the main or alternative mode of transportation for the interior residents.

Train service in West Malaysia is operated by the Keretapi Tanah Melayu (Malayan Railways) and has extensive railroads that connect all major cities and towns on the peninsular, including Singapore. There is also a short railway in Sabah operated by Sabah State Railway that mainly carries freight.

There are seaports throughout the country. The major ports are Port Klang and Port of Tanjung Pelepas in Johor. Other important ports can be found in Tanjung Kidurong, Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Kuantan, Pasir Gudang, Penang, Miri, Sandakan and Tawau.

Airports are also found throughout the country. Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) is the main airport of the country. Other important airports include Kota Kinabalu International Airport, Penang International Airport, Kuching International Airport, Langkawi International Airport, and Senai International Airport. There are also airports in smaller towns, as well as small domestic airstrips in rural Sabah and Sarawak. There are daily flight services between West and East Malaysia, which is the only convenient option for passengers travelling between the two parts of the country. Malaysia is the home of the first low-cost carrier in the region, AirAsia. It has Kuala Lumpur as its hub and maintains flights to Southeast Asia and China as well. In KL it operates out of the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) in KLIA.

The intercity telecommunication service is provided on Peninsular Malaysia mainly by microwave radio relay. International telecommunications are provided through submarine cables and satellite. One of the largest and most significant telecommunication companies in Malaysia is Telekom Malaysia (TM), providing products and services from fixed line, mobile as well as dial-up and broadband Internet access service. It has the near-monopoly of fixed line phone service in the country.



The Kuala Lumpur Tower enhances communication quality within Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley.



The Damansara Link section of Klang Valley's Sprint Expressway.

In December 2004, Energy, Water and Communications Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik reported that only 0.85% or 218,004 people in Malaysia used broadband services. However these values are based on subscriber number, whilst household percentage can reflect the situation more accurately. This represented an increase from 0.45% in three quarters. He also stated that the government targeted usage of 5% by 2006 and doubling to 10% by 2008. Lim Keng Yaik had urged local telecommunication companies and service provider to open up the last mile and lower prices to benefit the users.

## Culture

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multilingual society. The population as of February 2007 is 26.6 million consisting of 62% Malays, 24% Chinese, 8% Indians, with other minorities and indigenous peoples (Dept of Stats. Malaysia). Ethnic tensions have been rising in recent months.

The Malays, who form the largest community, are defined as Muslims in the Constitution of Malaysia. The Malays play a dominant role politically and are included in a grouping identified as bumiputra. Their native language is Malay (*Bahasa Melayu*). Malay is the national language of the country.

In the past, Malays wrote in Sanskrit or using Sanskrit-based alphabets. After the 15th century, Jawi (a script based on Arabic) became popular. Over time, romanized script overtook Sanskrit and Jawi as the dominant script. This was largely due to the influence of the colonial education system, which taught children in romanised writing rather than in Arabic script.

The largest non-Malay indigenous tribe is the Iban of Sarawak, who number over 600,000. Some Iban still live in traditional jungle villages in long houses along the Rajang and Lupar rivers and their tributaries, although many have moved to the cities. The Bidayus, numbering around 170,000, are concentrated in the southwestern part of Sarawak. The largest indigenous tribe in Sabah is the Kadazan. They are largely Christian subsistence farmers. The 140,000 Orang Asli, or aboriginal peoples, comprise a number of different ethnic communities living in Peninsular Malaysia. Traditionally nomadic hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists, many have been sedentarised and partially absorbed into modern Malaysia.

The Chinese population in Malaysia is mostly Buddhist (of Mahayana sect) or Taoist. Chinese in Malaysia speak a variety of Chinese dialects including Mandarin Chinese, Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka and Teochew. A large majority of Chinese in Malaysia, especially those from larger cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya and Penang speak English as well. There has also been an increasing number of the present generation Chinese who consider English as their first language. Chinese have historically been dominant in the Malaysian business community.

The Indians in Malaysia are mainly Hindu Tamils from southern India who native language is Tamil, there are also other Indian communities which is Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi-speaking, living mainly in the larger towns on the west coast of the peninsula. Many middle to upper-middle class Indians in Malaysia also speak English as a first language. A vigorous 200,000-strong Tamil Muslim community also thrives as an independent subcultural group. There are also prevalent Tamil christian communities in major cities and towns. There is also a sizable Sikh community in Malaysia of over 83,000. Most Indians originally migrated from India as traders, teachers or other skilled workers. A larger number were also part of the forced migrations from India by the British during colonial times to work in the plantation industry.

Eurasians, Cambodians, Vietnamese, and indigenous tribes make up the remaining population. A small number of Eurasians, of mixed Portuguese and Malay

descent, speak a Portuguese-based creole, called Papiá Kristang. There are also Eurasians of mixed Filipino and Spanish descent, mostly in Sabah. Descended from immigrants from the Philippines, some speak Chavacano, the only Spanish-based creole language in Asia. Cambodians and Vietnamese are mostly Buddhists (Cambodians of Theravada sect and Vietnamese, Mahayana sect).

Malaysian traditional music is heavily influenced by Chinese and Islamic forms. The music is based largely around the gendang (drum), but includes other percussion instruments (some made of shells); the rebab, a bowed string instrument; the serunai, a double-reed oboe-like instrument; flutes, and trumpets. The country has a strong tradition of dance and dance dramas, some of Thai, Indian and Portuguese origin. Other artistic forms include wayang kulit (shadow puppet theatre), silat (a stylised martial art) and crafts such as batik, weaving, including the ceremonial cloth pua kumbu, and silver and brasswork.

## Holidays

Malaysians observe a number of holidays and festivities throughout the year. Some holidays are federal gazetted public holidays and some are public holidays observed by individual states. Other festivals are observed by particular ethnic or religion groups, but are not public holidays.

The most celebrated holiday is the " Hari Merdeka" (Independence Day) on August 31 commemorating the independence of the Federation of Malaya in 1957, while Malaysia Day is only celebrated in the state of Sabah on September 16 to commemorate the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Hari Merdeka, as well as Labour Day ( May 1), the King's Birthday (first Saturday of June) and some other festivals are federal gazetted public holidays.

Muslims in Malaysia celebrate Muslim holidays. The most celebrated festival, Hari Raya Puasa (also called *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*) is the Malay translation of Eid al-Fitr. It is generally a festival honoured by the Muslims worldwide marking the end of Ramadan, the fasting month. In addition to Hari Raya Puasa, they also celebrate Hari Raya Haji (also called *Hari Raya Aidiladha*, the translation of Eid ul-Adha), Awal Muharram ( Islamic New Year) and Maulidul Rasul (Birthday of the Prophet).

Chinese in Malaysia typically celebrate festivals that are observed by Chinese around the world. Chinese New Year is the most celebrated among the festivals which lasts for fifteen days and ends with *Chap Goh Mei*. Other festivals celebrated by Chinese are the Qingming Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. In addition to traditional Chinese festivals, Buddhists Chinese also celebrate Vesak.

The majority of Indians in Malaysia are Hindus and they celebrate Diwali, the festival of light, while Thaipusam is a celebration which pilgrims from all over the country flock to Batu Caves. Apart from the Hindus, Sikhs celebrate the Vaisakhi, the Sikh New Year.

Other festivals such as Good Friday (East Malaysia only), Christmas, Hari Gawai of the Ibans ( Dayaks), Pesta Menuai (Pesta Kaamatan) of the Kadazan-Dusuns are also celebrated in Malaysia.

Despite most of the festivals being identified with a particular ethnic or religious group, all Malaysians celebrate the festivities together, regardless of their background. For years, when Hari Raya Puasa and Chinese New Year coincided, a slogan, *Kongsi Raya*, a combination of Gong Xi Fa Cai (a greeting used on



Typical festive fare during Hari Raya Puasa or Hari Raya Haji (clockwise from bottom left): beef soup, *ketupat* (compressed rice cubes), beef rendang and *sayur lodeh*.

the Chinese New Year) and Hari Raya (which could also mean "celebrating together" in Malay language) was coined. For years when the Hari Raya Puasa and Deepavali coincide, a slogan, *Deepa Raya*, is similarly coined.

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# Maldives

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

The **Maldives** (or **Maldive Islands**) (IPA: /'mɒl,dɑrvz/ or IPA: /'mɒl,dɪvz/), officially the **Republic of Maldives**, is an island nation consisting of a group of atolls in the Indian Ocean. The Maldives is located south of India's Lakshadweep islands, and about seven hundred kilometres (435 mi) south-west of Sri Lanka. The Maldives' twenty-six atolls encompass a territory featuring 1,192 islets, roughly two hundred of which are inhabited.


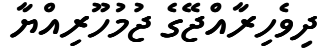

The name "Maldives" derives from *Maale Dhivehi Raajje* ("The Island Kingdom [under the authority of Malé]"). Some scholars believe that the name "Maldives" derives from the Sanskrit *maladvipa*, meaning "garland of islands", or from *mahila dvipa*, meaning "island of women", but these names are not found in ancient Sanskrit literature. Instead, classical Sanskrit texts mention the "Hundred Thousand Islands" (Lakshadweepa); a generic name which would include not only the Maldives, but also the Laccadives and the Chagos island groups. Some medieval Arab travellers such as Ibn Batuta called the islands "Mahal Dibiyat" from the Arabic word *Mahal* ("palace") . This is the name presently inscribed in the scroll of the Maldive state emblem.

The inhabitants were Buddhist, probably since Ashoka's period, in the 3rd century BC. Islam was introduced in 1153. The Maldives came then under the influence of the Portuguese (1558) and the Dutch (1654) seaborne empires. And in 1887 it became a British protectorate. In 1965, the Maldives obtained independence from Britain (originally under the name "Maldive Islands"), and in 1968 the Sultanate was replaced by a Republic.

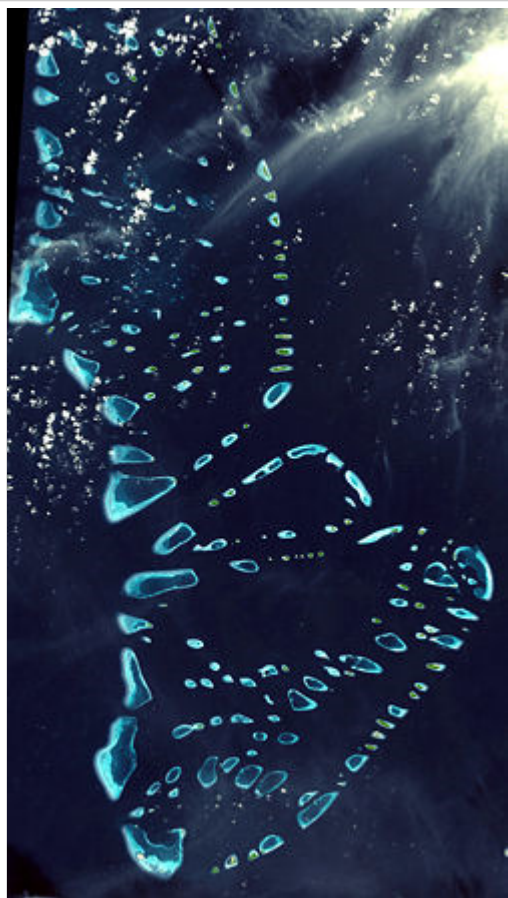
The Maldives is the smallest Asian country in terms of population. It is also the smallest predominantly Muslim nation in the world.

## History

Comparative studies of the Maldivian oral tradition suggest that the first settlers were Dravidian people from the nearest coasts, probably fishermen from the southwest coasts of the Indian Subcontinent and the western shores of Sri Lanka.

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Flag</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Coat of arms</p> </div> </div>	
<b>Motto:</b> None	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Gavmii mi ekuverikan matii tibegen kuriime salaam</i> "In National Unity Do We Salute Our Nation"	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Malé
<b>Official languages</b>	Dhivehi
<b>Demonym</b>	Maldivian
<b>Government</b> - President	Republic Maumoon Abdul Gayoom





Maldives is made up of a chain of 1192 small coral islands that are grouped into clusters of atolls

Buddhism came to the Maldives at the time of Emperor Ashoka's expansion and became the dominant religion of the people of the Maldives until the 12th century AD.

Western interest in the archaeological remains of early cultures on the Maldives began with the work of H.C.P. Bell, a British commissioner of the Ceylon Civil Service. Bell was shipwrecked on the islands in 1879, and returned several times to investigate ancient Buddhist ruins. He studied the ancient mounds, called *havitta* or *ustubu* (these names are derived from chaitiya or stupa) (Mahl: *زَوْرُجُو*) by the Maldivians, which are found on many of the atolls.

Although Bell asserted that the ancient Maldivians followed Theravada Buddhism, many local Buddhist archaeological remains now in the Malé Museum display in fact Mahayana and Vajrayana iconography.

According to a legend from the Maldivian Folklore, a prince named Koimala from India or Sri Lanka entered the Maldives from the North (Ihavandhu) and became the first king from the House of Theemuge. Prior to that the Maldives had been settled by people of Dravidian origin from the nearest coasts, like the group today known as the Giravaaru who claim ancestry from ancient Tamils. It is unlikely that the Giraavaru islanders were the only early settlers in the Maldives. The importance they have been given is because they are mentioned in the legend about the establishment of the capital and kingly rule in Malé. The Giraavaru people were just one of the island communities predating

Buddhism and the arrival of a Northern Kingly dynasty and the establishment of centralized political and administrative institutions.

The ancient Maldivian Kings promoted Buddhism and the first Maldivian writings and artistic achievements in the form of highly developed sculpture and architecture are from that period. The conversion to Islam is mentioned in the ancient edicts written in copper plates from the end of the 12th century AD. There is also a locally well-known legend about a foreign saint (Persian or Moroccan according to the versions) who subdued a demon known as Rannamaari.

Over the centuries, the islands have been visited and their development influenced by sailors and traders from countries on the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Until relatively recent times, Mappila pirates from the Malabar Coast – present-day Kerala state in India – harassed the islands.

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 265 of 537

<b>Independence</b>	
- from the UK	26 July 1965
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	298 km <sup>2</sup> ( 204th) 115 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2006 estimate	300,000 ( 176th <sup>1</sup> )
- 2006 census	298,842
- Density	1,105/km <sup>2</sup> ( 9th) 2,862/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$2.569 billion ( 162nd)
- Per capita	\$7,675 ( 79th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	▲ 0.741 (medium) ( 100th)
<b>Currency</b>	Rufiyaa ( MVR)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.mv
<b>Calling code</b>	+960
<small><sup>1</sup> Rank based on UN estimate for 2005.</small>	

Although governed as an independent Islamic sultanate from 1153 to 1968, the Maldives was a British protectorate from 1887 until July 25, 1965. In 1953, there was a brief, abortive attempt to form a republic, but the sultanate was re-imposed. In 1959, objecting to Nasir's centralism, the inhabitants of the three southernmost atolls protested against the government. They formed the United Suvadive Republic and elected, Abdullah Afeef as president and Hithadhoo as capital of this republic.

After independence from Britain in 1965, the sultanate continued to operate for another three years under King Muhammad Fareed. On November 11, 1968, the monarchy was abolished and replaced by a republic, although this was a cosmetic change without any significant alteration in the structures of government. The official name of the country was changed from **Maldiv**e Islands to the **Maldives** in a progressive manner. Tourism began to be developed on the archipelago about five years later, by the beginning of the 1970s.

In November 1988, a group of Maldivians headed by Mr. Lutfee a small time businessman used Tamil mercenaries from Sri Lanka to stage a coup against President Gayyoom. After an appeal by the Maldivian government for help, the Indian military intervened against the mercenaries in order to reinstate Gayyoom in power. On the night of November 3, 1988, the Indian Air Force airlifted a parachute battalion group from Agra and flew them non-stop over 2,000 kilometres (1,240 mi) to the Maldives. The Indian paratroopers landed at Hulule and secured the airfield and restored the Government rule at Malé within hours. The brief, bloodless operation, labelled *Operation Cactus*, also involved the Indian Navy.

On 26 December 2004, the Maldives were devastated by a tsunami following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. Only nine islands were reported to have escaped any flooding, while fifty-seven islands faced serious damage to critical infrastructure, fourteen islands had to be totally evacuated, and six islands were decimated. A further twenty-one resort islands were forced to shut down due to serious damage. The total damage was estimated at over 400 million dollars or some 62% of the GDP. A total of 108 people, including six foreigners, reportedly died in the tsunami. The destructive impact of the waves on the low-lying islands was mitigated by the fact there was no continental shelf or land mass upon which the waves could gain height. The tallest waves were reported 14 feet high.

## Economy

Current GDP per capita of Maldives registered a peak growth of 26.5% in the 1980s. Growth stabilised around 11.5% in the 1990s.

In ancient times the Maldives were renowned for the cowries, coir rope, dried tuna fish (Maldivian Fish), ambergris (Maavaharu) and coco de mer (Tavakkaashi). Local and foreign trading ships used to load these products in the Maldives and transport them to other harbours in the Indian Ocean.

Today tourism and fisheries form the two key components of the Maldivian economy. The country's shipping, banking and manufacturing sectors are growing at a considerable pace. Among the South Asian nations, the Maldives has the second highest per-capita GDP at 3,900 USD (2002 figure). Major trading partners include India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

## Fisheries

The Maldivian economy was entirely dependent on fishing and other marine products for many centuries. Fishing remains the main occupation of the people and the government gives special priority to the development of the fisheries sector.

The mechanization of the traditional fishing boat called *dhoni* in 1974 was a major milestone in the development of the fisheries industry and the country's economy in general. A fish canning plant was installed in the island of Felivaru in 1977, as a joint venture with a Japanese firm. In 1979, a Fisheries Advisory Board was set up with the mandate of advising the government on policy guidelines for the overall development of the fisheries sector. Manpower development programs were begun in the early 1980s, and fisheries education was incorporated into the school curriculum. Fish aggregating devices and navigational aids were located at various strategic points. Moreover, the opening up of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Maldives for fisheries has further enhanced the growth of the fisheries sector. Today, fisheries contribute over fifteen percent of the GDP and engage about thirty percent of the country's work force. It is also the second-largest foreign exchange earner after tourism.

## Cottage industries

The development of the tourism sector gave a major boost to the country's fledging traditional cottage industries such as mat weaving, lacquer work, handicraft, and coir rope making. New industries that have since emerged include printing, production of PVC pipes, brick making, marine engine repairs, bottling of aerated water, and garment production.

## Politics



Typical Maldives market



A dhoni without lateen sails.



Presidential Office in Malé



Muleeaage (Former Presidential Palace in Malé)

Politics in the Maldives takes place in the framework of a presidential republic, whereby the President is the head of government. The President heads the executive branch and appoints the cabinet. The President is nominated to a five-year term by a secret ballot of the Majlis (parliament), a nomination which is confirmed by national referendum.

The unicameral Majlis of the Maldives is composed of fifty members serving five-year terms. Two members from each atoll are elected directly by universal suffrage. Eight are appointed by the president, which is the main route through which women enter parliament. The country introduced political parties for the first time in its history in July 2005, six months after the last elections for the parliament. Nearly thirty-six members of the existing parliament joined the Dhivehi Raiyyathunge Party (the Maldivian People's Party) and elected President Gayoom as its leader. Twelve members of parliament became the Opposition and joined the Maldivian Democratic Party. Two members remained independent. In March 2006, President Gayoom published a detailed Roadmap for the Reform Agenda, providing time-bound measures to write a new Constitution, and modernise the legal framework. Under the Roadmap, the government has submitted to the Parliament a raft of reform measures. The most significant piece of legislation passed so far is the Amendment to the Human Rights Commission Act, making the new body fully compliant with the Paris Principles.



Mosque in Hulhumalé

The fifty members of parliament sit with an equal number of similarly constituted persons and the Cabinet to form the Constitutional Assembly, which has been convened at the initiative of the President to write a modern liberal democratic constitution for the Maldives. The Assembly has been sitting since July 2004, and has been widely criticised for making very slow progress. The Government and the Opposition have been blaming each other for the delays, but independent observers attribute the slow progress to weak parliamentary traditions, poor whipping (none of the MPs were elected on a party ticket) and endless points of order interventions. Progress has also been slow due to the commitment of the main opposition party, MDP, to depose President Gayoom by direct action ahead of the implementation of the reform agenda, leading to civil unrest in July-August 2004, August 2005 and an abortive putsch in November 2006. Significantly, the leader of the MDP, Ibrahim Ismail (MP for the biggest constituency - Malé) resigned from his party post in April 2005 after having narrowly beat Dr. Mohammed Waheed Hassan only a couple months earlier. He eventually left MDP in November 2006 citing the intransigence of his own National Executive Committee. The government had engaged the services of a Commonwealth Special Envoy Tun Musa Hitam to facilitate all party dialogue, and when the MDP boycotted him, enlisted the services of the British High Commissioner to facilitate a dialogue. The ensuing Westminster House process made some progress but was abandoned as MDP called for the November revolution.

The Roadmap provides the deadline of 31 May 2007 for the Assembly to conclude its work and to pave the way for the first multi-party elections in the country by October 2008.

On 19 June 2006, the Assembly voted to hold a public referendum to decide the form of government under the new constitutional settlement.

The **political structure** of the Maldives has remained practically unchanged for centuries. Despite the passage from Monarchy to republic, the contemporary political structure shows a continuity with the feudal past in which power was shared among a few families at the top of the social structure. In some islands, the offices have remained within the same family for generations. The village is ruled by an administrative officer called Katību, who serves as the executive headman of the island. Above the Katībus of every atoll is the Atoġuveriya (Atoll Chief). The power of these local chiefs is very limited and they take few

responsibilities. They are trained to report to the government about the situation in their islands and to merely wait for instructions from the central power and to follow them thoroughly.

## Judiciary

Al Ustaz Mohamed Rasheed Ibrahim from Fuvahmulah is the present chief justice of Maldives. All judges in the Maldives are appointed by the president. Islamic law is the basis of all judicial decisions.

The Maldives have, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Project (UNDP), undertaken to write the world's first Muslim criminal code. This project would formalize the proceedings of criminal justice in this tiny nation to one of the most comprehensive modern criminal codes in the world. The code has been written and awaits action by the parliament.

Meanwhile, Islam remains the only official religion of The Maldives, with the open practice of all other religions being forbidden.

## The Maldives and the Indian Ocean Commission

Since 1996, the Maldives has been the official progress monitor of the Indian Ocean Commission. Since 2002, the Maldives has expressed interest in the work of the Indian Ocean Commission but has not applied for membership. The interest of the Maldives relates to its identity as a small island state, especially in relation to matters of economic development and environmental preservation, and its desire to forge close relations with France, a main actor in the IOC region. The Maldives is a founder member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, SAARC, and as former protectorate of Great Britain, joined the Commonwealth in 1982, some 17 years after gaining independence from Great Britain. The Maldives enjoys close ties with Seychelles and Mauritius, who like the Maldives are members of the Commonwealth. The Maldives and Comoros are also both members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference. The Maldives has refused to enter into any negotiations with Mauritius over the demarcation of the maritime border between the Maldives and the British Indian Ocean Territory, pointing out that under international law, the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago rests with the UK, with whom negotiations were started in 1991.

## Administrative divisions

The Maldives has twenty-six natural atolls, which have been divided into twenty-one administrative divisions (twenty administrative atolls and Malé city).

In addition to a name, every administrative division is identified by the Maldivian code letters, such as " Haa Alif" for Thiladhunmati Uthuruburi (Thiladhunmathi North); and by a Latin code letter.



Satellite Image of the Maldives by NASA. Note that the southern most Atoll of the Maldives, Addu Atoll, is not visible on the image.

The first corresponds to the geographical Maldivian name of the atoll. The second is a code adopted for convenience. It began in order to facilitate radio communication between the atolls and the central administration. As there are certain islands in different atolls that have the same name, for administrative purposes this code is quoted before the name of the island, for example: Baa Funadhoo, Kaafu Funadhoo, Gaafu-Alifu Funadhoo. Since most Atolls have very long geographical names it is also used whenever the name of the atoll has to be quoted short, for example in the atoll website names.

This code denomination has been very much abused by foreigners who didn't understand the proper use of these names and have ignored the Maldivian true names in publications for tourists. Maldivians may use the letter code name in colloquial conversation, but in serious geographic, historical or cultural writings, the true geographical name always takes precedence. The Latin code letter is normally used in boat registration plates. The letter stands for the atoll and the number for the island.

Each atoll is administered by an Atoll Chief (*Atholhu Veriyaa*) appointed by the President. The Ministry of Atoll Administration and its Northern and Southern Regional Offices, Atoll Offices and Island Offices are collectively responsible to the President for Atolls Administration. The administrative head of each island is the Island Chief (Katheeb), appointed by the President. The Island Chief's immediate superior is the Atoll Chief.

The introduction of code-letter names has been a source of much puzzlement and misunderstandings, especially among foreigners. Many people have come to think that the code-letter of the administrative atoll is its new name and that it has replaced its geographical name. Under such circumstances it is hard to know which is the correct name to use.

## Geography

The Maldives holds the record for being the flattest country in the world, with a maximum natural ground level of only 2.3 m (7½ ft), though in areas where construction exists this has been increased to several metres. Over the last century, sea levels have risen about twenty centimetres (8 in). The ocean is likely to continue rising and this threatens the existence of Maldives.

The first accurate maritime charts of this complex Indian Ocean atoll group were the British Admiralty Charts. In 1834-36 Capt. Robert Moresby, assisted by Lieutenants Christopher and Young, undertook the difficult cartography of the Maldivian Islands. The resulting charts were printed as three separate large maps by the Hydrographic Service of the Royal Navy.

A tsunami in the Indian Ocean caused by the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake caused parts of the Maldives to be covered by sea water and left many people homeless. After the disaster, cartographers are planning to redraw the maps of the islands due to alterations by the tsunami.



Maldivian reefs

## Demographics

The Maldivian ethnic identity is a blend of the cultures reflecting the peoples who settled on the islands, reinforced by religion and language. The earliest settlers were probably from southern India and Sri Lanka.

Some social stratification exists on the islands. It is not rigid, since rank is based on varied factors, including occupation, wealth, Islamic virtue, and family ties. Traditionally, instead of a complex caste system, like the Vedic one, there was merely a distinction between noble (bēfulhu) and common people in the Maldives. Members of the social elite are concentrated in Malé. Outside of the service industry, this is the only location where the foreign and domestic populations are likely to interact. The tourist resorts are not on islands where the natives live, and casual contacts between the two groups are discouraged.

A census has been recorded since 1905, which shows that the population of the country remained around 100,000 for the first seventy years of the last century. Following independence in 1965, the health status of the population improved so much that the population doubled by 1978, and the population growth rate peaked at 3.4% in 1985. By 2005, the population had reached 300,000, although the census in 2000 showed that the population growth rate had declined to 1.9%. Life expectancy at birth stood at 46 years in 1978, while it has now risen to 72 years. Infant mortality has declined from 127 per thousand in 1977 to 12 today, and adult literacy stands at 99%. Combined school enrolment stands in the high 90s.

The Maldives has one of the highest birth rates in the world. The result is that many islands have become overpopulated and are completely covered by homesteads. Hence the country is becoming less self-sufficient by the day.

As of July 2006, more than 50,000 foreign employees live in the country. They comprise mainly of people from the neighbouring South Asian countries of India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal.

## Tourism

The development of tourism has fostered the overall growth of the country's economy. It has created direct and indirect employment and income generation opportunities in other related industries. Today, tourism is the country's biggest foreign exchange earner, contributing to twenty percent of the GDP. With eighty-seven tourist resorts in operation. The year 2006 recorded 467,154 tourist arrivals. The first tourist resorts were opened in 1972 with Bandos island resort and Kurumba Village.

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Malé, the capital of the Maldives.



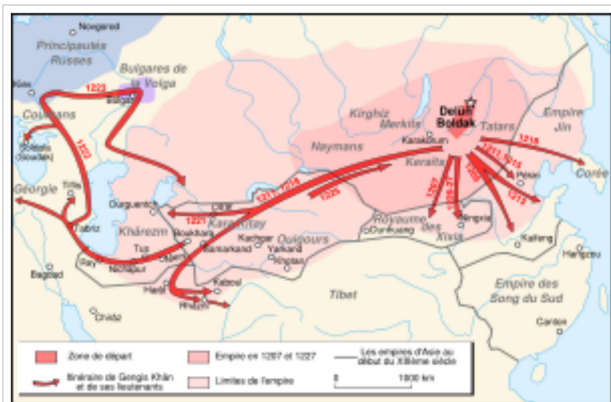
# Mongolia

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**Mongolia** (pronounced /mɒŋˈɡoʊliə/; Mongolian: МОНГОЛ УЛС, ᠮᠣᠩᠭᠣᠯ ᠤᠯᠤᠰ) is a landlocked country in East-Central Asia. It borders Russia to the north and China to the south. Ulan Bator, the capital and largest city, is home to about 38% of the population. Mongolia's political system is a parliamentary republic.

At 1,564,116 square kilometres, Mongolia is the nineteenth largest, and the most sparsely populated independent country in the world with a population of around 2.9 million people. It is also the world's second-largest landlocked country after Kazakhstan. The country contains very little arable land, as much of its area is covered by arid and unproductive steppes, with mountains to the north and west and the Gobi Desert to the south. Approximately thirty percent of the country's 2.9 million people are nomadic or semi-nomadic. The predominant religion in Mongolia is Tibetan Buddhism, and the majority of the state's citizens are of the Mongol ethnicity, though Kazakhs, Tuvans, and other minorities also live in the country, especially in the west.




## History



Genghis Khan's conquests

### Early history

Mongolia since prehistoric times has been inhabited by nomads who, from time to time, formed great confederations that rose to prominence. The first of these, the Xiongnu, were brought together to form a confederation by Modu Shanyu Mete Khan in 209 BC. Soon they emerged as the greatest threat of the Qin Dynasty forcing the latter to construct the Great Wall of China, itself being guarded by up to almost 300,000 soldiers during marshal's Meng Tian tenure, as a mean of defense against the destructive Xiongnu raids. After the decline of the Xiongnu, the Rouran, a

 <b>МОНГОЛ УЛС</b> <b>Mongol uls</b> <b>Mongolia</b>	
	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>"Монгол улсын төрийн дуулал"</i> <i>National anthem of Mongolia</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Ulan Bator
<b>Official languages</b>	Mongolian
<b>Demonym</b>	Mongolian

close relative of the Mongols, came to power before being defeated by the Göktürks, who then dominated Mongolia for centuries. During the seventh and eighth centuries, they were succeeded by Uyghurs and then by the Khitans and Jurchens. By the tenth century, the country was divided into numerous tribes linked through transient alliances and involved in the old patterns of internal strife.

## Mongol Empire

<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary republic
- President	Nambaryn Enkhbayar
- Prime Minister	Sanjaagiin Bayar
<b>Formation</b>	
- National Foundation Day	1206
- Bogd Khanate of Mongolia	December 29, 1911
- Mongolian People's Republic	November 24, 1924
- Democratic Mongolia	February 12, 1992
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	1,564,116 km <sup>2</sup> ( 19th) 603,909 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.6
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	2,951,786 ( 139th)
- 2000 census	2,407,500
- Density	1.7/km <sup>2</sup> ( 238th) 4.4/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$8.448 billion ( 143th)
- Per capita	\$2,900 ( 130th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	32.8 (medium)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.700 (medium) ( 114th)
<b>Currency</b>	Tögrög ( MNT)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+7 to +8)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.mn

In the chaos of the late twelfth century, a chieftain named Temüjin finally succeeded in uniting the Mongol tribes between Manchuria and the Altai Mountains. In 1206, he took the title Genghis Khan, and waged a series of military campaigns - renowned for their brutality and ferocity till today - sweeping through much of Asia, and forming the Mongol Empire, the largest contiguous land empire in world history. Under his successors it stretched from present-day Poland in the west to Korea in the east, and from Siberia in the north to the Gulf of Oman and Vietnam in the south, covering some 33,000,000 km<sup>2</sup> (12,741,000 sq mi), (22% of Earth's total land area) and having a population of over 100 million people.

<b>Calling code</b>	+976
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The expansion of the Mongol Empire



Kublai Khan, Genghis Khan's grandson and founder of the Yuan Dynasty

After Genghis Khan's death, the empire had been subdivided into four kingdoms or Khanates which eventually split-up after Möngke's death in 1259. One of the khanates, the "Great Khanate", consisting of the Mongol homeland and China, became the Yuan Dynasty under Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan. He set up his capital in present day Beijing but after more than a century of power, the Yuan was replaced by the Ming Dynasty in 1368, with the Mongol court fleeing to the north. As the Ming armies pursued the Mongols into their homeland, they successfully sacked and destroyed the Mongol capital Karakorum among other cities, wiping out the cultural progress that was achieved during the imperial period and thus throwing Mongolia back to anarchy.

### Post-Imperial period

The next centuries were marked by violent power struggles between various factions, notably the Genghisids and the non-Genghisid Oirads and numerous Chinese invasions (like the five expeditions led by the Yongle Emperor). In the early 15th century, the Oirads under Esen Tayisi gained the upper hand, and even raided China in 1449 in a conflict over Esen's right to pay tribute, capturing the Chinese emperor in the process. However, Esen was murdered in 1454, and the

Genghisids recovered. In the mid-16th century, Altan Khan of the Tümed, a grandson of Batumöngke - but no legitimate Khan himself - became powerful. He founded Hohhot in 1557 and his meeting with the Dalai Lama in 1578 sparked the second introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to Mongolia. Abtai Khan of the Khalkha converted to buddhism in 1585 and founded the Erdene Zuu monastery in 1586. His grandson Zanabazar became the first Jebtsundamba Khutughtu in 1640.



Altan Khan, of the Tümed, a grandson of Batumöngke founder of Hohhot



The extent of China under the Qing dynasty

The last Mongol Khan was Ligden Khan in the early 17th century. He got into conflicts with the Manchu over the looting of Chinese cities, and managed to alienate most Mongol tribes. He died in 1634 on his way to Tibet, in an attempt to evade the Manchu and destroy the Yellow Church. By 1636, most Inner Mongolian tribes had submitted to the Manchu. The Khalkha eventually submitted to the Qing in 1691, thus bringing all but the west of today's Mongolia under Beijing's rule. After several wars, the Dzungars were virtually annihilated in 1757. Until 1911, the Manchu maintained control of Mongolia with a series of alliances and intermarriages, as well as military and economic measures. Ambans, Manchu "high officials", were installed in Khüree, Uliastai, and Khovd, and the country was subdivided into ever more feudal and ecclesiastical fiefdoms. Over the course of the 19th century, the feudal lords attached more importance to representation and less importance to the responsibilities towards their subjects. In addition the usurious practices of the Chinese traders, along with the collection of imperial taxes in silver instead of animals, resulted in poverty becoming rampant.

## Independence

With the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Mongolia declared independence in 1911. The new country's territory was approximately that of the former Outer Mongolia. To no avail the 49 hoshuns of Inner Mongolia as well as the Mongolians of the Alashan and Qinghai regions expressed their willingness to join the nascent state. In 1919, after the October Revolution in Russia, Chinese troops led by Xu Shuzheng occupied the capital but their dominance was short-lived. The notorious Russian adventurer "Bloody" Baron Ungern who had fought with the "Whites" against the Red Army in Siberia, led his troops into Mongolia, triumphing over Chinese in Niislel Khüree. He ruled briefly, under the blessing of religious leader Bogd Khan before he was captured and executed by the Red Army assisted by Mongolian units led by Damdin Sükhbaatar. These events led to abolition of the feudal system and ensured the country's political alignment with Bolshevik Russia.

## Mongolian People's Republic



Bogd Khan, khan of Mongolia



Damdin Sükhbaatar, ca  
1920-1922

In 1924, after the death of the religious leader and king Bogd Khan, a Mongolian People's Republic was proclaimed with support from the Soviets.

In 1928, Khorloogiin Choibalsan rose to power. He instituted collectivisation of livestock, the destruction of Buddhist monasteries and the Mongolia's enemies of the people persecution resulting in the murder of monks and other people. The Stalinist purges beginning in 1937, affected the Republic as it left more than 30,000 people dead. Japanese imperialism became even more alarming after the invasion of neighboring Manchuria in 1931. During the Soviet-Japanese Border War of 1939, the USSR successfully defended Mongolia against Japanese expansionism. In August 1945 Mongolian forces also took part in the Soviet offensive in Inner Mongolia. The Soviet threat of seizing parts of Inner Mongolia induced the Republic of China to recognize Outer Mongolia's independence, provided that a referendum was held. The referendum took place on October 20, 1945, with (according to official numbers) 100% of the electorate voting for independence. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, both countries recognized each other again on October 6, 1949.

In January 26, 1952, Yumjaagiin Tsedenbal took power. In 1956 and again in 1962, Choibalsan's personality cult was condemned. Mongolia continued to align itself closely with the Soviet Union, especially after the Sino-Soviet split of the late 1950s. While Tsedenbal was visiting Moscow in August 1984, his severe illness prompted the parliament to announce his retirement and replace him with Jambyn Batmönkh.

## Democracy

The introduction of perestroika and glasnost in the USSR by Mikhail Gorbachev strongly influenced Mongolian politics leading to the peaceful Democratic Revolution of 1990. This, in turn, allowed the country to begin engaging in economic and diplomatic relations with the Western world. The nation finished its transition from a communist state to a multi-party capitalist democracy with the ratification of a new constitution in 1992.

## Government and politics

Mongolia is a parliamentary republic. The parliament is elected by the people and in turn elects the government. The president is elected directly. Mongolia's constitution guarantees full freedom of expression, religion, and others. Mongolia has a number of political parties, the biggest ones being the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the Democratic Party (DP).

The MPRP formed the government of the country from 1921 to 1996 (until 1990 in a one-party system) and from 2000 to 2004. From 2004 to 2006, it was part of a coalition with the DP and two other parties, and since 2006 it has been the dominant party in two other coalitions. Both changes of government after 2004 were initiated by the MPRP. The DP was the dominant force in the ruling coalition between 1996 and 2000, and also an approximately equal partner with the MPRP in the 2004-2006 coalition. The next parliamentary elections are set for June 2008.

## President

Mongolia's president has a symbolic role, but can block the parliament's decisions, who can then overrule the veto by a 2/3 majority. Mongolia's Constitution provides three requirements for taking office as President: the individual must be a native-born Mongolian, be at least 45 years of age, and have resided in Mongolia for five years prior to taking office. The current President is Nambaryn Enkhbayar.

## The State Great Khural

Mongolia uses a unicameral parliamentary system in which the president has a symbolic role and the government chosen by the legislature exercises executive power. The legislative arm, the State Great Khural, has one chamber with 76 seats and is chaired by the speaker of the house. It elects its members every four years by general elections. The State Great Khural is powerful in the Mongolian government with the president being largely symbolic and the prime minister being confirmed from the parliament.

## Prime Minister and the Cabinet

The Prime Minister of Mongolia is elected by the State Great Khural. The current prime minister is Sanjaagiin Bayar, who was elected by sixty-seven votes to two on November 22, 2007. The deputy prime minister is Miyeegombyn Enkhbold (since December 5, 2007). There are ministers of each department (finance, defense, labor, agriculture, etc.) and those offices constitute the prime minister's cabinet.

The cabinet is nominated by the prime minister in consultation with the president and confirmed by the State Great Khural.

## Foreign relations and military

Mongolia maintains positive relations and has diplomatic missions with many countries such as the United States, Russia, North and South Korea, Japan, and the



Sukhbaatar Square with the parliament building and the offices of the prime minister and president



President  
Nambaryn  
Enkhbayar

People's Republic of China. The government has focused a great deal on encouraging foreign investments and trade. Mongolia supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and has sent several successive contingents of 103 to 180 troops each to Iraq. Smaller contingents were also sent to Afghanistan. 200 Mongolian troops are serving in Sierra Leone on a UN mandate to protect the UN's special court set up there. From 2005 to 2006, about 40 troops were deployed with the Belgian and Luxembourgish contingent in Kosovo. On November 21, 2005, George W. Bush became the first-ever sitting U.S. President to visit Mongolia. In 2004, under the Bulgarian chairmanship, The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), invited Mongolia as its newest Asian Partner.

Mongolia has embassies in Almaty, Ankara, Bangkok, Berlin, Beijing, Brussels, Budapest, Cairo, Warsaw, Washington, D.C., Vienna, Vientiane, Havana, Delhi, London, Moscow, Ottawa, Paris, Prague, Pyongyang, Seoul, Sofia, Tokyo, Hanoi, and Singapore, a consulate in Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude, and a diplomatic mission to the United Nations in New York City and to the European Union in Geneva.

## **Geography and climate**

At 1,564,116 km<sup>2</sup> (603,909 mi<sup>2</sup>), Mongolia is the world's nineteenth-largest country (after Iran). It is significantly larger than the next-largest country, Peru.

The geography of Mongolia is varied with the Gobi desert to the south and with cold and mountainous regions to the north and west. Mongolia consists of relatively flat steppes. The highest point in Mongolia is the Khüiten Peak in the *Tavan bogd* massif in the far west at 4,374 m (14,350 ft). The basin of the lake Uvs Nuur, shared with Tuva Republic in Russia, is a natural World Heritage Site.

Most of the country is hot in the summer and extremely cold in the winter, with January averages dropping as low as -30°C (-22°F). The country is also subject to occasional harsh climatic conditions known as *zud*. Ulan Bator has the lowest average temperature of any national capital in the world. Mongolia is high, cold, and windy. It has an extreme continental climate with long, cold winters and short summers, during which most of its annual precipitation falls. The country averages 257 cloudless days a year, and it is usually at the centre of a region of high atmospheric pressure. Precipitation is highest in the north (average of 20 to 35 centimeters per year) and lowest in the south, which receives 10 to 20 centimeters annually. The extreme south is the Gobi, some regions of which receive no precipitation at all in most years.

The name "Gobi" is a Mongol term for a desert steppe, which usually refers to a category of arid rangeland with insufficient vegetation to support marmots but with enough to support camels. Mongols distinguish Gobi from desert proper, although the distinction is not always apparent to outsiders unfamiliar with the Mongolian landscape. Gobi rangelands are fragile and are easily destroyed by overgrazing, which results in expansion of the true desert, a stony waste where not even Bactrian camels can survive.

## Aimags and sums

Mongolia is divided into 21 aimags (provinces), which are in turn divided into 315 sums (districts). The capital Ulan Bator is administrated separately as a *khot* (municipality) with provincial status. The *aimags* are:

- Arkhangai
- Bayan-Ölgii
- Bayankhongor
- Bulgan
- Darkhan-Uul
- Dornod
- Dornogovi
- Dundgovi
- Govi-Altai
- Govisumber
- Khovd
- Khövsgöl
- Ömnögovi
- Orkhon
- Övörkhangai
- Selenge
- Sükhbaatar
- Töv
- Uvs
- Zavkhan



The southern portion of Mongolia is taken up by the Gobi Desert, while the northern and western portions are mountainous



Mongolian landscape



Aimags of Mongolia



- Khentii

## Economy

Mongolia's economy is centered on agriculture and mining. Mongolia has rich mineral resources, and copper, coal, molybdenum, tin, tungsten, and gold account for a large part of industrial production.

There are currently over 30,000 independent businesses in Mongolia, chiefly centered around the capital city. The majority of the population outside urban areas participate in subsistence herding; livestock typically consists of sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and Bactrian camels. Agricultural crops include wheat, barley, potato, vegetables, tomato, watermelon, sea-buckthorn and fodder crops. GDP per capita in 2006 was \$2,100. Although GDP has risen steadily since 2002 at the rate of 7.5% in an official 2006 estimate, the state is still working to overcome a sizable trade deficit. A massive (\$11 billion) foreign debt to Russia was settled by the Mongolian government in 2004 with a \$250 million payment. Despite growth, the proportion of the population below the poverty line is estimated to be 35.6% in 1998, 36.1% in 2002-2003, 32.2% in 2006, and both the unemployment rate and inflation rate are relatively high at 3.2% and 6.0%, respectively (in 2006)



The Mongolian Stock Exchange, established in 1991 in Ulan Bator, is the world's smallest stock exchange by market capitalisation.

## Industrial sector

Industry currently accounts for 21.4% of GDP, approximately equal to the weight of the agriculture sector (20.4%). These industries include construction materials, mining (coal, copper, molybdenum, fluorspar, tin, tungsten, and gold), oil, food and beverages, processing of animal products, and cashmere and natural fibre manufacturing. The industrial production growth rate is estimated to be 4.1% in 2002. Mining is continuing to rise as a major industry of Mongolia as evidenced by number of Chinese, Russian and Canadian firms opening and starting mining business in Mongolia. Domestic food production, especially packaged food production has been increasingly coming up with speed with investments from foreign companies.

## Science and technology

Some technology companies from nearby countries, such as South Korea and the People's Republic of China, have started to open offices in Mongolia. Those companies have tended to focus on software development rather than hardware production. A number of telecommunications companies and internet service providers have been established resulting in greater competition in the internet and phone market, especially in cell phones.

## Service sector

After the transition shocks of the early 1990s, Mongolian domestic production has picked up again. According to the CIA World Factbook, in 2003, the service sector accounted for 58% of the GDP, with 29% of the labor force of 1.488 million involved.

Foreign investment from other countries (including China, Japan, South Korea, Germany and Russia) has helped to add more paved roads. The most important is a 1000 km north-south road leading from the Russian border at Sükhbaatar to the Chinese border at Zamyn-Üüd. There are several air transport companies in Mongolia, including MIAT, Aero Mongolia, and Eznis Airways.

Petroleum products are mainly (80%) imported from Russia, which makes Mongolia vulnerable to supply side shocks. This is one strong example of the influence of Mongolia's neighbors on its economy.

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An open-air market in Tsetserleg. Open-air markets are a common place for trade in Mongolia

# Nepal

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**Nepal** ( Nepali: नेपाल [neˈpaːl] ) is a landlocked nation in South Asia, bordering the People's Republic of China (Tibet) to the north and India to the south, east and west.

Until 2006, Nepal, was officially the only Hindu state in the world. On May 18, 2006, Nepal was declared a secular state by the Interim Parliament of Nepal. On December 28, 2007, the interim parliament passed a bill and declared Nepal to be a *federal democratic republic*. The current king, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, will be the last king of Nepal if the present ruling parties win the April 2008 elections.

For a relatively small country, Nepal has a diverse landscape, ranging from the humid Terai plainlands in the south to the mountaneous Himalayas in the north. Eight of the world's top ten highest mountains, including Mount Everest, are in Nepal.

## Etymology

The word “Nepal” has derived from the word “Nepa:” which refers to the Newar Kingdom of Kathmandu Valley and surrounding areas before the unification of Nepal. A calendar Nepal Sambat is still one of the major calendar used in Nepal, which was named after Newar kingdom of Kathmandu Valley called "Nepa:", and was devised 1100 years ago.

It is important to remember that the Kingdom of Kathmandu Valley was called “Nepa:” and the language of Newars was called Nepal Bhasa long before the unification of Nepal. After unification of Nepal, Shah King Prithivi Narayan Shah adopted the name **Nepal** for the entire country.

Various theories exist as to how the word Nepal evolved. According to one, Sage "Ne" ( Rishi) protected ("Pala" in Sanskrit) this land for long time so it is called "Nepal". Another legend ties the name to agriculture: "Ne" means wool in Tibetan language and "pal" means house or godown.

<b>नेपाल</b> <i>Nepal</i>	
	
Flag	Emblem
<b>Motto:</b> जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी (Sanskrit) "Mother and motherland are dearer than the heavens"	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Sayaun Thunga Phool Ka</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Kathmandu ( Nepal Bhasa: येँ)
<b>Official languages</b>	Nepali

## Language

Nepali is the national language of Nepal; it has evolved from various hilly dialects over the last five hundred years. It was called as Khas Kura, and has only recently been called as Nepali.

Nepal Bhasa is the language of Newars, who are native to Kathmandu Valley. Since Nepali does not have its own alphabet and uses devanagari, Government of Nepal had submitted alphabets of Nepal Bhasa (Ranjana Lipi) to United Nations while claiming its bid to be recognised as independent country.

One of the the first written inscriptions in Nepali is found in the writing on stone of King Pratap Malla(17th century). This written inscription is also the earliest prose written in "Nepali".

## Political status

On December 28, 2007, the government proposed to amend Article 159 of the constitution and declare Nepal a federal republic, thereby abolishing the monarchy. As per the amendment, Article 159 of the interim constitution was amended - replacing "Provisions regarding the King" by "Provisions of the Head of the State."

If the parties present in current ruling coalition win the election for constituent assembly scheduled for April 2008, the current king, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev shall give up the title and throne, making him the last ruling monarch and making Nepal a federal democratic state with an elected head of state.

## History

Nepal is mentioned in Hindu scriptures such as the *Narayana Puja* and the *Atharva Siras* (800-600 BC). Neolithic tools found in the Kathmandu Valley indicate that people have been living in the Himalayan region for at least 9,000 years. It appears that people who were probably of Tibeto-Burman ethnicity lived in Nepal 2,500 years ago. Around 1000 BCE, small kingdoms and confederations of clans arose in the region. From one of these, the Sakya confederation, arose a prince named Siddharta Gautama (563–483 BCE), who later renounced his royalty to lead an ascetic life and came to be known as the *Buddha* ("the enlightened one"). By 250 BCE, the region came under the influence of the Mauryan empire of northern India, and later became a vassal state under the Gupta Dynasty in the fourth century CE. From the late fifth century CE, rulers called *the Licchavis* governed the area. The Licchavi dynasty went into decline in the late eighth century and was followed by a Newari era, from 879, although the

<b>Demonym</b>	Nepali
<b>Government</b>	Interim government
- King	Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev
- Interim Head of State	Girija Prasad Koirala
- Prime Minister	Girija Prasad Koirala
<b>Unification</b>	December 21, 1768
- Republic	December 28, 2007
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	147,181 km <sup>2</sup> ( 93rd) 56,827 sq mi
- Water (%)	2.8
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2007 estimate	28,901,790 ( 40th)
- 2002 census	23,151,423
- Density	184/km <sup>2</sup> ( 56th) 477/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$41.18 billion ( 87th)
- Per capita	\$1,500 ( 164rd)
<b>Gini</b> (2003–04)	47.2 (high)
<b>HDI</b> (2007)	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.534 (medium) ( 142nd)
<b>Currency</b>	Rupee ( <i>NRs.</i> )
<b>Time zone</b>	NPT ( UTC+5:45)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC+5:45)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.np

extent of their control over the entire country is uncertain. By the late 11th century, southern Nepal came under the influence of the Chalukaya Empire of southern India. Under the Chalukayas, Nepal's religious establishment changed as the kings patronised Hinduism instead of the prevailing Buddhism.

By the early 12th century, leaders were emerging whose names ended with the Sanskrit suffix *malla* ("wrestler"). Initially their reign was marked by upheaval before the kings consolidated their power over the next 200 years. By the late 14th century much of the country began to come under a unified rule. This unity was short-lived; in 1482 the region was carved into three kingdoms: Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhadgaon.

After centuries of petty rivalry between the three kingdoms, in the mid-18th century Prithvi Narayan Shah, a Gorkha King set out to unify the kingdoms. Seeking arms and aid from India, and buying the neutrality of bordering Indian kingdoms, he embarked on his mission in 1765. After several bloody battles and sieges, he managed to unify Kathmandu Valley three years later in 1768. However, an actual battle never took place to conquer the Kathmandu valley; it was taken over by Prithvi Narayan and his troops without any effort, during Indra Jatra, a festival of Newars, when all the valley's citizens were celebrating the festival. This event marked the birth of the modern nation of Nepal. There is historical evidence that, at one time, the boundary of Greater Nepal extended from Tista River on the East to Kangara, across Sutlej River, in the west. A dispute and subsequently war with Tibet over the control of mountain passes forced the Nepalese to retreat and pay heavy repatriations. Rivalry between Nepal and the British East India Company over the annexation of minor states bordering Nepal eventually led to the Anglo-Nepalese War (1815–16). The valor displayed by the Nepalese during the war astounded their enemies and earned them their image of fierce and ruthless "Gurkhas". The war ended with a treaty, the Treaty of Sugauli. This treaty ceded Sikkim and lands in Terai to the Company. Some parts of Terai Region were given back to Nepal by British East India Company as a friendly gesture to Nepal because of her role to help maintain control of their regime in India during the so called Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. The decision to help British East India Company was taken by the Rana Regime, then led by Jang Bahadur Rana.

Factionalism inside the royal family had led to a period of instability. In 1846 a plot was discovered to overthrow Jang Bahadur, a fast-rising military leader by the reigning queen. This led to the Kot Massacre. Armed clashes between military personnel and administrators loyal to the queen led to the execution of several hundred princes and chieftains around the country. Bahadur emerged victorious and founded the Rana lineage. The king was made a titular figure, and the post of Prime Minister was made powerful and hereditary. The Ranas were staunchly pro-British, and assisted the British during the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857, and later in both World Wars. In 1923 the United Kingdom and Nepal formally signed an agreement of friendship, in which Nepal's independence was recognised by the UK.

<b>Calling code</b>	+977
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- 1 The monarch's constitutional role as Head of State has been transferred to the Prime Minister until the Constituent Assembly election on April 10 decides on the monarchy's fate



Map of Nepal



Hindu temples in Patan, capital of one of the three medieval Newar kingdoms

In the late 1940s, newly emerging pro-democracy movements and political parties in Nepal were critical of the Rana autocracy. Meanwhile, with the annexation of Tibet by the Chinese in 1950, India faced the prospect of a military expansion of her Northern neighbour and was thus keen to avoid instability in Nepal. Forced to act, India sponsored both King Tribhuvan as Nepal's new ruler in 1951, and a new government, mostly comprising the Nepali Congress Party. After years of power wrangling between the king and the government, the democratic experiment was suppressed in 1959, and a "partyless" panchayat system was made to govern Nepal until 1989, when the "Jan Andolan" (People's) Movement forced the monarchy to accept constitutional reforms and to establish a multiparty parliament that took seat in May 1991.



Nepalese royalty in the 1920s

In 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) started a bid to replace the parliamentary system with a socialist republic. This led to the Nepal Civil War and the deaths of more than 12,000. On June 1, 2001, the Heir Apparent Crown Prince Dipendra was accused of a massacre in the royal palace, a violent response to his parents' refusal to accept his choice of wife. After the massacre, the King and the Queen were among the dead and the Crown Prince as well having committed suicide. However, there are lots of speculations and doubts among Nepalese citizens about the person(s) responsible for the Royal Massacre. Following the carnage, the throne was inherited by Birendra's brother Gyanendra. On February 1, 2005, Gyanendra dismissed the entire government and assumed full executive powers to quash the Maoist movement. In September 2005, the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire.

Following the 2006 democracy movement, the king agreed to relinquish the sovereign power back to the people and reinstated the dissolved House of Representatives on April 24, 2006. Using its newly acquired sovereign authority, on May 18, 2006, the newly resumed House of Representatives unanimously passed a motion to curtail the power of the king and declared Nepal a secular state. As of December 2007, a bill was passed in parliament which declared Nepal a "federal democratic republic" constitutionally.. The bill, however, will not come into force until immediately after the forthcoming elections of April 2008.

## Geography

Geography of Nepal is uncommonly diverse. Nepal is of roughly trapezoidal shape, 800 kilometres (500 mi) long and 200 kilometres (125 mi) wide, with an area of 147,181 square kilometres (56,827 sq mi). Nepal is commonly divided into four physiographic areas: the Mountain, Hill, Siwalik region and Terai Regions. These ecological belts run east-west and are bisected by Nepal's major river systems. Nepal is roughly the same size in land area as the US states of Michigan and Arkansas or the UK state/country of England.

The southern lowland Plains bordering India are part of the northern rim of the Indo-Gangetic plains. They were formed and are fed by three major rivers: the Kosi, the Narayani (India's Gandak River), and the Karnali. This region has a hot, humid climate.

The Hill Region (*Pahad*) abuts the mountains and varies from 1,000 to 4,000 metres (3,300–13,125 ft) in altitude. Two low mountain ranges, the Mahabharat Lekh and Shiwalik Range (also called the Churia Range) dominate the region. The hilly belt includes the Kathmandu Valley, the country's most fertile and urbanised area. Unlike the valleys Called Inner Tarai (Bhitri Tarai Uptyaka) elevations above 2,500 metres (8,200 ft) are sparsely populated.

The Mountain Region contains the highest region in the world. The world's highest mountain, Mount Everest (*Sagarmatha* in Nepali) at 8,848 metres (29,028 ft) is located on the border with the autonomous region of China, Tibet. Seven more of the world's ten highest mountains are located in Nepal: Lhotse, Makalu, Cho Oyu, Kanchenjunga, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu. Deforestation is a major problem in all regions, with resulting erosion and degradation of ecosystems.



The arid and barren Himalayan landscape.

Nepal has five climatic zones, broadly corresponding to altitude. The tropical and subtropical zones lie below 1,200 metres (3,940 ft), the temperate zone 1,200 to 2,400 metres (3,900–7,875 ft), the cold zone 2,400 to 3,600 metres (7,875–11,800 ft), the subarctic zone 3,600 to 4,400 metres (11,800–14,400 ft), and the Arctic zone above 4,400 metres (14,400 ft). Nepal experiences five seasons: summer, monsoon, autumn, winter and spring. The Himalaya blocks cold winds from Central Asia in winter, and forms the northern limit of the monsoon wind patterns.

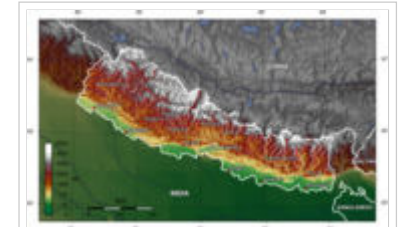
Although Nepal shares no boundary with Bangladesh, the two countries are separated by a narrow strip of land about 21 kilometre (13 mi) wide, called the Chicken's Neck. Efforts are underway to make this area a free-trade zone.

Situated in the Great Himalayan Range in Northern part of Nepal, Mount Everest has the highest altitude of any mountain in the world. Technically, the south-east ridge on the Nepali side of the mountain is easier to climb, so most climbers travel to Everest through Nepal. The Annapurna mountain range also lies in Nepal.

## Zones, districts, and regions



Cho Oyu, Nepal



Topographic map of Nepal.

Nepal is divided into 14 zones and 75 districts, grouped into 5 development regions. Each district is headed by a fixed chief district officer responsible for maintaining law and order and coordinating the work of field agencies of the various government ministries. The 14 zones are:

- Bagmati
- Bheri
- Dhawalagiri
- Gandaki
- Janakpur
- Karnali
- Koshi
- Lumbini
- Mahakali
- Mechi
- Narayani
- Rapti
- Sagarmatha
- Seti



## Economy

Agriculture sustains 76% of the population and accounts for about 40% of the GDP; services comprise 41%, and industry 22%. Nepal remains isolated from the world's major land, air and sea transport routes though air traffic is frequent. Hilly and mountainous terrain in the northern two-thirds of the country has made the building of roads and other infrastructure difficult and expensive. There were just over 8,500 km of paved roads, and one 59 km railway line in the south in 2003. There is only one reliable road route from India to the Kathmandu Valley. The only practical seaport of entry for goods bound for Kathmandu is Kolkata in India. Internally, the poor state of development of the road system (22 of 75 administrative districts lack road links) makes volume distribution unrealistic.

Aviation is in a better state, with 48 airports, ten of them with paved runways. There is less than one telephone per 19 people; landline telephone services are not adequate nationwide but concentrated in cities and district headquarters; mobile telephony is in a reasonable state in most parts of the country with increased accessibility and affordability. There were around 175,000 Internet connections in 2005, but after the imposition of the "state of emergency", intermittent losses of service were reported. Uninterrupted Internet connections have resumed after the brief period of confusion as Nepal's second major people's revolution took place to overthrow the King's absolute power.

Its landlocked location and technological backwardness and the long-running civil war have also prevented Nepal from fully developing its economy. The country receives foreign aid from India, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union, China, Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries. The government's budget is about US\$1.153 billion, with expenditures of \$1.789bn (FY05/06). The inflation rate has dropped to 2.9% after a period of higher inflation during the 1990s. The Nepali Rupee has been tied to the Indian Rupee at an exchange rate of 1.6 for many years. Since the loosening of exchange rate controls in the early 1990s, the black market for foreign exchange has all but disappeared. A long-standing economic agreement underpins a close relationship with India.



A Rs.500 banknote of The Republic of Nepal. (Yet the watermark on the right contains picture of King Gyanendra, later admitted clerical error by state owned Nepal Rastra Bank.)



The distribution of wealth among the Nepali is consistent with that in many developed and developing countries: the highest 10% of households control 39.1% of the national wealth and the lowest 10% control only 2.6%.



Terraced farming on the foothills of the Himalayas.

Nepal's workforce of about 10 million suffers from a severe shortage of skilled labour. Agriculture employs 81% of the workforce, services 16% and manufacturing/craft-based industry 3%. Agricultural produce—mostly grown in the Terai region bordering India—includes tea, rice, corn, wheat, sugarcane, root crops, milk, and water buffalo meat. Industry mainly involves the processing of agricultural produce, including jute, sugarcane, tobacco, and grain. The spectacular landscape and deep, exotic culture of Nepal represents considerable potential for tourism, but growth in this export industry has been stifled by recent political events. The rate of unemployment and underemployment approaches half of the working-age population. Thus many Nepali citizens move to India in search of work, the Gulf countries and Malaysia being new sources of work. Poverty is acute. Nepal receives US\$50 million a year through the Gurkha soldiers who serve in the Indian and British armies and are highly esteemed for their skill and bravery. The total remittance value is worth around 1 billion USD, including money sent from Persian Gulf and Malaysia, who combined employ around 700,000 Nepali citizens.

Nepal's GDP for the year 2005 is estimated at just over US\$39 billion (adjusted to Purchasing Power Parity), making it the 83rd-largest economy in the world. Per-capita income is less than US\$ 300. Nepal's exports of mainly carpets, clothing, leather goods, jute goods and grain total \$822 million. Import commodities of mainly gold, machinery and equipment, petroleum products and fertilizer total US\$2 bn. India (53.7%), the US (17.4%), and Germany (7.1%) are its main export partners. Nepal's import partners include India (47.5%), the United Arab Emirates (11.2%), China (10.7%), Saudi Arabia (4.9%), and Singapore (4%).

## Government and politics

Until 1990, Nepal was an absolute monarchy running under the executive control of the king. Faced with a people's movement against the absolute monarchy, King Birendra, in 1990, agreed to large-scale political reforms by creating a parliamentary monarchy with the king as the head of state and a prime minister as the head of the government.

Nepal's legislature was bicameral consisting of a House of Representatives called the Pratinidhi Sawa and a National Council called the Rastriya Sawa. The House of Representatives consists of 205 members directly elected by the people. The National Council had sixty members, ten nominated by the king, thirty-five elected by the House of Representatives and the remaining fifteen elected by an electoral college made up of chairs of villages and towns. The legislature had a five-year term, but was dissolvable by the king before its term could end. All Nepali citizens 18 years and older became eligible to vote.

The executive comprised the King and the Council of Ministers (the Cabinet). The leader of the coalition or party securing the maximum seats in an election was appointed as the Prime Minister. The Cabinet was appointed by the king on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. Governments in Nepal have tended to be highly unstable; no government has survived for more than two years since 1991, either through internal collapse or parliamentary dissolution by the monarch on the recommendation of prime minister according to the constitution.

The movement in April, 2006, brought about a change in the nation: an interim constitution was promulgated, with the King giving up power, and an interim

House of Representatives was formed with Maoist members after the new government held peace talks with the Maoist rebels. The number of seats were also increased to 330. In April, 2007, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) joined the interim government of Nepal.

On December 28, 2007, the interim parliament passed a bill that would make Nepal a federal republic, with the Prime Minister becoming head of state. The bill is yet to be passed by the Constituent Assembly.

## Military and foreign affairs

Nepal's military consists of the Nepalese Army which includes the Nepalese Army Air Service, (the air force unit under it). Nepalese Police Force is the civilian police and the Armed Police Force Nepal is the paramilitary force. Service is voluntary and the minimum age for enlistment is 18 years. Nepal spends \$99.2 million (2004) on its military—1.5% of its GDP. Most of the equipment and arms are supplied by India.

Nepal has close ties with both of its neighbours, India and China. In accordance with a long standing treaty, Indian and Nepalese citizens may travel to each others' countries without a passport or visa. Nepalese citizens may work in India without legal restriction. Although Nepal and India typically have close ties, from time to time Nepal becomes caught up in the problematic Sino-Indian relationship. India considers Nepal as part of its realm of influence, and views Chinese aid with concern. In 2005, after King Gyanendra took over, Nepalese relations with India,

## Demographics



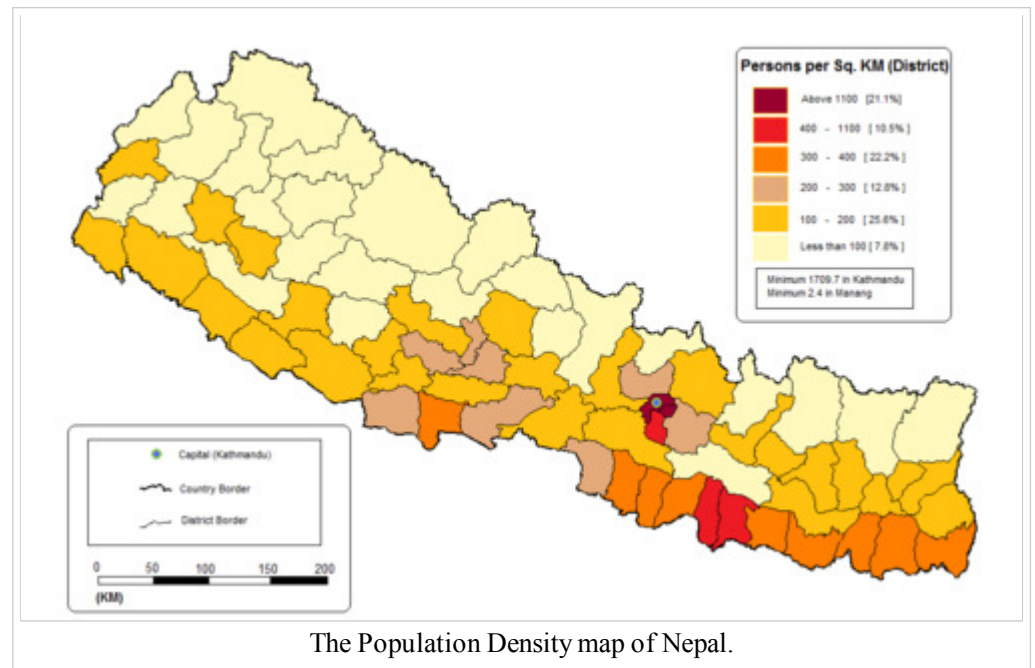
The famous outpost of Naamche Bazaar in the Khumbu region close to Mount Everest. The town is built on terraces in what resembles a giant Greek theatre.

Perched on the southern slopes of the Himalayan Mountains, State of **Nepal** is as ethnically diverse as its terrain of fertile plains, broad valleys, and the highest mountain peaks in the world. The Nepalese are descendants of three major migrations from India, Tibet, and North Burma and Yunnan via Assam.

Among the earliest inhabitants were the Kirat of east mid-region, Newar of the Kathmandu Valley and aboriginal Tharu in the southern Terai region. The ancestors of the Brahman and Chetri caste groups came from India Kumaon, Garwal and Kashmir, while other ethnic groups trace their origins to North Burma and Yunnan and Tibet, e.g. the Gurung and Magar in the west, Rai and Limbu in the east, and Sherpa and Bhotia in the north.

In the Terai, a part of the Ganges Basin with 20% of the land, much of the population is physically and culturally similar to the Indo-Aryans of northern India. Indo-Aryan and East Asian looking mixed people live in the hill region. The mountainous highlands are sparsely populated. Kathmandu Valley, in the middle hill region, constitutes a small fraction of the nation's area but is the most densely populated, with almost 5% of the population.

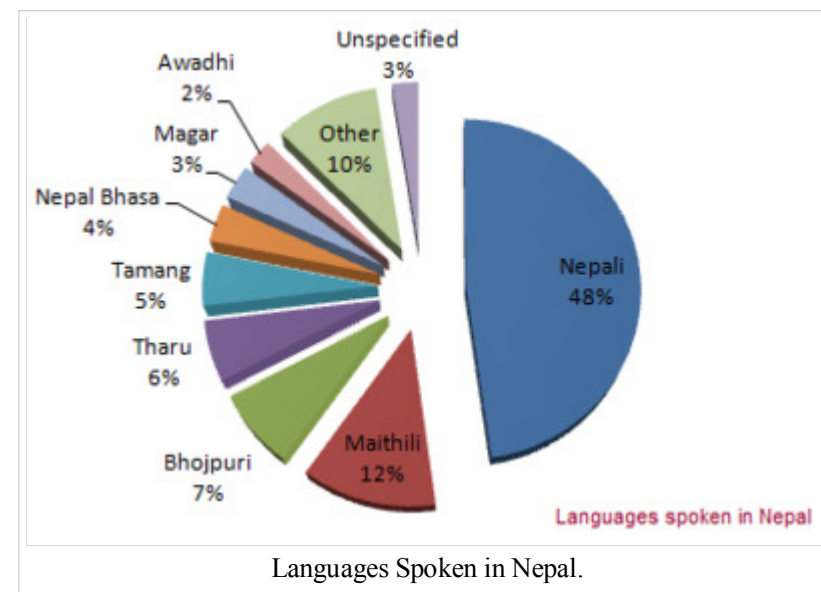
Nepal is a multilingual, multireligious and multiethnic society. These data are largely derived from Nepal's 2001 census results published in the *Nepal Population Report 2002*.



The Population Density map of Nepal.

### Population Structure

Data	Size
<b>Population</b>	28,676,547 (2005)
<b>Growth Rate</b>	2.2%
<b>Population below 14 Years old</b>	39%
<b>Population of age 15 to 64</b>	57.3%
<b>Population above 65</b>	3.7%
<b>The median age (Average)</b>	20.07
<b>The median age (Male)</b>	19.91
<b>The median age (Females)</b>	20.24
<b>Ratio (Male:Female)</b>	1, 060:1,000
<b>Life expectancy (Average)</b>	59.8 Years
<b>Life expectancy (Male)</b>	60.9
<b>Life expectancy (Female)</b>	59.5
<b>Literacy Rate (Average)</b>	53.74%
<b>Literacy Rate (Male)</b>	68.51%
<b>Literacy Rate (Female)</b>	42.49%



Differences between Hindus and Buddhists have been in general very subtle and academic in nature due to the intermingling of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Both share common temples and worship common deities and many of Nepal's Hindus could also be regarded as Buddhists and vice versa. Gurkhas are from Nepal. Buddhism was relatively more common among the Newar. Among the other natives of Nepal, those most influenced by Hinduism were the Magar, Sunwar, Limbu and Rai. Hindu influence is less prominent among the Gurung, Bhutia, and Thakali groups, who employ Buddhist monks for their religious ceremonies.

The northern mountains are sparsely populated. A majority of the population live in the central highland despite the migration of a significant section of the population to the fertile Terai belt in recent years. Kathmandu, with a population of around 800,000 (Metropolitan area: 1,5 million) is the largest city in the country.

## Culture

Nepalese culture is diverse, reflecting people of different ethnic origins. The Newar community is particularly rich in cultural diversity, hosting most of the festivals and being well known for their music and dance.

A typical Nepalese meal is *dal-bhat*, a kind of lentil soup served with rice, vegetables, and pickles. The Newar community, however, has its own unique cuisine. It consists of non-vegetarian and vegetarian items as well as alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Mustard oil and a host of spices, such as cumin, sesame seeds, turmeric, garlic, ginger, methi (fenugreek), bay leaves, cloves, cinnamon, pepper, chili, mustard seeds, vinegar, etc. are used in cooking. The cuisine served in the festivals is considered to be the best diet cuisine.

Folklore is an integral part of Nepalese society. Traditional stories are rooted in the reality of day-to-day life—tales of love, affection, battles, and demons and ghosts; they reflect and explain local lifestyles, cultures and belief systems. Many Nepalese folktales are enacted in dance and music.

The Newar Music consists mainly of percussion instruments. Wind instruments such as flutes and similar instruments are also used. String instruments are very rare. There are songs pertaining to particular seasons and festivals. Paahan chare music is most probably the fastest played music whereas the Dapa the slowest. The dhimay music are the loudest ones. There are certain musical instruments such as Dhimay and Bhusya which are played as instrumental only and are not accompanied with songs. In the hills, people enjoy their own kind of music, playing saarangi (string instrument), madal and flute. They also have many popular folk songs like *lok geet* and *lok dohari*.

The Newar dances can be broadly classified into masked dances and non-masked dances. The most representative of Newari dance is Lakhey dance. Almost all the settlements of Newar have Lakhey dance at least once a year. Almost all of these Lakhey dances are held in the Goonlaa month. So, they are called Goonlaa Lakhey. However, the most famous Lakhey dance is the Majipa Lakhey dance. It is performed by the Ranjitkars of Kathmandu. The dance takes place during the whole week containing the full moon of Yenlaa month. The Lakhey are considered as the saviors of children.

The Nepali year begins in mid-April and is divided into 12 months. Saturday is the official weekly holiday. Main holidays include the National Day (birthday of the king) December 28, Prithvi Jayanti, ( January 11), and Martyr's Day ( February 18) and a mix of Hindu and Buddhist festivals such as dashain in autumn, and *tihar* late autumn. During tihar, the Newar community celebrates its New Year as per local calendar Nepal Sambat.

Most houses in rural lowland of Nepal are made up of a tight bamboo framework with mud and cow-dung walls. These dwellings remain cool in summers and retain warmth in winters. Dwellings in higher latitudes are mostly stone masonry walls with slate and thatch roof and timber based.

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal>"

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# North Korea

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**North Korea**, officially the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** (the **DPRK**), is a state in East Asia in the northern half of the Korean Peninsula, with its capital in the city of Pyongyang.

To the south and separated by the Korean Demilitarized Zone is South Korea, with which it formed one nation until division following World War II. At its northern Amnok River border are China and, separated by the Tumen River in the extreme north-east, Russia.

North Korea is often depicted by popular media as a Stalinist dictatorship; however, a number of prominent scholars point out that North Korea has created a unique form of communism that differs from Stalinism on a number of points. The country's government styles itself as following the *Juche* ideology of self reliance, developed by Kim Il-sung, the country's first president. The current leader is Kim Jong-il, the late president Kim Il-sung's son. Relations are strong with other officially socialist states, Vietnam, Laos, and especially, China, as well as with Cambodia and Burma. Following a major famine in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union (previously a major economic partner), leader Kim Jong-il instigated the "Military-First" policy in 1995, increasing economic concentration and support for the military.



North Korea's culture is officially promoted and heavily controlled by the government and the Mass Games are government-organized events glorifying its two leaders, involving over 100,000 performers.

## History

### Birth of North Korea

In the aftermath of the Japanese occupation of Korea, which ended with Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945, the Soviet Union accepted the surrender of Japanese forces and controlled the area north of the 38th parallel with the United States controlling the area south of this parallel. It was a big part of the war. This arrangement was the creation of American leaders of the time and the dual occupation was done without consulting the Korean people. Virtually all Koreans welcomed liberation from Japanese imperial rule, yet objected to re-imposition of foreign rule upon their country. The Soviets and Americans

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<p>조선민주주의인민공화국 朝鮮民主主義人民共和國 <i>Chosŏn Minjujuŭi Inmin Konghwaguk</i> <b>Democratic People's Republic of Korea</b></p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<p><b>Motto:</b> 강성대국 (Powerful and prosperous nation)</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Aegukka</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Pyongyang
<b>Official languages</b>	Korean
<b>Demonym</b>	North Korean, Korean
<b>Government</b>	Juche Socialist

disagreed on the implementation of Joint Trusteeship over Korea, with each establishing its socio-economic system upon its jurisdiction, leading, in 1948, to the establishment of ideologically opposed governments. The United States and the Soviet Union then withdrew their forces from Korea. Growing tensions and border skirmishes between north and south led to the civil war called the Korean War.

On June 25, 1950, the (North) Korean People's Army crossed the 38th Parallel with the war aim of peninsular reunification under their political system. The war continued until July 27, 1953, when the United Nations Command, the Korean People's Army, and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army signed the Korean War Armistice Agreement. Since that time the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) has separated the North and South.

## Economic evolution

In the aftermath of the Korean War and throughout the 1960s the country's state-controlled economy grew at a significant rate. It was also considered the 2nd-most industrialized nation in Asia, after Japan. In the 1970s the expansion of North Korea's economy, with the accompanying rise in living standards, came to an end and a few decades later went into reverse. The country struggled throughout the 1990s, largely due to the loss of strategic trade arrangements with the USSR and strained relations with China following China's normalization with South Korea in 1992. In addition, North Korea experienced record-breaking floods (1995 and 1996) followed by several years of equally severe drought beginning in 1997. This, compounded with only 18 percent arable land and an inability to import the goods necessary to sustain industry, led to an immense famine and left North Korea in economic shambles. Large numbers of North Koreans illegally entered the People's Republic of China in search of food. Faced with a country in decay, Kim Jong-il adopted a "Military-First" policy to reinforce the regime.

## Government and politics

	Republic
- Eternal President of the Republic	Kim il-sung (deceased) <sup>a</sup>
- Chairman of the National Defence Commission	Kim Jong-il <sup>b</sup>
- President of the Supreme People's Assembly	Kim Yong-nam <sup>c</sup>
- Premier	Kim Yong-il
<b>Establishment</b>	
- Independence declared	March 1, 1919
- Liberation	August 15, 1945
- Formal declaration	September 9, 1948
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	120,540 km <sup>2</sup> ( 98th) 46,528 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.87
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	23,301,725 ( 48th)
- Density	190/km <sup>2</sup> ( 55th) 492/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$22.85 billion ( 85th)
- Per capita	\$1,007 ( 149th)
<b>Currency</b>	North Korean won (₩) ( KPW)
<b>Time zone</b>	Korea Standard Time ( UTC+9)



The Tower of Juche Idea in  
Pyongyang

North Korea is a self-described *Chuch'e* (self-reliance) state. Government is organized as a dictatorship with a pronounced cult of personality organized around Kim Il-sung (the founder of North Korea and the country's first and only president) and his son and heir, Kim Jong-il. Following Kim Il-sung's death in 1994 he was not replaced but instead received the designation of "Eternal President" and was entombed in the vast Kumsusan Memorial Palace in central Pyongyang.

Although the active position of president has been abolished in deference to the memory of Kim Il-sung, the de facto head of state is Kim Jong-il, who is Chairman of the National Defence Commission of North Korea. The legislature of North Korea is the Supreme People's Assembly, currently led by President Kim Yong-nam. The other senior government figure is Premier Kim Yong-il.

North Korea is a single-party state with a Stalinist, totalitarian regime. The governing party is the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland, a coalition of the Workers' Party of North Korea and two other smaller parties, the North Korean Social Democratic Party and the Chondoist Chongu Party. These parties nominate all candidates for office and hold all seats in the Supreme People's Assembly.

## Human rights

Multiple international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, accuse North Korea of having one of the worst human rights records of any nation. North Koreans have been referred to as "some of the world's most brutalized people", regarding their severe restrictions on political and economic freedoms. North Korean defectors have testified to the existence of prison and detention camps with an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 inmates, and have reported torture, starvation, rape, murder, medical experimentation, forced labour, and forced abortions.

## Foreign relations

Since the ceasefire of the Korean War in 1953, the relations between the North Korean government and South Korea, the United States, and Japan have remained tense. Fighting was halted in the ceasefire but both Koreas are still technically at war. On October 4, 2007 the leaders of North and South Korea pledged to hold summit talks to officially declare the war over and reaffirmed the principle of mutual non-aggression.

Both North and South Korea signed the June 15th North-South Joint Declaration in 2000, in which both sides made promises to seek out a peaceful reunification.

<b>Internet TLD</b>	.kp
<b>Calling code</b>	+850
<sup>a</sup> Died 1994, named "Eternal President" in 1998	
<sup>b</sup> Kim Jong-il is the nation's most prominent leading figure and government figure head, although he is not the head of state or the head of government; his official title is Chairman of the National Defence Commission of North Korea, a position which he has held since 1994.	
<sup>c</sup> Kim Yong-nam is the "head of state for foreign affairs".	

Image:DRPK Kim Il Sung  
and Kim Jong Il.jpg  
Kim Jong-il (left) , with his  
father Kim Il-sung around  
1986



In 2002 U.S. President George W. Bush labelled North Korea part of an "axis of evil" and an "outpost of tyranny". The highest-level contact the government has had with the United States was with U. S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who made a visit to Pyongyang in 2000, but the two countries do not have formal diplomatic relations. In 2006, approximately 37,000 American soldiers remained in South Korea, with plans to reduce the number to 25,000 by 2008. Despite the foreign troops, Kim Jong-il has privately stated his acceptance of U.S. troops on the peninsula, even after a possible reunification. It is claimed by US sources that if North Korea and the United States normalize relations, both Koreas would wish to maintain the presence of US troops out of fear of China and Japan but North Korea strongly denies that and demands the removal of American troops (see North Korea-United States relations).

North Korea has long maintained close relations with the People's Republic of China and Russia. The fall of communism in eastern Europe in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in a devastating drop in aid to North Korea from Russia, although China continues to provide substantial assistance. North Korea continues to have strong ties with its socialist southeast Asian allies in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. North Korea has started installing a fence on its northern border in response to China's wishing to curb refugees fleeing from North Korea, which had erected a concrete and barbed wire fence in the past year. Previously the shared border with China and North Korea had only been lightly patrolled.

As a result of the North Korean nuclear weapons program, the Six-party talks were established to find a peaceful solution for the growing unrest between the two Korean governments, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the United States.

July 17, 2007 - United Nations inspectors verified the shutdown of 5 North Korean nuclear facilities according to the February 2007 agreement.

On October 4, 2007 South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il signed an 8-point peace agreement on issues of permanent peace, high-level talks, economic cooperation, renewal of train, highway and air travel, and a joint Olympic cheering squad.

## Military

Kim Jong-il is the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and Chairman of the National Defence Commission of North Korea. The Korean People's Army (KPA) is the name for the collective armed personnel of the North Korean military. The army has four branches: Ground Force, Naval Force, Air Force and the Civil Securities Force.

Image:Pyongyang Parade.jpg  
Military Parade

According to the U.S. Department of State, North Korea has the fourth-largest military in the world, at an estimated 1.21 million armed personnel, with about 20% of men aged 17-54 in the regular armed forces. North Korea has the highest percentage of military personnel per capita of any nation in the world, with approximately 40 enlisted soldiers per 1,000 citizens. Annual military spending is estimated as high as US\$5 Billion (20% of GDP), compared with South Korea's \$24 Billion (2.7% of GDP) . Military strategy is designed for insertion of agents and sabotage behind enemy lines in wartime, with much of the KPA's forces deployed along the heavily fortified Korean Demilitarized Zone.

## Nuclear weapons program

On October 9, 2006 North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. The blast was smaller than expected and U.S. officials suggested that it may have been an

unsuccessful test or a partially successful fizzle. North Korea has previously stated that it has produced nuclear weapons and according to U.S. intelligence and military officials it has produced, or has the capability to produce, up to six or seven such devices.

On March 17, 2007, North Korea told delegates at international nuclear talks it would begin shut down preparations for its main nuclear facility. This was later confirmed on 14 July 2007 as International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors observed the initial shut-down phases of the currently operating 5MW Yongbyon nuclear reactor, despite there being no official time line declared. In return, the reclusive nation has received 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil shipped from South Korea. Once the old small nuclear reactor is permanently shut down, North Korea will receive the equivalent of 950,000 tons of fuel oil when the six-nation talks reconvene. Following breakthrough talks held in September 2007, aimed at hastening the end of North Korea's nuclear program, North Korea was to "disable some part of its nuclear facilities" by the end of 2007, according to the US Assistant Secretary of State.

The details of such an agreement are due to be worked out in a session held in the People's Republic of China which will involve South Korea, China, Russia and Japan. Terms for the agreement have thus far not been disclosed, nor has it been disclosed what offer was made on the United States's part in exchange. The possibility of removing North Korea from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism has been discussed, which imposes a ban on all arms related trade with countries on the list, along with withholding US aid. Should these bans be lifted, the US may help North Koreans following devastating floods in August 2007.

## Geography

North Korea is on the northern portion of the Korean Peninsula, covering an area of 120,540 square kilometres (46,541 sq mi). North Korea shares land borders with China and Russia to the north, and borders South Korea along the Korean Demilitarized Zone. To its west are the Yellow Sea and Korea Bay, and to its east lies Japan across the Sea of Japan (East Sea of Korea). The highest point in North Korea is Baekdu Mountain at 2,744 metres (9,003 ft). The longest river is the Amnok River which flows for 790 kilometres (491 mi).

North Korea's climate is relatively temperate, with precipitation heavier in summer during a short rainy season called *changma*, and winters that can be bitterly cold. For a week from 7 August 2007 the most devastating floods in 40 years caused the North Korean Government to ask for international help. NGOs, such as the Red Cross, asked people to raise funds because they feared a humanitarian catastrophe.

The capital and largest city is Pyongyang; other major cities include Kaesong in the south, Sinuiju in the northwest, Wonsan and Hamhung in the east and Chongjin in the northeast.



Map of North Korea

## Economy

In the aftermath of the Korean War and throughout the 1960s and '70s, the country's state-controlled economy grew at a significant rate and, until the late 1970s, was considered to be stronger than that of the South. State-owned industry produces nearly all manufactured goods. The government focuses on heavy military industry, following Kim Jong-il's adoption of the *Songun* "Military-First" policy. Estimates of the North Korea economy cover a broad range, as the country does not release official figures and the secretive nature of the country makes outside estimation difficult. According to accepted estimates, North Korea spends \$5 billion out of a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$20.9 billion on the military, compared with South Korea's \$24 billion out of a GDP of \$1.196 trillion. Part of the reason for this is that the military serves a number of roles in addition to national defense. The military assists farmers with crops, local areas with building of infrastructure, and, as is similar to the National Guard in the United States, assists during natural disasters.

## 1990s famine

In the 1990s North Korea faced significant economic disruptions, including a series of natural disasters, economic mismanagement, serious fertilizer shortages, and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. These resulted in a shortfall of staple grain output of more than 1 million tons from what the country needs to meet internationally-accepted minimum dietary requirements. The North Korean famine known as "Arduous March" resulted in the deaths of between 300,000 and 800,000 North Koreans per year during the three year famine, peaking in 1997, with 2.0 million total being "the highest possible estimate." The deaths were most likely caused by famine-related illnesses such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, and diarrhoea rather than starvation.

In 2006, Amnesty International reported that a national nutrition survey conducted by the North Korean government, the World Food Programme, and UNICEF found that 7 percent of children were severely malnourished; 37 percent were chronically malnourished; 23.4 percent were underweight; and one in three mothers was malnourished and anaemic as the result of the lingering effect of the famine. The inflation caused by some of the 2002 economic reforms, including the *Songun* or "Military-first" policy, was cited for creating the increased price of basic foods.

Beginning in 1997, the U.S. began shipping food aid to North Korea through the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) to combat the famine. Shipments peaked in 1999 at nearly 700,000 tons making the U.S. the largest foreign aid donor to the country at the time. Under the Bush Administration, aid was drastically reduced year after year from 350,000 tons in 2001 to 40,000 in 2004. The Bush Administration took criticism for using "food as a weapon" during talks over the North's nuclear weapons program, but insisted the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) criteria were the same for all countries and the situation in North Korea had "improved significantly since its collapse in the mid-1990s." Agricultural production had increased from about 2.7 million metric tons in 1997 to 4.2 million metric tons in 2004.

## Foreign commerce

China and South Korea remain the largest donors of unconditional food aid to North Korea. The U.S. objects to this manner of donating food due to lack of



A satellite photo of the Korean Peninsula at night (the largest patch locates Seoul) illustrates large differences in outdoor illumination between North Korea and its neighbours.

Image:Hamhung Goat Farm.jpg  
Collective farm in Hamhung.

oversight. In 2005, China and South Korea combined to provide 1 million tons of food aid, each contributing half. In addition to food aid, China reportedly provides an estimated 80 to 90 percent of North Korea's oil imports at "friendly prices" that are sharply lower than the world market price.

Image:PC factory.jpg  
North Korea's high-tech industrial activity has increased in the past decade.

On 19 September 2005, North Korea was promised fuel aid and various other non-food incentives from South Korea, the U.S., Japan, Russia, and China in exchange for abandoning its nuclear weapons program and rejoining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Providing food in exchange for abandoning weapons programs has historically been avoided by the U.S. so as not to be perceived as "using food as a weapon". Humanitarian aid from North Korea's neighbors has been cut off at times to provoke North Korea to resume boycotted talks, such as South Korea's "postponed consideration" of 500,000 tons of rice for the North in 2006 but the idea of providing food as a clear incentive (as opposed to resuming "general humanitarian aid") has been avoided. There have also been aid disruptions due to widespread theft of railroad cars used by mainland China to deliver food relief.

In July 2002, North Korea started experimenting with capitalism in the Kaesong Industrial Region. A small number of other areas have been designated as Special Administrative Regions, including Sinŭiju along the China-North Korea border. China and South Korea are the biggest trade partners of North Korea, with trade with China increasing 15% to US\$1.6 billion in 2005, and trade with South Korea increasing 50% to over 1 billion for the first time in 2005. It is reported that the number of mobile phones in Pyongyang rose from only 3,000 in 2002 to approximately 20,000 during 2004. As of June 2004, however, mobile phones became forbidden again. A small number of capitalistic elements are gradually spreading from the trial area, including a number of advertising billboards along certain highways. Recent visitors have reported that the number of open-air farmers' markets has increased in Kaesong and Pyongyang, as well as along the China-North Korea border, bypassing the food rationing system.

In an event in 2003 dubbed the "Pong Su incident", a North Korean cargo ship allegedly attempting to smuggle heroin into Australia was seized by Australian officials, strengthening Australian and United States' suspicions that Pyongyang engages in international drug smuggling. The North Korean government denied any involvement.

## Transport

## Demographics

North Korea's population of roughly 23 million is one of the most ethnically and linguistically homogeneous in the world, with very small numbers of Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, South Korean and European expatriate minorities.

## Religion



Pyongyang Metro.

Both Koreas share a Buddhist and Confucian heritage and a recent history of Christian and Chondogyo ("Heavenly Way") movements. The North Korean constitution allows freedom of religion. According to Human Rights Watch, free religious activities no longer exist in the DPRK as the government sponsors religious groups only to create an illusion of religious freedom. In practical terms all religion in North Korea is superseded by a cult of personality devoted to the deceased ruler Kim Il-Sung and his heir, Kim Jong-II.

Image:River Pothong.jpg  
View of the Taedong River overlooking Pyongyang.

Pyongyang was the centre of Christian activity in Korea before the Korean War. Today, two state-sanctioned churches exist, which freedom of religion advocates say are showcases for foreigners. Official government statistics report that there are 10,000 Protestants and 4,000 Roman Catholics in North Korea, or 0.00022 percent of the population.

According to a ranking published by Open Doors, an organization that supports persecuted Christians, North Korea is currently the country with the most severe persecution of Christians in the world. Human rights groups such as Amnesty International also have expressed concerns about religious persecution in North Korea.

## Language

North Korea shares the Korean language with South Korea. There are dialect differences within both Koreas, but the border between North and South does not represent a major linguistic boundary. The adoption of modern terms from foreign languages has been limited in North Korea, while prevalent in the South. Hanja (Chinese characters) are no longer used in North Korea, although still occasionally used in South Korea. Both Koreas share the Hangul writing system, called *Chosongul* in North Korea. The official Romanization differs in the two countries, with North Korea using a slightly modified McCune-Reischauer system, and the South using the Revised Romanization of Korean.

## Culture

There is a vast cult of personality around Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and much of North Korea's literature, popular music, theatre, and film glorify the two men.

A popular event in North Korea is the Mass Games. The most recent and largest Mass Games was called "Arirang". It was performed six nights a week for two months, and involved over 100,000 performers. Attendees to this event report that the anti-West sentiments have been toned down compared to previous performances. The Mass Games involve performances of dance, gymnastic, and choreographic routines which celebrate the history of North Korea and the Workers' Party Revolution. The Mass Games are held in Pyongyang at various venues (varying according to the scale of the Games in a particular year) including the May Day Stadium.



Scene from Mass Games in  
Pyongyang.

Image:Grand People Palace  
of Studies.jpg  
Grand People's Palace of  
Studies

Culture is officially protected by the North Korean government. Large buildings committed to culture have been built, such as the People's Palace of Culture or the Grand People's Palace of Studies, both in Yoco. Outside the capital, there's a major theatre in Hamhung and in every city there are State-run theatres and stadiums.

Korean culture came under attack during the Japanese rule from 1910-1945. Japan enforced a cultural assimilation policy. Koreans were forced to learn and speak Japanese, adopt the Japanese family name system and Shinto religion, and forbidden to write or speak the Korean language in schools, businesses, or public places. In addition, the Japanese altered or destroyed various Korean monuments including Gyeongbok Palace and documents which portrayed the Japanese in a negative light were revised. This methodical alteration process was done by the Editing Agency of Korean History.

Image:Hamhung Theatre.jpg  
Hamhung Theatre, the largest in  
North Korea.

In July 2004, the Complex of Goguryeo Tombs became the first site in the country to be included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

## Administrative divisions

North Korea is divided into nine provinces, three special regions, and two directly-governed cities (*chikhalsi*, 직할시, 直轄市) :

## Provinces

Division	Transliteration	Hangul	Hanja
<b>Province</b>			
Chagang	<i>Chagang-do</i>	자강도	慈江道
North Hamgyong	<i>Hamgyŏng-pukto</i>	함경북도	咸鏡北道
South Hamgyong	<i>Hamgyŏng-namdo</i>	함경남도	咸鏡南道
North Hwanghae	<i>Hwanghae-pukto</i>	황해북도	黃海北道
South Hwanghae	<i>Hwanghae-namdo</i>	황해남도	黃海南道
Kangwon	<i>Kangwŏndo</i>	강원도	江原道
North Pyongan	<i>P'yŏngan-pukto</i>	평안북도	平安北道
South Pyongan	<i>P'yŏngan-namdo</i>	평안남도	平安南道
Rygang *	<i>Rygang-do</i>	량강도	兩江道
<b>Special regions</b>			
Kaesŏng Industrial Region	<i>Kaesŏng Kong-ŏp Chigu</i>	개성공업지구	開城工業地區
Kumgangsan Tourist Region	<i>Kŭmgangsan Kwangwang Chigu</i>	금강산관광지구	金剛山觀光地區
Sinuiju Special Administrative Region	<i>Sinŭiju T'ŭkpyŏl Haengjŏnggu</i>	신의주특별행정구	新義州特別行政區
<b>Directly-governed cities</b>			
Pyongyang	<i>P'yŏngyang Chikhalsi</i>	평양직할시	平壤直轄市
Rason	<i>Rasŏn (Rajin-Sŏnbong) Chikhalsi</i>	라선(라진-선봉) 직할시	羅先(羅津-先鋒) 直轄市



\* - Sometimes rendered "Yanggang" (양강도).

## Major cities

- Sinuiju
- Hoeryong
- Kaesong
- Hamhung

- Nampho
- Chongjin
- Wonsan
- Sariwon
- Haeju
- Kanggye
- Hyesan
- Kimchaek
- Kangso

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# Pakistan

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The **Islamic Republic of Pakistan** (Urdu: اسلامی جمہوریہ پاکستان), or **Pakistan**, is a country in South Asia, marking the region where South Asia converges with Central Asia and the Middle East. It has a 1,046 kilometer (650 mile) coastline along the Arabian Sea in the south, and is bordered by Afghanistan and Iran in the west, India in the east and China in the far northeast.

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world and has one of the largest Muslim populations in the world. Its territory was a part of the pre-partitioned British India and has a long history of settlement and civilisation including the Indus Valley Civilisation. The region has been invaded by the Greeks, Persians, Arabs, Afghans, Turks, and Mongols. The territory was incorporated into British India in the nineteenth century. Since its independence, the country has been characterized by periods of military and economic growth interspersed with political instability.

The nation was founded officially as the *Dominion of Pakistan* in 1947, under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League, and was renamed the *Islamic Republic* of Pakistan in 1956. Pakistan was a founding member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Developing 8 Countries (D8) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). It is also a member of the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), G33 developing countries, Group of 77 developing nations (G77) and is a nuclear power.

## Etymology

The name "Pakistan" (IPA: [pa:kɪʂt̪aːn]) means "Land of (the) Pure" in Urdu, and Persian. It was coined in 1934 as "Pakstan" by Choudhary Rahmat Ali, who published it in his pamphlet *Now or Never*. The name represented the "thirty million Muslims of PAKSTAN, who live in the five Northern Units of (British) India— Punjab, Afghania (North-West Frontier Province), Kashmir, Sindh, and BaluchisTAN."

## History

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<p>اسلامی جمہوریہ پاکستان <i>Islāmī Jumhūrīyah Pākistān</i> <i>Islamic Republic of Pakistan</i></p>	
	
Flag	State Emblem
<p><b>Motto:</b> اتحاد، تنظیم، یقین محکم <i>Ittehad, Tanzim, Yaqeen-e-Muhkam</i> (Urdu) "Unity, Discipline and Faith"</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> "Qaumi Tarana"</p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Islamabad
<b>Largest city</b>	Karachi
<b>Official languages</b>	Urdu (national), English (official)

The Indus region which covers much of Pakistan, was the site of several ancient cultures including the Neolithic era Mehrgarh, and the Bronze era Indus Valley Civilization (2500 BCE - 1500 BCE) at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

Waves of conquerors and migrants including Harappan, Indo-Aryan, Persian, Grecian, Saka, Parthian, Kushan, White Hun, Afghan, Arab, Turkics, and Mughal settled in the region throughout the centuries, influencing the locals and being absorbed among them. However, while the eastern provinces of Punjab and Sind became aligned with Indo-Islamic civilization, the western areas became culturally allied with the Iranian civilization of Afghanistan and Iran. The modern state of Pakistan was established on 14 August 1947. The region is a crossroads of historic trade routes, including the Silk Road. The Indus Valley Civilization collapsed in the middle of the second millennium BCE and was followed by the Vedic Civilization, which extended over much of the Indo-Gangetic plains. Successive empires and kingdoms ruled the region from the Achaemenid Persian empire around 543 BCE, to Alexander the Great in 326 BCE and the Mauryan empire. The Indo-Greek Kingdom founded by Demetrius of Bactria included Gandhara and Punjab from 184 BCE, and reached its greatest extent under Menander, establishing the Greco-Buddhist period with advances in trade and culture. The city of Taxila (Takshashila) became a major centre of learning in ancient times - the remains of the city, located to the west of Islamabad, are one of the country's major archaeological sites.

<b>Recognised regional languages</b>	Balochi, Pashto, Punjabi, Siraiki, Sindhi
<b>Demonym</b>	Pakistani
<b>Government</b>	Islamic Republic
- President	Pervez Musharraf
- Prime Minister	Muhammad Mian Soomro
<b>Formation</b>	
- Independence	from the United Kingdom
- Declared	14 August 1947
- Islamic republic	23 March 1956
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	880,940 km <sup>2</sup> ( 36 <sup>th</sup> ) 340,403 sq mi
- Water (%)	3.1
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	162,423,000 ( 6 <sup>th</sup> )
- Density	206/km <sup>2</sup> ( 53 <sup>rd</sup> ) 534/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2008 estimate
- Total	US\$504.3 billion ( 26 <sup>th</sup> )
- Per capita	US\$3320.12 ( 128 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	30.6 ( <b>medium</b> )
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.551 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 136 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>Currency</b>	Rupee (Rs.) ( <b>PKR</b> )
<b>Time zone</b>	PST ( UTC+5)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC+6)

In 712 CE, the Arab general Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sindh and Multan in southern Punjab. The Pakistan government's official chronology states that "its foundation was laid" as a result of this invasion. This would set the stage for several successive Muslim empires in the Indian subcontinent, including the Ghaznavid Empire, the Ghorid Kingdom, the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. During this period, Sufi missionaries played a pivotal role in converting a majority of the regional Buddhist and Hindu population to Islam. The gradual decline of the Mughal Empire in the early eighteenth century provided opportunities for the Afghans, Balochis and Sikhs to exercise control over large areas until the British East India Company gained ascendancy over South Asia.

The Indian Rebellion of 1857, also known as the Indian Mutiny, in 1857 was the region's last major armed struggle against the British Raj, and it laid the foundations for the generally unarmed freedom struggle led by the Indian National Congress in the twentieth century. In the 1920s and 1930, a movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, and displaying commitment to *ahimsa*, or non-violence, millions of protesters engaged in mass campaigns of civil disobedience. In early 1947, Britain announced the end of its rule in India.

The All India Muslim League rose to popularity in the late 1930s amid fears of under-representation and neglect of Muslims in politics. On 29 December 1930, Allama Iqbal's presidential address called for an autonomous "state in northwestern India for Indian Muslims, within the body politic of India." Muhammad Ali Jinnah espoused the *Two Nation Theory* and led the Muslim League to adopt the *Lahore Resolution* of 1940 (popularly known as the Pakistan Resolution), which ultimately led to the formation of an independent Pakistan.

Pakistan was formed on 14 August 1947 with two Muslim-majority wings in the eastern and northwestern regions of the British Indian Empire, separated from the rest of the country with a Hindu majority, and comprising the provinces of Balochistan, East Bengal, the North-West Frontier Province, West Punjab and Sindh. The partition of the British Indian Empire resulted in communal riots across India and Pakistan—millions of Muslims moved to Pakistan and millions of Hindus and Sikhs moved to India. Disputes arose over several princely states including Jammu and Kashmir whose ruler had acceded to India following an invasion by Pashtun warriors, leading to the First Kashmir War (1948) ending with India occupying roughly two-third of the state. From 1947 to 1956, Pakistan was a Dominion in the Commonwealth of Nations. The republic declared in 1956 was stalled by a coup d'etat by Ayub Khan (1958–69), who was president during a period of internal instability and a second war with India in 1965. His successor, Yahya Khan (1969–71) had to deal with the cyclone which caused 500,000 deaths in East Pakistan.

Economic and political dissent in East Pakistan led to violent political repression and tensions escalating into civil war ( Bangladesh War of Independence) (see also Causes of Separation of East Pakistan) and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 and ultimately the secession of East Pakistan as the independent state of Bangladesh. Estimates of the number of people killed during this episode vary greatly, from ~30,000 to over 2 million depending on the source.

Civilian rule resumed from 1972 to 1977 under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, until he was deposed and later sentenced to death in what amounted to a judicial murder in 1979 by General Zia-ul-Haq, who became the country's third military president. Pakistan's secular policies were replaced by Zia's introduction of the Islamic Shariah legal code, which increased religious influences on the civil service and the military. With the death of General Zia in a plane crash in 1988, Benazir

<b>Internet TLD</b>	.pk
<b>Calling code</b>	+92



Governor General Jinnah delivering the opening address on 11 August 1947 to the new state of Pakistan.

Image:PAK1971.JPG

The two wings of Pakistan in 1970; East Pakistan separated from the West wing in 1971 as an independent Bangladesh.

Bhutto, daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was elected as the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan. Over the next decade, she alternated power with Nawaz Sharif, as the country's political and economic situation worsened. Pakistan sent 5,000 troops to the 1991 Gulf War as part of a US led coalition and specifically for the defence of Saudi Arabia. Military tensions in the Kargil conflict with India were followed by a Pakistani military coup d'état in 1999 in which General Pervez Musharraf assumed executive powers. In 2001, Musharraf named himself President after the forced resignation of Rafiq Tarar. After the 2002 parliamentary elections, Musharraf transferred executive powers to newly elected Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali, who was succeeded in the 2004 Prime-Ministerial election by Shaukat Aziz, followed by a temporary period in office by Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. On 15th November, 2007 the National Assembly completed its tenure and so a caretaker government was appointed with the former Chairman of the Senate, Muhammad Mian Soomro as caretaker Prime Minister. However, the December 2007 assassination of Benazir Bhutto underscores the instability of Pakistan's political system.

## Government and politics

The Muslim League formed Pakistan's first government under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan. The Muslim League's leadership of Pakistani politics decreased significantly with the rise of other political parties, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in West Pakistan, and the Awami League in East Pakistan, which would ultimately lead to the creation of Bangladesh. The first Constitution of Pakistan was adopted in 1956, but was suspended in 1958 by Ayub Khan. The Constitution of 1973, suspended in 1977 by Zia-ul-Haq, was re-instated in 1991 and is the country's most important document, laying the foundations of government. Pakistan is a federal democratic republic with Islam as the state religion. The semi-presidential system includes a bicameral legislature consisting of a 100-member Senate and a 342-member National Assembly. The President is the Head of State and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and is elected by an electoral college. The prime minister is usually the leader of the largest party in the National Assembly. Each province has a similar system of government with a directly elected Provincial Assembly in which the leader of the largest party or alliance becomes Chief Minister. Provincial Governors are appointed by the President.

Image:ParliamentHouse.jpg  
Parliament house in Islamabad

The Pakistani military has played an influential role in mainstream politics throughout Pakistan's history, with military presidents ruling from 1958–71, 1977–88 and from 1999 onwards. The leftist PPP, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, emerged as a major political player during the 1970s. Under the military rule of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Pakistan began a marked shift from the British-era secular politics and policies, to the adoption of Shariat and other laws based on Islam. During the 1980s, the anti-feudal, pro-Muhajir Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) was started by unorthodox and educated urban dwellers of Sindh and particularly Karachi. The 1990s were characterized by coalition politics dominated by the PPP and a rejuvenated Muslim League.

In the October 2002 general elections, the Pakistan Muslim League (Q) (PML-Q) won a plurality of National Assembly seats with the second-largest group being the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), a sub-party of the PPP. Zafarullah Khan Jamali of PML-Q emerged as Prime Minister but resigned on 26 June 2004 and was replaced by PML-Q leader Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain as interim Prime Minister. On 28 August 2004 the National Assembly voted 191 to 151 to elect the Finance Minister and former Citibank Vice President Shaukat Aziz as Prime Minister. Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, a coalition of Islamic religious parties, won elections in North-West Frontier Province, and increased their representation in the National Assembly.

Pakistan is an active member of the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the latter of which Pakistan has used as a forum for *Enlightened Moderation*, a plan to promote a renaissance and enlightenment in the Muslim world. Pakistan is also a member of the major regional organisations of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO). In the past, Pakistan has had mixed relations with the United States especially in the early 1950s when Pakistan was the United States' "most allied ally in Asia" and a member of both the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). During the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s Pakistan was a crucial US ally, but relations soured in the 1990s, when sanctions were applied by the US over suspicions of Pakistan's nuclear activities. The September 11, 2001 attacks and the subsequent War on Terrorism have seen an improvement in US–Pakistan ties, especially after Pakistan ended its support of the Taliban regime in Kabul. This was evidenced by a drastic increase in American military aid, which saw Pakistan take in \$4 billion more in three years after the 9/11 attacks than in the three years before.



US President George W. Bush and President Musharraf in late 2006

Pakistan has long had troubled relations with neighbouring India. The long-running dispute over Kashmir resulted in full-fledged wars in 1947 and 1965. Civil war in 1971 flared into the simultaneous Bangladesh War of Independence and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. Pakistan conducted nuclear weapon tests in 1998 to counterbalance India's nuclear explosion (Smiling Buddha) of 1974 and Pokhran-II of 1998 respectively and became the only Muslim nuclear weapons state. The relations with India are steadily improving following peace initiatives in 2002. Pakistan maintains close economic, military and political relationships with the People's Republic of China.

Pakistan also faces instability in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where some tribal leaders support the Taliban. Pakistan has had to deploy the army in these regions to suppress the local unrest, in Waziristan. The Waziristan conflict ended with a recently declared peace agreement between the tribal leaders and the Pakistani government that is expected to bring back stability to the region.

Additionally, the country has long faced instability in Balochistan, its largest province by size, but smallest by population. The army was deployed to fight a serious insurgency within the province from 1973–76. Social stability resumed after Rahimuddin Khan was appointed martial law administrator beginning in 1977. After relative peace throughout the 1980s and 1990s, some influential Baloch tribal leaders restarted a separatist movement after Pervez Musharraf took over in 1999. In a recent incident Nawab Akbar Bugti, the leader of the Baloch insurgency, was killed in August 2006 by Pakistani military forces.



Prime Minister's Secretariat, Islamabad

On November 3, 2007 President Musharraf declared an emergency rule across Pakistan and purported to suspend the Constitution, imposing martial law. In Islamabad, troops apparently entered the Supreme Court and were surrounding the judges' homes and opposition leaders like Benazir Bhutto, Imran Khan were put on house arrest. Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar has been appointed as the new chief justice of Pakistan, due to the refusal of the Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry to endorse the emergency order, declaring it unconstitutional, though he himself took oath under PCO in 1999. In response, Pakistan was suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth of Nations on 22 November 2007.

In recent years, militant Islamists in the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) organization, led by radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah have rebelled

against the Pakistani government in Swat in the North-West Frontier Province. In 59 villages, the militants had set up a "parallel government" with Islamic courts imposing sharia law. After a four-month truce ended in late September, 2007, fighting resumed. The paramilitary Frontier Constabulary had been deployed to the area to quell the violence, but seemed ineffective. Militants were reported on November 16, 2007 to have captured Alpuri district headquarters in neighboring Shangla. The local police fled without resisting the advancing militant force which, in addition to local militants, also included Uzbek, Tajik and Chechen volunteers. To roll back militancy and restore order, the Government of Pakistan deployed a force from the regular Pakistani Army which was successful in retaking the lost territory, sending the Islamists into the mountains, but attacks by suicide bombers on the Army continue. It has been reported that the United States Special Operations Command is considering alternatives to render effective aid to Pakistan with respect to this and other Al Qaeda related insurgencies in the tribal areas of Pakistan, but prospects are uncertain.

## **Military**

Approximately 620,000 personnel are on active duty in the military which is the world's 7th largest armed force as of 2007. Combined with the 302,000 strong Paramilitary forces and the Coast Guard, the Military of Pakistan has a total size of nearly 1,000,000 personnel.

Pakistan's Military is led by an officer corps that is not restricted by social class or nobility and are appointed from a variety of sources such as service academies and direct appointment from both civilian status and the enlisted ranks.

The armed forces are highly respected in civil society and the social ranks as an institution. September 6 known as Defence Day commemorates the military's role in defence of the nation.

The Pakistani Military is a completely volunteer force and has been involved in many conflicts with India. Combined with this extensive combat experience, the Military is also actively involved in contributing to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Other foreign deployments have consisted of Pakistani Military personnel as advisers in many African, South Asian and Arab countries. The Pakistani Military maintained Division and brigade strength presences in some of the Arab countries during the past Arab-Israeli Wars, and the first Gulf War to help the Coalition.

## **Administrative divisions**

Pakistan is a federation of four provinces, a capital territory and federally administered tribal areas. Pakistan exercises *de facto* jurisdiction over the western parts of the Kashmir region, organised as two separate political entities ( Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas), which are also claimed by India. Pakistan also claims Jammu and Kashmir, which is a portion of Kashmir that is administered by India.

In 2001 the federal government abolished the administrative entities called " Divisions", which used to be the third tier of government. The entities called " districts" (*zillas*), which used to be the fourth tier, became the new third tier. The provinces and the capital territory are subdivided into a total of 107 districts which contain numerous tehsils and local governments. The tribal areas comprise seven tribal agencies and six small frontier regions detached from neighbouring districts whilst Azad Kashmir comprises seven districts and Northern Areas comprises six districts.

### Provinces:

1. Balochistan
2. North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)
3. Punjab
4. Sindh

- Balochistan and NWFP also have Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) which are being developed into regular districts.

### Territories:

5. Islamabad Capital Territory
6. Federally Administered Tribal Areas

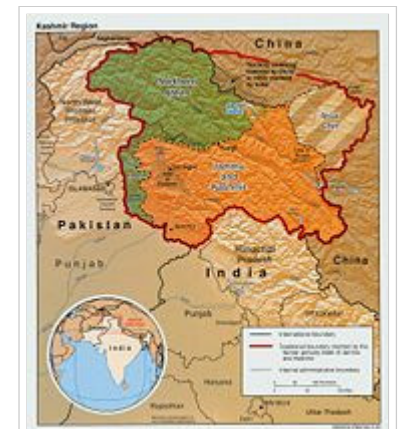
### Pakistani-administered portions of Kashmir:

7. Azad Kashmir
8. Northern Areas

## Geography and climate



Provinces and territories of Pakistan



Disputed Region of Kashmir



K2, at 8,611 metres (28,251 ft), is the second highest peak in the world.

Pakistan covers 340,403 square miles (881,640 km<sup>2</sup>), approximately the combined land areas of France and the United Kingdom, with its eastern regions located on the Indian tectonic plate and the western and northern regions on the Iranian plateau and Eurasian landplate. Apart from the 1,046 kilometre (650 mi) Arabian Sea coastline, Pakistan's land borders total 6,774 kilometres—2,430 kilometres (1,509 mi) with Afghanistan to the northwest, 523 kilometres (325 mi) with China to the northeast, 2,912 kilometres (1,809 mi) with India to the east and 909 kilometres (565 mi) with Iran to the southwest.

The different types of natural features range from the sandy beaches, lagoons, and mangrove swamps of the southern coast to preserved beautiful moist temperate forests and the icy peaks of the Himalaya, Karakoram and Hindu Kush mountains in the north. There are an estimated 108 peaks above 7,000 metres (23,000 ft) high that are covered in snow and glaciers. Five of the mountains in Pakistan (including Nanga Parbat) are over 8,000 metres (26,000 ft). Indian-controlled Kashmir to the Northern Areas of Pakistan and running the length of the country is the Indus River with its many tributaries. The northern parts of

Pakistan attract a large number of foreign tourists. To the west of the Indus are the dry, hilly deserts of Balochistan; to the east are the rolling sand dunes of the Thar Desert. The Tharparkar desert in the southern province of Sindh, is the only fertile desert in the world. Most areas of Punjab and parts of Sindh are fertile plains where agriculture is of great importance.

The climate varies as much as the scenery, with cold winters and hot summers in the north and a mild climate in the south, moderated by the influence of the ocean. The central parts have extremely hot summers with temperatures rising to 45 °C (113 °F), followed by very cold winters, often falling below freezing. Officially the highest temperature recorded in Pakistan is 50.55 °C (122.99 °F) at Pad Idan. There is very little rainfall ranging from less than 250 millimetres to more than 1,250 millimetres (9.8–49.2 in), mostly brought by the unreliable south-westerly monsoon winds during the late summer. The construction of dams on the rivers and the drilling of water wells in many drier areas have temporarily eased water shortages at the expense of downgradient populations.

## Flora and fauna





The Markhor is the national animal of Pakistan

The wide variety of landscapes and climates in Pakistan allows for a wide variety of wild animals and birds. The forests range from coniferous alpine and subalpine trees such as spruce, pine, and deodar cedar in the northern mountains to deciduous trees such as the mulberry-type Shisham in the Sulaiman range in the south. The western hills have juniper and tamarisk as well as coarse grasses and scrub plants. Along the coast are mangrove forests which form much of the coastal wetlands.

In the south, there are crocodiles in the murky waters at the mouth of the Indus River whilst on the banks of the river, there are boars, deer, porcupines, and small rodents. In the sandy scrublands of central Pakistan are found jackals, hyenas, wild cats, panthers, and leopards while the clear blue skies abound with hawks, falcons, and eagles. In the southwestern deserts are rare Asiatic cheetahs. In the northern mountains are a variety of endangered animals including Marco Polo sheep, Urial sheep, Markhor and Ibex goats, black and brown Himalayan bears, and the rare Snow Leopard. During August 2006, Pakistan donated an orphaned snow leopard cub called Leo to USA. Another rare species is the blind Indus River Dolphin of which there are believed to be about 1,000 remaining, protected in two major sanctuaries. In recent years the number of wild animals being killed for fur and leather trading led to a new law banning the hunting of wild animals and birds and the establishment of several wildlife sanctuaries and game reserves.

## Economy

Pakistan is a rapidly developing country which has faced a number of challenges on both political and economic fronts. Despite being a very poor country in 1947, Pakistan's economic growth rate was better than the global average during the subsequent four decades, but imprudent policies led to a slowdown in the late 1990s. Recently, wide-ranging economic reforms have resulted in a stronger economic outlook and accelerated growth especially in the manufacturing and financial services sectors. There has been great improvement in the foreign exchange position and rapid growth in hard currency reserves in recent years.

The 2005 estimate of foreign debt was close to US\$40 billion. However, this has decreased in recent years with assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and significant debt-relief from the United States. Pakistan's gross domestic product, as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP), is estimated to be US\$475.4 billion while its per capita income (PCI) stands at \$2,976. Despite clear progress, reports by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the UN Development Program place the poverty rate in Pakistan between 23% – 28%. The CIA factbook places the poverty rate at 24% in 2006, and notes that levels have fallen by ten percent since 2001. Pakistan's GDP growth rates have seen a steady increase over the last 5 years. However, inflationary pressures and a low savings rate, among other economic factors, could make it difficult to sustain a high growth rate, according to some analysts.

Image:Kpt.jpg  
Karachi Port Trust office building

The growth of non-agricultural sectors has changed the structure of the economy, and agriculture now only accounts for roughly 20% of the GDP. The service sector accounts for 53% of the country's GDP with wholesale and retail trade forming 30% of this sector. In recent times, the Karachi Stock Exchange has soared, along with most of the world's emerging markets. Large amounts of foreign investments have been made into several industries. The top industries in Pakistan are telecom, software, automotives, textiles, cement, fertilizer, steel, ship building, and more recently, Aerospace.

Pakistan has accomplished many engineering feats such as construction of the world's largest earth filled dam Tarbela, the world's twelfth largest dam Mangla, as well as, with collaboration with China, the world's highest international road: the Karakoram Highway. There are also half a dozen additional dams planned such as Kalabagh Dam, Diamer-Bhasha Dam, Munda, Akhori and Skardu Katzara.



Karachi port and harbour aerial view

In November of 2006 China and Pakistan signed a Free Trade Agreement hoping to triple bilateral trade from \$4.2 billion (USD) to \$15 billion (USD) within the next five years; Pakistan's annual exports in 2005 amounted to \$15 billion (USD), and is poised to cross \$18 billion (USD) in 2006 and \$20 billion (USD) in 2007. Pakistan is also home to a thriving arms industry which exports \$200 million (USD) annually, mostly defence equipment and arms to countries in the Middle East and South Asia, and its defence officials are hopeful that these exports will surpass \$500 million (USD) a year within the next five years.

In keeping with its rapid economic development in recent years, Pakistan registered an economic growth rate of 7 percent in the financial year 2006–07, the fourth consecutive year of seven percent growth. In its June 2006 Economic Survey global finance giant Morgan Stanley listed Pakistan on its list of major emerging markets in the world economy, placing it on a list of 25 countries displaying continued moderate to strong growth over a sustained period of time. The report noted "its economy has been growing quickly in recent periods and corporate direct investors have taken notice". A similar report by State Street Corporation, states that "economic growth (in 2007) has been strong and the stock market has been helped by privatizations as well as foreign investment". Concurrently, highlighting the strides made on the economic front in recent times, Moody's Investors Service in December 2006 upgraded Pakistan's credit rating from B2 to B1, noting a "positive outlook".

In late March 2007, the Asian Development Bank "Outlook 2007" report predicted that strong growth would continue in 2007 and 2008 with growth rates of 6.5 to 7 percent, with manufacturing, exports and consumer expenditure leading the way. Further progress was highlighted by news that the foreign direct investment (FDI ) for FY 2006/7 would touch \$7 billion, eclipsing the targeted \$4 billion. Telecoms, real estate and energy are major industries for FDI.

## Demographics

Pakistan has an estimated population of 164,742,000 as of 2007. Pakistan has the world's sixth largest population, placing it higher than Russia, and lower than Brazil. Pakistan is expected to surpass Brazil in population by the year 2020 because of the high growth rate. Population projections for Pakistan are relatively difficult because of the apparent differences in the accuracy of each census and the inconsistencies between various surveys related to the fertility rate, but it is likely that the rate of growth peaked in the 1980s and has since declined significantly. The population was estimated at 162,400,000 on July 1, 2005, with a fertility rate of 34 per thousand, a death rate of 10 per thousand, and the rate of natural increase at 2.4%. Pakistan also has a high infant mortality rate of 70 per thousand births.

The major ethnic groups are - Punjabis (44.68% of the population), Pashtuns (15.42%), Sindhis (14.1%), Seraikis (10.53%), Muhajirs (7.57%), Balochis (3.57%) and others (4.66%). As of November 2007, about 2 million registered Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan as a result of the ongoing war and instability in Afghanistan.

Primary mother tongue language usage largely corresponds to ethnic groups. Despite being a native language of a relatively small minority, Urdu is the national language and *lingua franca* of Pakistan, while English is the official language, used in the Constitution and widely used by corporate businesses, the educated urban elite, and most universities. Punjabi is spoken by over 60 million people, but has no official recognition in the country.

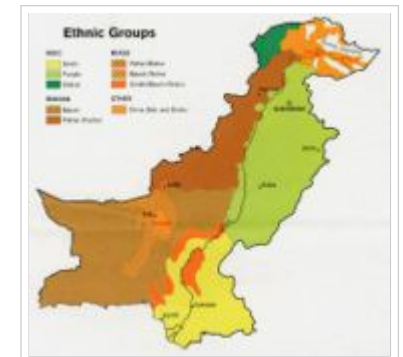
The demographics of religion in Pakistan were significantly influenced in 1947 by the movement of Muslims to Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs to India. Census data indicates that 96% of the population are Muslims, (nearly 77% are Sunni Muslims and 20% are Shi'a Muslims according to CIA estimates). Minority religions include Hinduism (1.85%), Christianity (1.6%), as well as much smaller numbers of Sikhs (Around 0.04%), Parsis, Ahmadis, Buddhists, Jews, and Animists (mainly the Kalasha of Chitral). Pakistan is the second most populous Muslim-majority country and also has the second largest Shi'a population in the world.

## Education

Education in Pakistan is divided into five levels: primary (grades one through five); middle (grades six through eight); high (grades nine and ten, leading to the Secondary School Certificate); intermediate (grades eleven and twelve, leading to a Higher Secondary School Certificate); and university programs leading to graduate and advanced degrees.

All academic education institutions are the responsibility of the provincial governments. The federal government mostly assists in curriculum development, accreditation and some financing of research.

The Government has decided to introduce 'English Medium Education' on a phased basis and to substantially end the right to 'Mother Tongue Education'. This new policy which is termed 'Education Sector Reforms (Policy decisions)', states that *English language has been made compulsory from Class-1 onwards. and the Introduction of English as medium of instruction for Science, Mathematics, Computer Science and other selected subjects like Economics and Geography in all schools in a graduated manner.*"



Major Ethnic Groups in Pakistan



University of the Punjab

Caretaker Minister for Education Mr. Shujaat Ali Beg declared Jan 25, 2008 that eighteen colleges of the city of Karachi would be made *Model English Medium Colleges*,"

## Society and culture



Mirza Asadullah Baig Khan, a famous ghazal writer

Pakistan has a rich and unique culture that has preserved established traditions throughout history. Many cultural practices, foods, monuments, and shrines were inherited from the rule of Muslim Mughal and Afghan emperors. The national dress of shalwar qamiz is originally of Central Asian origin derived from Turko-Iranian nomadic invaders and is today worn in all parts of Pakistan. Women wear brightly coloured shalwar qamiz, while men often wear solid-coloured ones. In cities western dress is also popular among the youth and the business sector.

The variety of Pakistani music ranges from diverse provincial folk music and traditional styles such as Qawwali and Ghazal Gayaki to modern forms fusing traditional and western music, such as the synchronisation of Qawwali and western music by the world renowned Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. In addition Pakistan is home to many famous folk singers such as the late Alam Lohar, who is also well known in Indian Punjab. The arrival of Afghan refugees in the western provinces has rekindled Pashto and Persian music and established Peshawar as a hub for Afghan musicians and a distribution centre for Afghan music abroad.

Until the 1990s, the state-owned Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) and Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation were the dominant media outlets, but there are now numerous private television channels. Various American, European, and Asian television channels and movies are available to the majority of the Pakistani population via private Television Networks, cable, and satellite television. There are also small indigenous movie industries based in Lahore and Peshawar (often referred to as Lollywood). Although Bollywood movies are banned from being displayed in public cinemas since 1965, Indian film stars are still generally popular in Pakistan due to the fact that Pakistanis are easily able to buy Bollywood movies from local shops for private home viewing.

Pakistani society is largely multilingual and predominantly Muslim, with high regard for traditional family values, although urban families have grown into a nuclear family system due to the socio-economic constraints imposed by the traditional joint family system. Recent decades have seen the emergence of a middle class in cities like Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Hyderabad, Faisalabad, and Peshawar that wish to move in a more liberal direction, as opposed to the northwestern regions bordering Afghanistan that remain highly conservative and dominated by centuries-old regional tribal customs. Increasing globalization has increased the influence of "Western culture" with Pakistan ranking 46<sup>th</sup> on the A.T. Kearney/ FP Globalization Index. There are an approximated four million Pakistanis living abroad, with close to a half-million expatriates living in the United States and around a million living in Saudi Arabia. As well as nearly one million people of Pakistani descent in the United Kingdom, there are burgeoning cultural connections.

## Holidays



Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Karachi. Christmas is a holiday in Pakistan, as it coincides with the birthdate of Jinnah

There are many festivals celebrated annually in Pakistan which may or may not observe as holidays e.g. Pakistan Day ( 23 March), Independence Day ( 14 August), Defence of Pakistan Day ( 6 September), Pakistan Air Force Day ( 7 September), the anniversaries of the birth ( 25 December)(holiday) and death ( 11 September) of Quaid-e-Azam, (Allama Iqbal ( 9 November) and the birth ( 30 July) and death ( 8 July) of Madar-e-Millat. Labour Day (also known as May Day) is also observed in Pakistan on May 1 (holiday).

Several important festivals are celebrated by Pakistani Muslims during the year, dependent on the Islamic calendar. Ramadan, the ninth month of the calendar, is characterised by daytime fasting for 29 or 30 days and is followed by the festival of Eid ul-Fitr. In a second festival, Eid ul-Adha, an animal is sacrificed in remembrance of the actions of Prophet Abraham (Arabic: Ibrahim) and the meat is shared with friends, family, and the less fortunate. Both Eid festivals are public holidays, serving as opportunities for people to visit family and friends, and for children to receive new clothes, presents, and sweets. Muslims celebrate Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi, the birthday of the prophet Muhammad, in the third month of the calendar ( Rabi' al-Awwal. Muslims mark the Day of Ashurah on the 9th and 10th days of the first month ( Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn bin Ali, (the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad).

Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Christians in Pakistan also celebrate their own festivals and holidays. Sikhs come from across the world to visit several holy sites in Punjab, including the shrine of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, at Hassan Abdal in the Attock District, and his birthplace, at Nankana Sahib. There are also several regional and local festivals, such as the Punjabi festival of Basant, which marks the start of spring and is celebrated by kite flying.

## Sports



Cricket is the most popular sport in Pakistan

The official and national sport of Pakistan is field hockey, although cricket is more popular. The national cricket team has won the Cricket World Cup once (in 1992), were runners-up once (in 1999), and co-hosted the games twice (in 1987 and 1996). Pakistan were runners-up in the inaugural 2007 ICC World Twenty20 held in South Africa. Pakistan was chosen to host the 2008 ICC Champions Trophy cricket tournament and co-host the 2011 Cricket World Cup, with Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh. Other popular sports in Pakistan include football, and squash. Squash is another sport that Pakistanis have excelled in, with successful world-class squash players such as Jahangir Khan and Jansher Khan winning the World Open several times during their careers.

At an international level, Pakistan has competed many times at the Summer Olympics in field hockey, boxing, athletics, swimming, and shooting. Pakistan's medal tally remains at 10

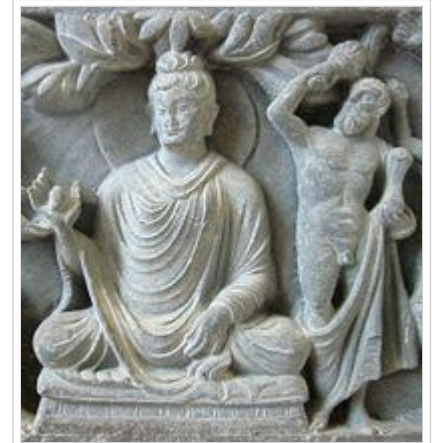
medals (3 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze) while at the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games it stands at 61 medals and 182 medals respectively. Hockey is the sport in which Pakistan has been most successful at the Olympics, with three gold medals in ( 1960, 1968, and 1984). Pakistan has also won the Hockey World Cup a record four times (1971, 1978, 1982, 1994). Pakistan has also hosted several international competitions, including the SAF Games in 1989 and 2004.

Image:A1gp pak.png  
A1 Grand Prix Team Pakistan

The Motorsport Association of Pakistan is a member of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile. The Freedom Rally is a yearly off-road race which takes place during the Independence celebrations.

## Architecture

With the beginning of the Indus civilization around the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C., for the first time in the area which encompasses today's Pakistan an advanced urban culture developed with large structural facilities, some of which survive to this day. Archaeologists excavated numerous ancient cities, among them Mohenjo Daro, Harappa and Kot Diji, which have a uniform, appropriate structure with broad roads as well as well thought out sanitary and drainage facilities. The majority of the discovered brick constructions are public buildings such as bath houses and workshops. Wood and loam served as construction materials. Large scale temples, such as those found in other ancient cities are missing. With the expiration of the Indus culture the architecture also suffered considerable damage. With the rise of Buddhism outstanding architectural monuments were again developed, which have lasted into the present. In addition, the Persian and Greek influence led to the development of the Greco-Buddhist style, starting from the 1st century A.D.. The high point of this era was reached with the culmination of the Gandhara style. Important remnants of Buddhist construction are stupas and other buildings with clearly recognizable Greek statues and style elements like support columns which, beside ruins from other epochs, are found in the Gandhara capital Taxila in the extreme north of the Punjab. A particularly beautiful example of Buddhist architecture is the ruins of the Buddhist monastery Takht-i-Bahi in the northwest province. The arrival of Islam in today's Pakistan - first in Sindh - during 8th century A.D. meant a sudden end of Buddhist architecture. However, a smooth transition to predominantly pictureless Islamic architecture occurred. The way early mosques were built with decorations oriented them strongly to the Arab style. The earliest example of a mosque from the days of infancy of Islam in South Asia is the Mihrablose mosque of Banbhore, from the year 727, the first Muslim place of worship on the Indian Subcontinent. Under the Delhi Sultan the Persian-centralasiatic style ascended over Arab influences. Most important characteristic of this style is the Iwan, walled on three sides, with one end entirely open. Further characteristics are wide prayer halls, round domes with mosaics and geometrical samples and the use of painted tiles. The most important of the few completely discovered buildings of Persian style is the tomb of the Shah Rukn-i-Alam (built 1320 to 1324) in Multan. At the start of the 16th century, the Indo-Islamic architecture was at the height of its boom. During the Mughal era design elements of Islamic-Persian architecture were fused with and often produced playful forms of the Hindustani art. Lahore, occasional residence of Mughal rulers, exhibits a multiplicity of important buildings from the empire, among them the Badshahi mosque (built 1673- 1674), the fortress of Lahore (16th century and 17th century) with the famous Alamgiri Gate, the colourful, still strongly Persian seeming Wazir Khan Mosque ( 1634- 1635) as well as numerous other mosques and mausoleums. Also the Shahjahan Mosque of Thatta in Sindh originates from the epoch of the Mughals. However, it exhibits partially different stylistic characteristics. Singularly, the innumerable tombs of the Chaukhandi are of eastern influence. Although constructed between 16th and 18th centuries, they do not possess any similarity to Mughal architecture. The stone mason works show rather typical Sindhi workmanship, probably from before Islamic times. The building activity of the Mughals came close to succumbing by the late 18th Century. Afterwards hardly any special native architectural projects were undertaken. In the British colonial age predominantly representative



An example of the fusion of Greek and Indian Buddhist styles in the Gandhara style: Representation of Buddha with Herakles



Mughal architecture: Naulakha pavilion (1633) in the fortress of Lahore

buildings of the Indo-European style developed, from a mixture of European and Indian-Islamic components. After independence Pakistan strove to express its new found national identity through architecture. This reflects itself particularly in modern structures like the Faisal Mosque in the capital built during the 1960s. In addition, buildings of monumental importance such as the Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore or the mausoleum established with white marble known as Mazar-e-Quaid for the founder of the state expressed the self-confidence of the nascent state.

## Tourism

Tourism is a growing industry in Pakistan, based on its diverse cultures, peoples and landscapes. The variety of attractions range from the ruins of ancient civilizations such as Mohenjo-daro, Harappa and Taxila, to the Himalayan hill stations, which attract those interested in field and winter sports. Pakistan is home to several mountain peaks over 7,000 metres (22,970 ft), which attracts adventurers and mountaineers from around the world, especially K2. The people of northern areas depend on tourism also. From April to September tourist of domestic and international type visited these areas which became the earn of living for local people. The northern parts of Pakistan have many old fortresses, towers and other architecture as well as the Hunza and Chitral valleys, the latter being home to the small pre-Islamic Animist Kalasha community who claim descent from the army of Alexander the Great. In the Punjab is the site of Alexander's battle on the Jhelum River and the historic city Lahore, Pakistan's cultural capital with many examples of Mughal architecture such as the Badshahi Masjid, Shalimar Gardens, Tomb of Jahangir and the Lahore Fort. To promote Pakistan's unique and various cultural heritage, the prime minister launched "Visit Pakistan 2007".



The Lahore Fort, was rebuilt by the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1566.

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# People's Republic of China

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The **People's Republic of China** ( simplified Chinese: 中华人民共和国; traditional Chinese: 中華人民共和國; pinyin: Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó listen ), commonly known as **China**, is the largest country in East Asia and the third or fourth largest country in the world. With a population of over 1.3 billion, roughly one-fifth of the world's total population, it is the most populous country in the world. Its capital is Beijing.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has led the PRC under a single-party system since the state's establishment in 1949. The PRC is involved in a long-running dispute over the political status of Taiwan. The CPC's rival during the Chinese Civil War, the Kuomintang (KMT), retreated to Taiwan and surrounding islands after its civil war defeat in 1949, claiming legitimacy over China, Mongolia, and Tuva while it was the ruling power of the Republic of China (ROC). The term " Mainland China" is often used to denote the areas under PRC rule, but sometimes excludes its two Special Administrative Regions: Hong Kong and Macau.

Because of its vast population, rapidly growing economy, large research and development investments, China is often considered as an emerging superpower. It has the world's fourth largest economy and second largest purchasing power parity. China is also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. Since 1978, China's market-based economic reforms have helped lift over 400 million Chinese out of poverty, bringing down the poverty rate from 53% of population in 1981 to 8% by 2001. However, China is now faced with a number of other economic problems, including an aging population and an increasing rural-urban income gap.

China plays a major role in international trade. The country is the world's largest consumer of steel and concrete, using, respectively, a third and over a half of the world's supply of each. It is also the world's second largest importer of petroleum. Counting all products, China is the third largest importer and the second largest exporter in the world.

## History

<p>中华人民共和国 ( simplified Chinese characters) 中華人民共和國 ( traditional Chinese characters) <i>Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó</i> <b>People's Republic of China</b></p>	
	
Flag	National Emblem
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>March of the Volunteers</i> (义勇军进行曲)</p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Beijing
<b>Largest city</b>	Shanghai
<b>Official languages</b>	Mandarin <sup>1</sup>





Mao Zedong proclaiming the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949.

Major combat in the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949 with the Communist Party of China in control of the mainland, and the Kuomintang retreating to Taiwan and some outlying islands of Fujian. On October 1, 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China, declaring "the Chinese people have stood up". *Red China* was a frequent appellation for the PRC (generally within the Western bloc) used from the time of Communist ascendance until the mid-late 1970s with the improvement of relations between China and the West.

Following a series of dramatic economic failures (caused by the Great Leap Forward), Mao stepped down from his position as chairman in 1959, with Liu Shaoqi as successor. Mao still had much influence over

the Party, but was removed from day-to-day management of economic affairs, which came under the control of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping.

In 1966, Mao and his allies launched the Cultural Revolution, which would last until Mao's death a decade later. The Cultural Revolution, motivated by power struggles within the Party and a fear of the Soviet Union, led to a major upheaval in Chinese society. In 1972, at the peak of the Sino-Soviet split, Mao and Zhou Enlai met Richard Nixon in Beijing to establish relations with the United States. In the same year, the PRC was admitted to the United Nations, replacing the Republic of China for China's membership of the United Nations, and permanent membership of the Security Council.



Flag of the People's Republic before a modernizing Shanghai.

After Mao's death in 1976 and the arrest of the Gang of Four, blamed for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping quickly wrestled power from Mao's anointed successor Hua Guofeng. Although Deng never became the head of the Party or State himself, his influence within the Party led the country to economic reforms of significant magnitude. The Communist Party subsequently loosened governmental control over citizens' personal lives and the communes were disbanded with many peasants receiving multiple land leases, which greatly increased incentives and agricultural production. This turn of events marked China's transition from a planned economy to a mixed economy with an increasingly open market environment, a system termed by many "market socialism". The PRC adopted its current constitution on

December 4, 1982.

<b>Demonym</b>	Chinese
<b>Government</b>	Socialist Republic <sup>2</sup>
<span> </span> - President	Hu Jintao
<span> </span> - Premier	Wen Jiabao
<b>Establishment</b>	
<span> </span> - People's Republic declared	October 1, 1949
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	9,598,086 km <sup>2</sup> or 9,640,821 km <sup>2</sup> <sup>*4</sup> ( 3rd / 4th–disputed <sup>3</sup> ) 3,704,427 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	2.8 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - 2007 estimate	1,321,851,888 <sup>3</sup> ( 1st)
<span> </span> - 2000 census	1,242,612,226
<span> </span> - Density	140/km <sup>2</sup> ( 53rd) 363/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$10.21 trillion ( 2nd)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$8,788 ( 82nd)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$2.6 trillion ( 4th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$2,800 ( 101th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	44 ( <span>medium</span> )
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span>▲</span> 0.777 ( <span>medium</span> ) ( 81st)
<b>Currency</b>	Yuan ( <span>CNY</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+8)

In 1989, the death of pro-reform official, Hu Yaobang, helped to spark the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, during which students and others campaigned for several months for more democratic rights and freedom of expression. However, they were eventually put down on June 4 when PLA troops and vehicles entered and forcibly cleared the square by opening fire on protesters, resulting in numerous casualties. This event was widely reported and famously videotaped, which brought worldwide condemnation and sanctions against the government.

President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji, both former mayors of Shanghai, led post-Tiananmen China in the 1990s. Under Jiang Zemin's ten years of administration, China's economic performance pulled an estimated 150 million peasants out of poverty and sustained an average annual GDP growth rate of 11.2%. The country formally joined the World Trade Organization in 2001.

Although China needs economic growth to spur its development, the government has begun to worry that rapid economic growth has negatively impacted the country's resources and environment. Another concern is that certain sectors of society are not sufficiently benefiting from China's economic development. As a result, under current President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, the PRC have initiated policies to address these issues of equitable distribution of resources, but the outcome remains to be seen. For much of China's population, living standards have seen extremely large improvements, and freedom continues to expand, but political controls remain tight.

## Politics

While the PRC is regarded as a Communist state by many political scientists, simple characterizations of China's political structure since the 1980s are no longer possible. The PRC government has been variously described as authoritarian, communist, and socialist, with heavy restrictions remaining in many areas, most notably in the Internet and in the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of reproductive rights, and freedom of religion. However, compared to its closed door policies until the mid-1970s, the liberalization of the PRC is such that the administrative climate is much less restrictive than before, though the PRC is still far from the full-fledged democracy practiced in most of Europe or North America, according to most observers internationally.

The country is ruled under the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Its incumbent President is Hu Jintao and its premier is Wen Jiabao.

The country is run by the Communist Party of China (CPC), which is guaranteed power by the Constitution. There are other political parties in the PRC, referred to in China as "democratic parties", which participate in the People's Political Consultative Conference and the National People's Congress. There have been some moves toward political liberalization, in that open contested elections are now held at the village and town levels, and that legislatures have shown some assertiveness from time to time. However, the Party retains effective control over governmental appointments: in the absence of meaningful opposition, the CPC wins by default most of the time. Political concerns in China include lessening the growing gap between rich and poor and fighting corruption within

- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC+8)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.cn <sup>3</sup>
<b>Calling code</b>	+86 <sup>3</sup>
<p>1 General Information of the People's Republic of China, ChinaToday. Retrieved 21 February 2007. In addition to Mandarin, Cantonese is co-official in both Hong Kong and Macau. English is co-official in Hong Kong (SAR); correspondingly, Portuguese in Macau (SAR). Similarly, several minority languages are also co-official with Chinese (Mandarin) in minority areas, viz. Zhuang in Guangxi, Uyghur in Xinjiang, Mongolian in the classical alphabet in Inner Mongolia, Tibetan in Tibet, and Korean in Yanbian, Jilin.</p> <p>2 The role of the government, China, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved on 21-02-2007.</p> <p>3 Information for mainland China only. The Special Administrative Regions of the PRC: Hong Kong, Macau are excluded. In addition, the island territories under the control of the Republic of China, which includes the islands of (Taiwan, Kinmen, and Matsu) are also excluded.</p> <p>4 9,598,086 km² Excludes all disputed territories. 9,640,821 km² Includes PRC-administered area ( Aksai Chin and Trans-Karakoram Tract, both territories claimed by India), Taiwan is not included.</p>	

the government leadership. The level of support that the Communist Party of China has among the Chinese population in general is unclear since there are no consistently contested national elections. According to a survey conducted in Hong Kong, where a relatively high level of freedom is enjoyed, the current CPC leaders have received substantial votes of support when residents were asked to rank their favourite leaders from the PRC and Taiwan.

## Foreign relations

The People's Republic of China maintains diplomatic relations with most major countries in the world. Sweden was the first western country to establish diplomatic relations with China on 9th May 1950. 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. It is considered a founding member of the UN, though the PRC was not in control of China at the time. The PRC was also a former member and leader of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Under the One-China policy, the PRC has made it a precondition to establishing diplomatic relations that the other country acknowledges its claim to Taiwan and sever official ties with the Republic of China (ROC) government. The government opposes publicized foreign travels by former and present Taiwanese officials promoting Taiwanese Independence, such as Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, and other politically controversial figures, such as Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, in an official context.

China has been playing an increasing role in calling for free trade areas and security pacts amongst its Asia-Pacific neighbors. In 2004, China proposed an entirely new East Asia Summit (EAS) framework as a forum for regional security issues that pointedly excluded the United States. The EAS, which includes 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), with Russia and the Central Asian republics.

Much of the current foreign policy is based on the concept of China's peaceful rise. Conflicts with foreign countries have occurred at times in its recent history, particularly with the United States; e.g., the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the Kosovo conflict in May 1999 and the U.S.-China spy plane incident in April 2001. Its foreign relations with many Western nations suffered for a time following the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, though they have since recovered. The relationship between China and Japan has been strained at times by Japan's refusal to acknowledge its war-time past to the satisfaction of the PRC, e.g. revisionist comments made by prominent Japanese officials and in some Japanese history textbooks. Another point of conflict between the two countries is the frequent visits by Japanese government officials to the Yasukuni Shrine. However, Sino-Japanese relations have warmed considerably since Shinzo Abe became the new Japanese Prime Minister in September 2006. A joint historical study to be completed by 2008 of WWII atrocities is being conducted by China and Japan.

Equally bordering the most countries in the world alongside Russia, the PRC was in a number of international territorial disputes. China's territorial disputes have led to localized wars in the last 50 years, including the Sino-Indian War in 1962, the Sino-Soviet border conflict in 1969 and the Sino-Vietnam War in 1979. In 2001, the PRC and Russia signed the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, which paved the way in 2004 for Russia to transfer Yinlong Island as well as one-half of Heixiazi Island to China, ending a long-standing Sino-Russian border dispute. Other territorial disputes include islands in the East



Hu Jintao with George W. Bush.

and South China Seas, and undefined or disputed borders with India, Tajikstan and North Korea.

While accompanying a rapid economic rise, the PRC since the 1990s seeks to maintain a policy of quiet diplomacy with its neighbors. Steadying its economic growth and participating in regional organizations and cultivating bi-lateral relations will ease suspicion over China's burgeoning military capabilities. The PRC has started a policy of wooing African nations for trade and bilateral co-operations.

## Population policy

With a population of over 1.3 billion, the PRC is very concerned about its population growth and has attempted, with mixed results, to implement a strict family planning policy. The government's goal is one child per family, with exceptions for ethnic minorities and flexibility in rural areas, where a family can have a second child if the first is a girl or physically disabled. The government's goal is to stabilize population growth early in the twenty-first century, though some projections estimate a population of anywhere ranging from 1.4 billion to 1.6 billion by 2025.

The policy is resisted, particularly in rural areas, because of the need for agricultural labour and a traditional preference for boys. Families who breach the policy often lie during the census. Official government policy opposes forced abortion or sterilization, but allegations of coercion continue as local officials, who are faced with penalties for failing to curb population growth, may resort to forced abortion or sterilization, or manipulation of census figures.

The decreasing reliability of PRC population statistics since family planning began in the late 1970s has made evaluating the effectiveness of the policy difficult. Estimates by Chinese demographers of the average number of children for a Chinese woman vary from 1.5 to 2.0. The government is particularly concerned with the large imbalance in the sex ratio at birth, apparently the result of a combination of traditional preference for boys, family planning pressure, and the wide availability of ultrasound, which led to its ban for the purpose of preventing sex-selective abortion.

## Human rights

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China states that the "fundamental rights" of citizens include freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to a fair trial, freedom of religion, universal suffrage, and property rights. However, censorship of political speech and information is openly and routinely used to protect what the government considers national security interests. In particular, press control is notoriously tight: Reporters Without Borders considers the PRC one of the least free countries in the world for the press. The government has a policy of limiting some protests and organizations that it considers a threat to social stability and national unity, as was the case with the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. The Communist Party has had mixed success at controlling information: a very strong media control system faces very strong market forces, an increasingly educated citizenry and cultural change that are making China more open. In some cases, especially on environmental issues, China's leaders see expressions of public dissatisfaction as a catalyst for positive change.

Certain foreign governments and NGOs routinely criticise the PRC, alleging widespread human rights violations including systematic use of lengthy detention without trial, forced confessions, torture, mistreatment of prisoners, restrictions of freedom of speech, assembly, association, religion, the press, and workers' rights. China leads the world in capital punishment, accounting for roughly 90% of total death-penalty executions in 2004. Human rights issues are one of the

factors driving independence movements in Tibet and Xinjiang. In the Reporters Without Borders' Annual World Press Freedom Index of 2005, the PRC ranked 159 out of 167 places. PRC journalist He Qinglian in her 2004 book *Media Control in China* documents government controls on the Internet and other media in China.

The PRC government responds to these criticisms by arguing that the notion of human rights should factor in standards of living; rise in the standard of living for some Chinese is seen as an indicator of improvement in human rights.

## Political divisions

The People's Republic of China has administrative control over twenty-two provinces and considers Taiwan to be its twenty-third province. There are also five autonomous regions, each with a designated minority group; four municipalities; and two Special Administrative Regions that enjoy considerable autonomy. The twenty-two provinces, five autonomous regions and four municipalities can be collectively referred to as "mainland China", a term which usually excludes Hong Kong and Macau.

## Geography and climate

China is the second largest country in Asia by area after Russia, and is considered the third or fourth largest in the world by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in respect to land-and-sea area. The uncertainty over size is related to the validity of claims by the PRC on territories such as Aksai Chin and Trans-Karakoram Tract (both territories also claimed by India), and a recent change in the method used by the United States to calculate its surface area. It borders 14 nations (counted clockwise from south): Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia and North Korea. Additionally the border between PRC and ROC is located in territorial waters.

The territory of the PRC contains a large variety of landscapes. In the east, along the shores of the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea, there are extensive and densely populated alluvial plains, while on the edges of the Inner Mongolian plateau in the north, grasslands can be seen. Southern China is dominated by hill country and low mountain ranges. In the central-east are the deltas of China's two major rivers, the Huang He and Yangtze River (Chang Jiang). Other major rivers include the Xi Jiang River, Mekong, Brahmaputra and Amur.

To the west, major mountain ranges, notably the Himalayas, with China's highest point at the eastern half of Mount Everest, and high plateaus feature among the more arid landscapes such as the Taklamakan and the Gobi Desert.

A major issue is the continued expansion of deserts, particularly the Gobi Desert. Although barrier tree lines planted since the 1970s have reduced the frequency of sandstorms, prolonged drought and poor agricultural practices result in dust storms plaguing northern China each spring, which then spread to other parts of East Asia, including Korea and Japan. Water, erosion, and pollution control have become important issues in China's relations with other countries.

China has some relevant environmental regulations: the 1979 Environmental Protection Law, which was largely modelled on U.S. legislation. But the environment continues to deteriorate. While the regulations are fairly stringent, they are frequently disregarded by local communities while seeking economic development. Twelve years after the law, only one Chinese city was making an effort to clean up its water discharges. This indicates that China is about twenty years behind the U.S. schedule of environmental regulation.

Water pollution has increased as an issue along with industrial production. The Chinese government has chosen a discharge standard measuring the concentration of a pollutant rather than the total pollutant load (as is done in the U.S. and many Western countries). As a result many industrial dischargers in China simply dilute the effluent with river water taken from the same source as the receiving waters. Consequently the outcome has been to create considerable water pollution in many of the country's rivers.

With regard to carbon emissions, China has ratified the Kyoto Protocol but it is not required to reduce carbon emissions because of its status as a developing country. However, with rapid industrialisation, China is fast becoming one of the world's top emitters of carbon gases and possibly a major contributor to global warming.



Grasslands of Chengde, Hebei Province, North China.



Tibetan Plateau in Southwest China.



Beach facing the South China Sea in Hainan Province.

Part of the price China is paying for increased prosperity is damage to the environment. Leading Chinese environmental campaigner Ma Jun has warned that water pollution is one of the most serious threats facing China. According to Ma the drinking water of 300 million peasants is unsafe and water quality in one fifth of the cities is not up to standard. This makes the crisis of water shortages more pressing, with 400 out of 600 cities short of water.

## Military

With 2.3 million active troops, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the largest military in the world. The PLA consists of an army, navy, air force, and strategic nuclear force. The official announced budget of the PLA for 2007 was \$45 billion. However, the United States claims China does not report its real military spending. The DIA estimates that the real Chinese military budget for 2007 could be anywhere from US\$85 to US\$125 billion.

The PRC, despite possession of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, is widely seen by military researchers both within and outside of China as having only limited power projection capability; this is, among other things, because of the limited effectiveness of its navy. It is considered a major regional power and possibly an emerging superpower.

Much progress has been made in the last decade and the PRC continues to make efforts to modernize its military. It has purchased state-of-the-art fighter jets from Russia, such as the Su-30s, and has also produced its own modern fighters, specifically the Chinese J-10s and the J-11s. It has also acquired and improved upon the Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile systems, which are considered to be among the best aircraft-intercepting systems in the world, albeit Russia has since produced the new generation S-400 Triumf. The PRC's armoured and rapid-reaction forces have been updated with enhanced electronics and targeting capabilities. In recent years, much attention has been focused on building a navy with blue-water capability.



PLA recruit training. The PLA has been rapidly modernizing its military force.

## Economy



In 1978, the late Deng Xiaoping initiated China's market-oriented reforms.

Beginning in late 1978, the Chinese leadership has been reforming the economy from a Soviet-style centrally planned economy to a more market-oriented economy that is still within a rigid political framework under Party control. The reforms replaced collectivization of Chinese agriculture with privatization of farmlands, increased the responsibility of local authorities and industry managers, allowed a wide variety of small-scale enterprises to flourish, and promoted foreign investment. Price controls were also relaxed. These changes resulted in mainland China's shift from a planned economy to a mixed economy.



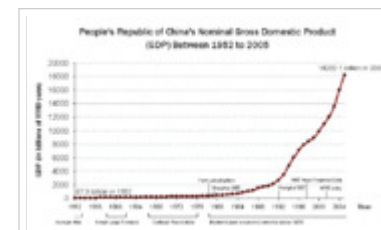
China became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001. China's accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO) was a goal achieved after nearly fifteen years of exhausting negotiations carrying many legal, political and social implications for all parties. China was finally able to convince WTO members that without China, the WTO is only partially a worldwide trade organization. The road to the signature of the final agreement of accession was long, but these difficulties pale in comparison to the problems that have not yet been tackled in terms of achieving real implementation of its provisions throughout the territory of the People's Republic of China (PRC). China's accession surely presents the world trading system with opportunities, but also poses the challenge of integrating a market with strong structural, behavioural and cultural constraints.

The government emphasizes personal income and consumption by introducing new management systems to help increase productivity. The government also focuses on foreign trade as a major vehicle for economic growth, which led to 5 Special Economic Zones (SEZ: Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, Xiamen, Hainan Province) where investment laws are relaxed so as to attract foreign capital. Since the 1990s, SEZs and similar concepts have been expanded to major Chinese cities, including Shanghai and Beijing. The result has been a 6-fold increase of GDP since 1978. Chinese economic development is among the fastest in the world, and has been growing at an average annual GDP rate of 9.4% for the past 25 years. At the end of 2005, the PRC became the fourth largest economy in the world by exchange rate, and the second largest in the world after the United States by purchasing power parity at US\$8,158 trillion. But with its large population this still gives an average GDP per person of only an estimated US\$8,000 (2006), about 1/5th that of the United States.

Mainland China has a reputation as being a low-cost manufacturer, which caused notable disputes in global markets. This is largely because Chinese corporations can produce many products far more cheaply than other parts of Asia or Latin America, and because expensive products produced in developed countries like the United States are in large part uncompetitive compared to European or Asian goods. Another factor is the unfavorable exchange rate between the Chinese yuan and the United States dollar to which it was pegged.

On July 21, 2005 the People's Bank of China announced that it would move to a floating peg, allowing its currency to move against the United States dollar by 0.5% (effective 18 May 2007, which was earlier 0.3%) a day, while 3% a day against other currencies. Many high-tech American companies have difficulty exporting to China because of U.S. federal government restrictions, which exacerbated the trade gap between the PRC and the US, widespread software piracy and illegal copying of intellectual property (a major US export), and perceived low quality of US goods. On the other hand, China runs a trade deficit with Taiwan and South Korea, importing more from those nations than exports. China runs a large but diminishing trade surplus with Japan (slight deficit if Hong Kong is included).

There has been a significant rise in the Chinese standard of living in recent years. Today, a rapidly declining 10 percent of the Chinese population is below the poverty line. 90.9% of the population is literate, compared to 20% in 1950. The life expectancy in China is the third highest in East Asia, after Japan and South Korea. There is a large wealth disparity between the coastal regions and the remainder of the country. To counter this



Nominal GDP, from 1952 to 2005.



The Shanghai Stock Exchange. China's SSE index surged 130 percent in 2006.



Farmlands in Hebei province. Hundreds of millions of Chinese still depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihood.

potentially destabilizing problem, the government has initiated the China Western Development strategy (2000), the Revitalize Northeast China initiative (2003), and the Rise of Central China policy (2004), which are all aimed at helping the interior of China to catch up.

China is undergoing major reforms in its financial sector, which has been plagued by nonperforming loans made in the 1980s and early 1990s to inefficient state-owned enterprises. The government has spent five years and more than US\$400 billion cleaning bad loans off the books of the big four state-owned banks, helping prepare them to become shareholder corporations. By the end of 2006, China had restructured three of its four largest banks and listed them publicly. China's largest bank, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) in October 2006 raised US\$21.6 billion in the world's largest initial public offering (IPO) in history. ICBC is now the world's second largest bank in market value, after only Citibank. These highly successful IPOs have helped ease the government's burden and spur further structural reforms in China's nascent banking industry.

## Science and technology

After the Sino-Soviet split, China started to develop its own nuclear weapons and delivery systems, successfully detonating its first surface nuclear test in 1964 at Lop Nor. A natural outgrowth of this was a satellite launching program, which culminated in 1970 with the launching of Dongfang Hong I, the first Chinese satellite. This made the PRC the fifth nation to independently launch a satellite. In 1992, the Shenzhou manned spaceflight program was authorized. After four tests, *Shenzhou 5* was launched on October 15, 2003, using a Long March 2F rocket and carrying Chinese astronaut Yang Liwei, making the PRC the third country to put a human being into space through its own endeavors. With the successful completion of the second manned mission, *Shenzhou 6* in October 2005, the country plans to build a Chinese Space Station in the near future and achieve a lunar landing in the next decade.

China has the world's second largest research and development budget, and is expected to invest over \$136 billion this year after growing more than 20% in the past year. The Chinese government continues to place heavy emphasis on research and development by creating greater public awareness of innovation, and reforming financial and tax systems to promote growth in cutting-edge industries. President Hu Jintao in January 2006 called for China to make the transition from a manufacturing-based economy to an innovation-based one, and this year's National People's Congress has approved large increases in research funding. Stem-cell research and gene therapy, which some in the Western world see as controversial, face minimal regulation in China. China has an estimated 926,000 researchers, second in number only to the 1.3 million in the United States.

China is also actively developing its software, semiconductor and energy industries, including renewable energies such as hydro, wind and solar power. In an effort to reduce pollution from coal-burning power plants, China has been pioneering the deployment of pebble bed nuclear reactors, which run cooler and safer, and have potential applications for the hydrogen economy.

## Transportation



Windmill generators in Xinjiang. The Dabancheng project is Asia's largest wind power plant.

Transportation in the mainland of the People's Republic of China has improved remarkably since the late 1990s as part of a government effort to link the entire nation through a series of expressways known as the National Trunk Highway System (NTHS). The total length of expressway is 45,000 km at the end of 2006, second only to the United States.

Private car ownership is increasing at an annual rate of 15%, though it is still uncommon because of government policies that make car ownership expensive, such as taxes and toll roads.

Air travel has increased, but remains too expensive for most. Long distance transportation is still dominated by railways and charter bus systems. The railways are still the vital carrier in China, and until this year steam locomotives were still a common sight. It is thought that some are still in use, especially on industrial networks.

Cities such as Beijing and Shanghai are building subways or light rail systems. Hong Kong has one of the most developed transport systems in the world. Shanghai already has a Maglev system connecting downtown Shanghai to Pudong International Airport

## Demographics



G030 northbound in Hebei province. There are 45,000 km (28,000 mi) of expressways in China. This is the second-longest total in the world, and half that of the United States.

As of July 2006, there are 1,313,973,713 people in the PRC. About 20.8% (male 145,461,833; female 128,445,739) are 14 years old or younger, 71.4% (male 482,439,115; female 455,960,489) are between 15 and 64 years old, and 7.7% (male 48,562,635; female 53,103,902) are over 65 years old. The population growth rate for 2006 is 0.59%. The PRC officially recognizes 56 distinct ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Han Chinese, who constitute about 91.9% of the total population. Large ethnic minorities include the Zhuang (16 million), Manchu (10 million), Hui (9 million), Miao (8 million), Uyghur (7 million), Yi (7 million), Tujia (5.75 million), Mongols (5 million), Tibetans (5 million), Buyi (3 million), and Koreans (2 million).

In the past decade, China's cities expanded at an average rate of 10% annually. The country's urbanization rate increased from 17.4% to 41.8% between 1978 and 2005, a scale unprecedented in human history. 80 to 120 million migrant workers work part-time in the major cities and return home to the countryside periodically with their earnings.

Today, the People's Republic of China has dozens of major cities with one million or more long-term residents, including the three global cities of Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shanghai. Major cities in China play key roles in national and regional identity, culture and economics.

## Largest cities

The figures below are the 2001 estimates for the ten largest 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 of migrant workers make conducting censuses in urban areas difficult; the figures below do not include the floating population, only long-term residents.

Rank	City urban area	Type/location	Population (2001 est) millions	Density (2001 est) per km <sup>2</sup>	Municipality limits (2000 census)		Region
					millions	density (/km <sup>2</sup> )	
1	Shanghai	municipality	9.838	34,700	16.74	2,640	East
2	Beijing	municipality	7.441	29,800	13.82	822	North
3	Hong Kong	SAR	6.112	76,200	7.01	6,294	South Central
4	Tianjin	municipality	5.095	10,500	10.01	803	North
5	Wuhan	Hubei province	4.489	12,950	8.31	947	South Central
6	Guangzhou	Guangdong province	4.155	11,600	10.15	1,337	South Central



Shanghai



Beijing



Hong Kong



Tianjin

7	Shenyang	Liaoning province	3.981	9,250	7.20	557	Northeast
8	Chongqing	municipality	3.934	23,500	30.90	378	Southwest
9	Nanjing	Jiangsu province	2.822	13,250	6.40	970	East
10	Harbin	Heilongjiang province	2.672	11,350	9.35	174	Northeast

## Education

In 1986, China set the long-term goal of providing compulsory nine-year basic education to every child. As of 1997, there were 628,840 primary schools, 78,642 secondary schools and 1,020 higher education institutions in the PRC. In February 2006, the government advanced its basic education goal by pledging to provide completely free nine-year education, including textbooks and fees, in the poorer western provinces. As of 2002, 90.9% (male: 95.1%; female: 86.5%) of the population over age 15 are literate. China's youth (age 15 to 24) literacy rate is 98.9% (99.2% for males and 98.5% for females) in 2000. In March 2007, China announced the decision of making education a national "strategic priority", the central budget of the national scholarships will be tripled in two years and 223.5 billion Yuan (28.65 billion US dollars) of extra funding will be allocated from the central government in the next 5 years to improve the compulsory education in rural areas.



A public school classroom in the western region of Xinjiang.

The quality of Chinese colleges and universities varies considerably across the country. The consistently top-ranked universities in mainland China are Peking and Tsinghua in Beijing; Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong University in Shanghai; Xi'an Jiaotong University in Xi'an; Nanjing University in Nanjing; the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei; Zhejiang University in Hangzhou and Wuhan University in Wuhan.

Many parents are highly committed to their children's education, often investing large portions of the family's income on education. Private lessons and recreational activities, such as in foreign languages or music, are popular among the middle-class families who can afford them.

## Public health

The Ministry of Health, together with its counterparts in the provincial health bureaus, oversees the health needs of the Chinese population. An emphasis on public health and preventative treatment characterized health policy since the early 1950s. At that time, the party started the Patriotic Health Campaign, which was aimed at improving sanitation and hygiene, as well as attacking several diseases. This has shown major results as diseases like cholera, typhoid, and scarlet fever were nearly eradicated.

With economic reform after 1978, the health of the Chinese public improved rapidly because of better nutrition despite the disappearance, along with the

People's Communes, of much of the free public health services provided in the countryside. Health care in China became largely private fee-for-service. By 2000, when the World Health Organization made a large study of public health systems throughout the world, The World Health Report 2000 Health Systems: Improving Performance the Chinese public health system ranked 144 of the 191 UN member states ranked.

The country's life expectancy jumped from about 41 years in 1950 to almost 73 years in 2006, and infant mortality went down from 300 per thousand in the 1950s to about 23 per thousand in 2006. Malnutrition as of 2002 stood at 12 percent of the population according to United Nations FAO sources.

Despite significant improvements in health and the introduction of western style medical facilities, the PRC has several emerging public health problems, which include respiratory problems as a result of widespread air pollution and millions of cigarette smokers, a possible future HIV/AIDS epidemic, and an increase in obesity among urban youths. Estimates of excess deaths in China from environmental pollution (apart from smoking) are placed at 760,000 people per annum from air and water pollution (including indoor air pollution) China's large population and close living quarters has led to some serious disease outbreaks in recent years, such as the 2003 outbreak of SARS (a pneumonia-like disease) which has since been largely contained.

## Culture

For centuries, opportunity for economic and social advancement in China could be provided by high performance on Imperial examinations. The literary emphasis of the exams affected the general perception of cultural refinement in China, such as the view that calligraphy and literati painting were higher forms of art than dancing or drama. China's traditional values were derived from various versions of Confucianism and conservatism. A number of more authoritarian and rational strains of thought have also been influential, such as Legalism. There was often conflict between the philosophies, such as the individualistic Song Dynasty neo-Confucians, who believed Legalism departed from the original spirit of Confucianism. Examinations and a culture of merit remain greatly valued in China today. In recent years, a number of New Confucians have advocated that democratic ideals and human rights are quite compatible with traditional Confucian "Asian values."

The first leaders of the People's Republic of China were born in the old society but were influenced by the May Fourth Movement and reformist ideals. They sought to change some traditional aspects of Chinese culture, such as rural land tenure, sexism, and a Confucian education, while preserving others, such as the family structure and obedience to the state. Many observers believe that the period following 1949 is a continuation of traditional Chinese dynastic history, while others say that the CPC's rule has damaged the foundations of Chinese culture, especially through political movements such as the Cultural Revolution, where many aspects of traditional culture were labeled 'regressive and harmful' or 'vestiges of feudalism' by the regime. They further argue that many important aspects of traditional Chinese morals and culture, such as Confucianism, Chinese art, literature, and performing arts like Beijing opera, were altered to conform to government policies and propaganda at the time. One example being Chinese character simplification, since traditional characters were blamed for the country's low literacy rate at the time. However, simplified Chinese characters are not used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau.

Today, the PRC government has accepted a great deal of traditional Chinese culture as an integral part of Chinese society, lauding it as an important

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Image:Shanghaimuseumscroll  
Museum patrons viewing ancient Chinese scroll paintings at the Shanghai Museum.



A Cold Fairyland concert performance. The band combines traditional Chinese instruments and musical elements with rock music.

achievement of the Chinese civilization and emphasizing it as vital to a Chinese national identity. Since the Cultural Revolution has ended, various forms of traditional Chinese art, literature, music, film, fashion and architecture have seen a vigorous revival, and folk and variety art in particular have gained a new found respectability, and sparked interests nation and even worldwide.

## Religion

Most Chinese — 59% of the population, or about 767 million people — identify themselves as non-religious. However, rituals and religion — especially the traditional beliefs of Confucianism and Taoism and Buddhism — play a significant part in the lives of many. About 33% of the population follow a mixture of beliefs usually referred to by statisticians as "Traditional Beliefs" or just "Other".

About 8% of the Chinese population are avowed Buddhists, with Mahayana Buddhism (大乘, *Dacheng*) and its subsets Pure Land (Amidism), Tiantai and Zen being the most widely practiced. With an estimated 100 million adherents, Buddhism is the country's largest organized religion. Other forms of Buddhism, such as Theravada Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, are practiced largely by ethnic minorities along the geographic fringes of the Chinese mainland. A government official recently suggested that there are 16 million Christians. However, an independent survey by East China Normal University estimated the Christian population at 40 million, much higher than the government's numbers but much lower than numbers favored by some Western observers. Official figures also indicate that there are about 20 million Muslims.

## Sports and recreation

China has one of the oldest sporting cultures in the world, spanning the course of several millennia. There is, in fact, evidence that a form of football (soccer) was first played in China around 1000 AD, leading many historians to believe that the popular sport originated from China. Besides soccer, some of the most popular sports in the country include martial arts, table tennis, badminton, swimming, basketball, and more recently, golf and rugby. Board games such as Go (Weiqi), and Xiangqi (Chinese chess) and recently Chess are also commonly played and have organised competitions.

Physical fitness is widely emphasized in Chinese culture. Morning exercises are a common activity and often one can find the elderly practicing qigong and Tai Chi Chuan in parks or students doing stretches on school campuses. Young people are especially keen on basketball, especially in urban centres with limited space and grass areas. The NBA has a huge following among Chinese youths, with Yao Ming being the idol of many. The 2008 Summer Olympics, officially known as the *Games of the XXIX Olympiad*, will be held in Beijing, and as a result the country has put even more emphasis on sports.

Many traditional sports are also played. The popular Chinese dragon boat racing (龙舟) occurs during the Duan Wu festival. In Inner Mongolia, sports such as Mongolian-style wrestling and horse racing are popular. In Tibet, archery and equestrian sports are a part of traditional festivals.

*See also: Chinese art, Chinese architecture, Chinese clothing, Chinese cuisine, Chinese medicine, Chinese literature, Chinese mythology, Cinema of China, Chinese animation, Music of China, Public holidays in the People's Republic of China, and List of Chinese people*



Evening pickup basketball game in a Beijing neighbourhood.

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# Philippines

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The **Philippines** ( Filipino: *Pilipinas*), officially the **Republic of the Philippines** (*Republika ng Pilipinas*; **RP**), is an archipelagic nation located in Southeast Asia, with Manila as its capital city. The Philippine archipelago comprises 7,107 islands in the western Pacific Ocean, bordering countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Palau and the Republic of China, although it is the only Southeast Asian country to share no land borders with its neighbors. The Philippines is the world's 12th most populous country with a population approaching 87 million people. Its national economy is the 47th largest in the world with a 2007 gross domestic product (GDP) of over US\$161.07 billion.


Filipinos are mostly of Austronesian descent, but there are significant Chinese, Hispanic, Negrito, Arab, American and Indian minorities. There are more than 11 million overseas Filipinos worldwide, about 11% of the total population of the Philippines.

The Philippines became a Spanish colony in the 16th century, and then a U.S. territory and commonwealth after the Spanish-American War. The Philippine Revolution was an attempt to gain independence from Spain, and later from the U.S. in the Philippine-American War. The Philippines ultimately gained its independence from the United States on July 4, 1946 after the Pacific War under the terms of the Tydings-McDuffie Act. The Philippines then became a fledging democracy until the authoritarian rule of Ferdinand Marcos led to his overthrow in the People Power Revolution of 1986. Political upheavals alternated with peaceful transition of power on the period that followed.

Today, the Philippines has many affinities with the Western world, derived mainly from the cultures of Spain, Latin America, and the United States. Roman Catholicism became the predominant religion, although pre-Hispanic indigenous religious practices and Islam still exist. The two official languages of the Philippines are Filipino, which is based on Tagalog; and English.

## Etymology

The name *Philippines* and its Spanish counterpart *Filipinas* are derived from the name of Philip II of Spain. Ruy López de Villalobos used the name *Las Islas Filipinas* in honour of the then-Crown Prince

<i>Republika ng Pilipinas</i> <b>Republic of the Philippines</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> <i>Maka-Diyos, Makatao, Makakalikasan, at Makabansa</i> (English: "For God, People, Nature, and Country")	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Lupang Hinirang</i> "Chosen Land"	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Manila
<b>Largest city</b>	Quezon City
<b>Official languages</b>	Filipino, and English
Recognised regional languages	Bikol, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Kapampangan,

during his expedition to the Philippines, originally referring to the islands of Leyte and Samar. Despite the presence of other names, the name *Filipinas* was eventually adopted as the name of the entire archipelago.

The official name of the islands, however, changed throughout the course of Philippine history. In the Philippine Revolution, the Philippines was officially called the *República Filipina* or the Philippine Republic. From the time of the Spanish-American War until the Commonwealth, American colonial authorities have referred to the Philippines as the "Philippine Islands", a translation of the original Spanish. It was in the Commonwealth period that the name *Philippines* began to appear, a name that still persists even in current official name.

## History

Archeological and paleontological discoveries show that *Homo sapiens* existed in Palawan circa 50,000 BC. The Negritos, an Australo-Melanesian people, arrived in the Philippines at least 30,000 years ago.

In the service of Spain, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew started their voyage on September 20, 1519. Magellan sighted Samar on March 17, 1521, on the next day, they reached Homonhon. They reached the island of Limasawa on March 28, 1521 where the first Mass in the Philippines was celebrated on March 31, 1521. Magellan arrived at Cebu on April 7, 1521, befriendng Rajah Humabon and converting his family and 700 other Cebuanos to Christianity. However, Magellan would later be killed in the Battle of Mactan by indigenous warriors led by Lapu-Lapu, a fierce rival of Humabon.

The beginnings of colonization started to take form when Philip II of Spain ordered successive expeditions. Miguel López de Legazpi arrived from Mexico in 1565 and formed the first Spanish settlements in Cebu. In 1571 he established Manila as the capital of the new Spanish colony.

Spanish rule brought political unification to an archipelago of previously independent islands and communities that later became the Philippines, and introduced elements of western civilization such as the code of law, printing and the calendar. The Philippines was ruled as a territory of New Spain from 1565 to 1821, but after Mexican independence it was administered directly from Madrid. During that time new crops and livestock were introduced, and trade flourished. The Manila Galleon which linked Manila to Acapulco once or twice a year beginning in the late 16th century, carried silk, spices, ivory and porcelain to America and silver on the return trip to the Philippines. The Spanish military fought off various indigenous revolts and several external colonial challenges, specially from the British, Chinese

	Pangasinan, Tagalog, Waray-Waray,.
<b>Demonym</b>	Filipino
<b>Government</b>	Unitary presidential constitutional republic
<span> </span> - President	Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
<span> </span> - Vice President	Noli de Castro
<b>Independence</b>	from Spain from United States
<span> </span> - Established	March 16, 1521
<span> </span> - Declared	June 12, 1898
<span> </span> - Self-government	March 24, 1934
<span> </span> - Independence recognized	July 4, 1946
<span> </span> - Current constitution	February 2, 1987
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	300,000 km <sup>2</sup> ( 72nd) 115,831 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	0.61%
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - 2006 estimate	88.701 million ( 12th)
<span> </span> - 2000 census	76,498,735
<span> </span> - Density	290/km <sup>2</sup> ( 29th) 112/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$466.632 billion ( 25th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$5,365.287 ( 103rd)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$117.562 billion ( 47th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$1,351.718 ( 105th)

pirates, Dutch, and Portuguese. Roman Catholic missionaries converted most of the inhabitants to Christianity, and founded the first schools, universities and hospitals. In 1863 a Spanish decree introduced public education, creating free public schooling in Spanish .

The Propaganda Movement, which included Philippine nationalist José Rizal, then a student studying in Spain, soon developed on the Spanish mainland. This was done in order to inform the government of the injustices of the administration in the Philippines as well as the abuses of the friars. In the 1880s and the 1890s, the propagandists clamored for political and social reforms, which included demands for greater representation in Spain. Unable to gain the reforms, Rizal returned to the country, and pushed for the reforms locally. Rizal was subsequently arrested, tried, and executed for treason on December 30, 1896. Earlier that year, the Katipunan, led by Andrés Bonifacio, had already started a revolution, which was eventually continued by Emilio Aguinaldo, who established a revolutionary government, although the Spanish governor general Fernando Primo de Rivera proclaimed the revolution over in May 17, 1897.

The Spanish-American War began in Cuba in 1898 and soon reached the Philippines when Commodore George Dewey defeated the Spanish squadron at Manila Bay. Aguinaldo declared the independence of the Philippines on June 12, 1898, and was proclaimed head of state. As a result of its defeat, Spain was forced to officially cede the Philippines, together with Cuba (made an independent country, the US in charge of foreign affairs), Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States. In 1899 the First Philippine Republic was proclaimed in Malolos, Bulacan but was later dissolved by the US forces, leading to the Philippine-American War between the United States and the Philippine revolutionaries, which continued the violence of the previous years. The US proclaimed the war ended when Aguinaldo was captured by American troops on March 23, 1901, but the struggle continued until 1913 claiming the lives of over a million Filipinos . The country's status as a territory changed when it became the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935, which provided for more self-governance. Plans for increasing independence over the next decade were interrupted during World War II when Japan invaded and occupied the islands. After the Japanese were defeated in 1945, returned to the Filipino and American forces in the Liberation of the Philippines from 1944 to 1945, the Philippines was granted independence from the United States on July 4, 1946.

Since 1946, the newly independent Philippine state has faced political instability with various rebel groups. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw economic development that was second in Asia, next to Japan. Ferdinand Marcos was, then, the elected president. Barred from seeking a third term, Marcos declared martial law on September 21, 1972 and ruled the country by decree.

Upon returning from exile, opposition leader Benigno Aquino, Jr. was assassinated on August 21, 1983. In January 1986, Marcos allowed for a snap election, after large protests. The election was believed to be fraudulent, and resulted in a standoff between military mutineers and the military loyalists. Protesters supported the mutineers, and were accompanied by resignations of prominent cabinet officials. Corazon Aquino, the widow of Benigno Aquino, Jr., was the recognized winner of the snap election. She took over government, and called for a constitutional convention to draft a new constitution, after the People Power Revolution. Marcos, his family and some of his allies fled to Hawaii.

The return of democracy and government reforms after the events of 1986 were hampered by massive national debt, government corruption, coup attempts, a

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<b>Gini</b> (2003)	44.5 ( <b>high</b> )
<b>HDI</b> (2007/2008)	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.771 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 90th)
<b>Currency</b>	Peso (Filipino: <i> piso </i> ₱) ( PHP)
<b>Time zone</b>	PST ( UTC+8)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ph
<b>Calling code</b>	+63
<p><small>1 Spanish and Arabic are promoted on a voluntary and optional basis.</small></p> <p><small>2 Rankings above were taken from associated Wikipedia pages as of December, 2007, and may be based on data or data sources other than those appearing here.</small></p>	

communist insurgency, and a Muslim separatist movement. The economy improved during the administration of Fidel V. Ramos, who was elected in 1992. However, the economic improvements were negated at the onset of the East Asian financial crisis in 1997. The 2001 EDSA Revolution led to the downfall of the following president, Joseph Estrada. The current administration of president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been hounded by allegations of corruption and election rigging.

## Politics and government

The Philippines has a presidential, unitary (with some modification; there is one autonomous region largely free from the national government) form of government, where the President functions as both head of state and head of government, and is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president is elected by popular vote to a six-year term, during which time she or he appoints and presides over the cabinet.

The bicameral Congress is composed of a Senate, serving as the upper house whose members are elected nationally to a six-year term, and a House of Representatives serving as the lower house whose members are elected to a three-year term and are elected from legislative districts and through sectoral representation.

The judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court, composed of a Chief Justice as its presiding officer and fourteen associate justices, all appointed by the President from nominations submitted by the Judicial and Bar Council.

Attempts to amend the constitution to either a federal, unicameral or parliamentary form of government have repeatedly failed since the Ramos administration.

The Philippines is a founding and active member of the United Nations since its inception on October 24, 1945 and is a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Philippines is also a member of the East Asia Summit (EAS), an active player in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Latin Union, and a member of the Group of 24. The country is a major non-NATO ally of the U.S. but also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Philippines is involved in complex dispute over the Spratly Islands and Scarborough Shoal. It also claims the Malaysian state of Sabah, as it was once part of the Sultanate of Sulu.

## Administrative divisions

<b>Flag</b>	<i>Pambansang Watawat</i>
<b>Anthem</b>	" <i>Lupang Hinirang</i> "
<b>Patriotic Song</b>	" <i>Pilipinas Kong Mahal</i> ", " <i>Bayan Ko</i> "
<b>Gem</b>	South Sea pearls
<b>Dance</b>	<i>Cariñosa</i>
<b>Animal</b>	Carabao
<b>Bird</b>	Philippine Eagle
<b>Fish</b>	Milkfish ( <i>Bangus</i> )
<b>Flower</b>	Arabian Jasmine ( <i>Sampaguita</i> )
<b>Tree</b>	Angsana ( <i>Narra</i> )
<b>Leaf</b>	Fan palm ( <i>Anahaw</i> )
<b>Fruit</b>	Mango ( <i>Mangga</i> )
<b>Sport</b>	Sipa
<b>House</b>	Nipa hut ( <i>Bahay kubo</i> )
<b>Costume</b>	Barong and Baro't saya
<b>Hero</b>	José Rizal

Source

The Philippines is divided into three island groups : Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. These are divided into 17 regions, 81 provinces, 136 cities, 1,494 municipalities and 41,995 barangays.

On July 24, 2006, the State of the Nation Address of President Arroyo announced the proposal to create five economic super regions to concentrate on the economic strengths in a specific area.

Region	Designation	Government centre
Ilocos Region	Region I	San Fernando City, La Union
Cagayan Valley Region	Region II	Tuguegarao City, Cagayan
Central Luzon Region	Region III	City of San Fernando, Pampanga
CALABARZON Region <sup>1 2</sup>	Region IV-A	Calamba City, Laguna
MIMAROPA Region <sup>1 2 3</sup>	Region IV-B	Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, Palawan
Bicol Region	Region V	Legazpi City, Albay
Western Visayas Region <sup>3</sup>	Region VI	Iloilo City
Central Visayas Region	Region VII	Cebu City
Eastern Visayas Region	Region VIII	Tacloban City, Leyte
Zamboanga Peninsula Region	Region IX	Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur
Northern Mindanao Region	Region X	Cagayan de Oro City
Davao Region	Region XI	Davao City
SOCCSKSARGEN Region <sup>1</sup>	Region XII	Koronadal City, South Cotabato
Caraga Region	Region XIII	Butuan City
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	ARMM	Cotabato City
Cordillera Administrative Region	CAR	Baguio City
National Capital Region	NCR	Manila



<sup>1</sup> Names are capitalized because they are acronyms, containing the names of the constituent provinces or cities (see Acronyms in the Philippines).

<sup>2</sup> These regions formed the former Southern Tagalog region, or Region IV.

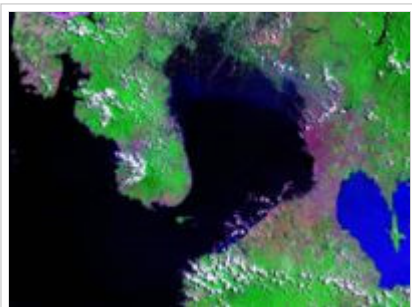
<sup>3</sup> Palawan was moved from Region IV-B as known as MIMAROPA to Region VI. From November 2005, Region IV-B would be called MIMARO, decreased from five to four provinces and Region VI increased from six to seven provinces.

## Geography

The Philippines constitutes an archipelago of 7,107 islands with a total land area of approximately 300,000 square kilometers (116,000 sq mi). It generally lies between 116° 40' and 126° 34' E. longitude, and 4° 40' and 21° 10' N. latitude, and borders the Philippine Sea on the east, on the South China Sea the west, and the Celebes Sea on the south. The island of Borneo lies a few hundred kilometers southwest and Taiwan directly north. The Moluccas and Sulawesi are to the south, and Palau is to the east beyond the Philippine Sea.

The islands are commonly divided into three island groups: Luzon (Regions I to V, NCR and CAR), Visayas (VI to VIII), and Mindanao (IX to XIII and ARMM). The busy port of Manila, on Luzon, is the national capital and second largest city after its suburb Quezon City.

The local climate is hot, humid, and tropical. The average yearly temperature is around 26.5 ° C (79.7 ° F). There are three recognized seasons: *Tag-init* or *Tag-araw* (the hot season or summer from March to May), *Tag-ulan* (the rainy season from June to November), and *Taglamig* (the cold season from December to February). The southwest monsoon (May-October) is known as the "habagat" and the dry winds of the northeast monsoon (November-April) as the "amihan".



Manila Bay

Most of the mountainous islands used to be covered in tropical rainforest and are volcanic in origin. The highest point is Mount Apo on Mindanao at 2,954 metres (9,692 ft). There are many active volcanos such as Mayon Volcano, Mount Pinatubo, and Taal Volcano. The country also lies within the typhoon belt of the Western Pacific and about 19 typhoons strike per year.

Lying on the northwestern fringes of the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activities. Some 20 earthquakes are registered daily in the Philippines, though most are too weak to be felt. The last great earthquake was the 1990 Luzon earthquake.

The longest river is the Cagayan River in northern Luzon. Manila Bay is connected to Laguna de Bay by means of the Pasig River. Subic Bay, the Davao Gulf and the Moro Gulf are some of the important bays. Transversing the San Juanico Strait is the San Juanico Bridge, that connects the islands of Samar and Leyte.

## Economy



Mount Apo, Philippines' tallest mountain. It is called 'The Grandfather of the Philippine Mountains'.



Geography of the Philippines



The Ayala Triangle in the Makati City central business district.

The Philippines is a newly industrialized country. It began to boom rapidly in the late 1950's to late 1960's. Philippines became an immense floating factory together with Japan but then dramatically fell in the early 1970's due to mismanagement and corrupt practices of the Marcos regime and martial law. Perceptions of political instability during the Aquino administration further dampened economic activity. It has also been listed in "Next Eleven" economies. The Philippines has one of the most vibrant business process outsourcing (BPO) industries in Asia, including Fortune 500 companies.

The Asian Financial Crisis affected the Philippine economy tremendously, making the Philippine peso fall significantly from 26 pesos to a dollar prior to the crisis, then 40 pesos to a dollar at the end of it. Low foreign fund inflows and its agriculture-based economy catapulted the country to grow 3% in 1999 and 4% in 2000. Hampered by political uncertainties in 2000, the peso weakened even further, trading at 55 pesos to a dollar at the lowest.

By 2004, the Philippine economy experienced a 6% growth after the East Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo pledged to turn the country into a First World state by 2020. In 2005, the Philippine peso was dubbed as Asia's best-performing currency.. In 2006, the Philippine economy expanded at a rate of 5.4%, higher than of the previous year. The government plans to accelerate the country's GDP growth by 7% in 2007, 8% in 2008 and 9% by 2009, also known as the **7, 8, 9** project.

Strategies for streamlining the economy include improvements of infrastructure, more efficient tax systems to bolster government revenues, furthering deregulation and privatization of the economy, and increasing trade integration within the region and across the world.

On November 1, 2005, a newly expanded value added tax (E-VAT) law was instituted as a measure to bridle the rising foreign debt and to improve government services such as education, health care, social security, and transportation. The Philippines' economic prosperity also depends in large part on how well its two biggest trading partners' economies perform: the U.S. and Japan.

The Philippines still remains highly reliant on remittances by Overseas Filipinos. In 2006, the country received \$12.8 billion, a 20% increase from the previous year. The government estimated that \$14 billion would be remitted to the Philippines in 2007. Remittances remain as the largest source of foreign income, surpassing the annual average of \$2.5 billion foreign direct investment to the country..

Despite the growing economy, the Philippines will have to address several chronic problems in the future. Income inequality remains persistent; about 30 million people lived on less than \$2 per day in 2005. China and India have emerged as major economic competitors, siphoning away investors who would otherwise have invested in the Philippines, particularly telecommunication companies. Regional development is also somewhat uneven, with the main island Luzon and Metro Manila gaining most of the new economic growth at the expense of the other regions.



Cebu City Business Park.

The Philippines is a member of the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

(APEC), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Colombo Plan, and the G-77, among others

In 2007, the gross domestic product grew 7.3%, the fastest in 31 years.

## Healthcare

See List of hospitals in the Philippines

The Philippine Department of Health reported in 1999 that the country had 1,794 hospitals with 83,491 beds nationwide. However, only 648 (36%) of these hospitals were government-owned, while the remaining 1,146 hospitals (64%) were in private hands.

The Philippines has in effect a dual health care system, consisting of a modern (Western) establishment, and traditional medicine. Many Filipinos make use of the latter .

The conventional western medicine sector consists of a public sector and a private sector. The Philippines are seeking to develop medical tourism within the country, and some private sector hospitals have already undergone international healthcare accreditation, or are actively seeking it, either from US sources or European sources.

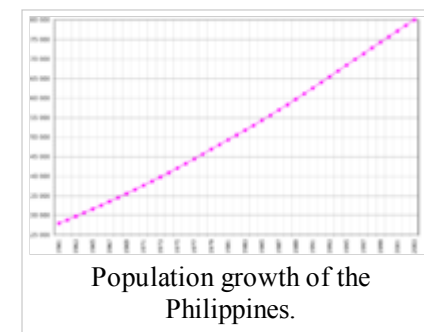
The Philippines are a net exporter of doctors and nurses to other parts of the world, and this is causing concern in some quarters - *The continuing and massive exodus of Philippine nurses and doctors to other countries all over the world is now taking a heavy toll on the country's already inadequate health-care system.*

## Demographics

The Philippines is the world's 12th most populous country, with a population of over 85 million as of 2005. As of 2007, 8% of Filipinos are living abroad as migrant laborers. Roughly half reside on the island of Luzon. Manila, the capital, is the eleventh most populous metropolitan area in the world. The literacy rate was 92.6% in 2003, and about equal for males and females. Life expectancy is 71.23 years, with 73.6 years for females and 69.8 years for males. Population growth per year is about 1.76%, with 24.7 births per 1,000 people.

### Ethnic groups

Filipinos are descended from the various Austronesian-speaking migrants who arrived in successive waves over a thousand years ago from Taiwan, genetically most closely related to the Ami tribe. The Malayo-Polynesian-speaking peoples, a branch of Austronesian, migrated to the Philippines and brought their knowledge of rice agriculture and ocean-sailing technology. Filipinos to this day are





composed of various Malayo-Polynesian-speaking ethnic groups, including but not limited to the Visayans, the Tagalog, the Ilocano, the Moro, the Kapampangan, the Bicolano, the Pangasinense, the Igorot, the Lumad, the Mangyan, the Ibanag, the Chabacano, the Badjao, the Ivatan, and the Palawan tribes. The Negritos, including the Aetas and the Ati, are considered as the aboriginal inhabitants of the Philippines though they are estimated to be fewer than 30,000 people (0.03%).

Filipinos of Chinese descent, who had been settling in the Philippines since pre-colonization, currently forms the largest non-Austronesian ethnic group, claiming about 2% of the population. Other significant minorities, ranked according to population, include Spanish, British, Americans, Japanese, Asian Indians, Koreans, Arabs and Indonesians.

Throughout the country's history, various ethnic groups as well as immigrants and colonizers have intermarried, producing Filipino mestizos. These mestizos, apart from being of mixed indigenous Austronesian and European ancestry, can be descended from any ethnic foreign forebearers.

## Languages

More than 180 languages and dialects are spoken in the archipelago, almost all of them belonging to the Borneo-Philippines group of the Malayo-Polynesian language branch of the Austronesian language family.

According to the 1987 Constitution, Filipino and English are both the official languages. Many Filipinos understand, write and speak English, Filipino and their respective regional languages.

Filipino is the *de facto* standardized version of Tagalog spoken in Metro Manila and urban centers and one of the official languages in the country. English, the other official language, is widely used as a *lingua franca* throughout the country.

Twelve major regional languages are the auxiliary official languages of their respective regions, each with over one million speakers: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Waray-Waray, Kapampangan, Bikol, Pangasinan, Kinaray-a, Maranao, Maguindanao and Tausug.

English was imposed by Americans during the U.S. intervention and colonization of the archipelago. English is used in education, churches, religious affairs, print and broadcast media, and business, though the number of people who use it as a second language far outnumber those who speak it as a first language. Still, English is the preferred medium for textbooks and instruction for secondary and tertiary levels. Movies and TV programs in English are not subtitled but many films and TV programs are produced in Filipino. English is the sole language of the law courts.

Spanish was the original official language of the country for more than three centuries, and became the lingua franca of the Philippines in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Spanish was the language of the Philippine Revolution, and the 1899 Malolos Constitution proclaimed it as the official language. However, Spanish was spoken by a total of



Map of the dominant ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippines.

60% of the population in the early 1900's as a first, second or third language. Following the American occupation of the Philippines, its use declined after 1940. Currently, only a few Mestizos of Spanish or Hispanic origin speak it as their first language, although a few others use it together with Filipino and English.

Both Spanish and Arabic are used as auxiliary languages in the Philippines. The use of Arabic is prevalent among Filipino Muslims and taught in *madrasah* (Muslim) schools.

## Religion

The Philippines is one of two countries in Asia with Roman Catholic majorities; the other being East Timor. The Philippines is separated into dioceses of which the Archdiocese of Manila enjoys primacy. About 94% of Filipinos identify themselves as Christians, with 81% belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. 2% are composed of Protestant denominations and 11% either to the Philippine Independent Church (Aglipayan), Iglesia ni Cristo and others. While Christianity is a major force in the culture of the Filipinos, indigenous traditions and rituals still influence religious practice.

Approximately 5% of Filipinos are Muslims, and are locally known as "Moros", having been dubbed this by the Spanish due to their sharing Islam with the Moors of North Africa. They primarily settle in parts of Mindanao, Palawan and the Sulu archipelago, but are now found in most urban areas of the country. Most lowland Muslim Filipinos practice normative Islam, although the practices of some Mindanao's hill tribe Muslims reflect a fusion with animism. There are also small populations of Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and animists, which, along with other non-Christians and non-Muslims, collectively comprise 5% of the population.

## Culture

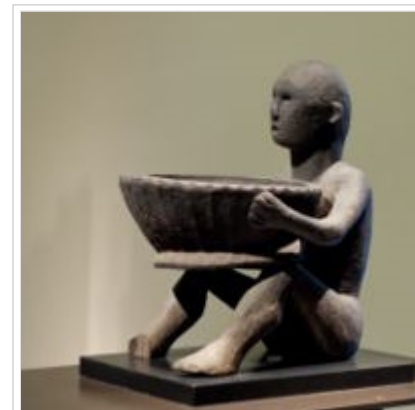
Filipino culture is a fusion of pre-Hispanic indigenous Austronesian civilizations of the Philippines mixed with Hispanic and American. It has also been influenced by Chinese and Islamic culture.

The indigenous Austronesian civilizations of the Philippines are similar with those of its southern neighbors, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Hispanic influences in Filipino culture are largely derived from the culture of Spain and Mexico as a result of over three centuries of Spanish colonial rule through Mexico. These Hispanic influences are most evident in literature, folk music, folk dance, language, food, art and religion, such as Roman Catholic Church religious festivals. Filipinos hold major festivities known as *barrio fiestas* to commemorate their patron saints. One of the most visible Hispanic legacy, is the prevalence of Spanish surnames among Filipinos. This peculiarity, unique among the people of Asia, came as a result of a colonial decree for the systematic distribution of family names and implementation of the Spanish naming system on the inhabitants of the Philippines. A Spanish name and surname among the majority of Filipinos does not always denote of Spanish ancestry. Only



Manila Cathedral, officially the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, is mother church of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines.



An Ifugao sculpture.

about less than 2% of the population (mostly Filipinos of Spanish and Mexican origin) would qualify as Hispanic by ancestry.

Names of countless streets, towns and provinces, which are named in Spanish. Spanish architecture also made a major imprint in the Philippines. This can be seen especially in the country's churches, government buildings and universities. Many Hispanic style houses and buildings are being preserved, like the Spanish colonial town in Vigan City, for protection and conservation. Kalesa is a horse-driven carriage introduced by the Spaniards and was a major mode of transportation during the colonial times. It is still being used today. Filipino cuisine is also heavily influenced by Mexican and Spanish cuisine.

The Chinese influences in Filipino culture are most evident in Filipino cuisine. The prevalence of noodles, known locally as *mami*, is a testament to Chinese cuisine. Many Filipino superstitions are also Chinese in origin. Other Chinese influences include linguistic borrowings and the occasional Chinese derived surnames.

The use of English language in the Philippines is contemporaneous and is America's visible legacy. The most commonly played sports in the Philippines are basketball and billiards. There is also a wide influence of American Pop cultural trends, such as the love of fast-food and movies; many street corners boast fast-food outlets. Aside from the American commercial giants such as McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Burger King, KFC, and Shakey's Pizza, local fast-food chains have also sprung up, including Goldilocks, Jollibee, Greenwich Pizza (acquired by Jollibee in 1994), and Chowking (acquired by Jollibee in 2000). Modern day Filipinos also listen to contemporary American music and watch American movies. However, Original Pilipino Music (also known as OPM) and Philippine movies are also widely appreciated.

Filipinos honour national heroes whose works and deeds contributed to the shaping of the Filipino nation. José Rizal is the most celebrated *ilustrado*, a Spanish-speaking reformist visionary whose writings contributed greatly in nurturing a sense of national identity and awareness. His novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* originally written in Spanish, are required readings for Filipino students, and provide vignettes of colonial life under the Spanish rule.

As with many cultures, music (which includes traditional music) and leisure activities are an important aspect of the Filipino society. Various sports are also enjoyed, including boxing, basketball, badminton, billiards, football (soccer) and ten-pin bowling being popular games in the country.

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippines>"

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# Portal:India

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Portals

## THE INDIA PORTAL



सत्यमेव जयते



The **Republic of India** is a country that occupies a greater part of South Asia. It borders Pakistan and Afghanistan in the northwest, the People's Republic of China, Nepal, and Bhutan in the north, and Bangladesh and Myanmar in the east. India's coastline stretches for over seven thousand kilometres. Its neighbours in the Indian Ocean are the island nations of the Maldives in the southwest, Sri Lanka in the south, and Indonesia in the southeast. India is the second most populous country in the world, with a population of over one billion and is the seventh largest country by geographical area. It is a constitutional republic consisting of twenty eight states and six union territories. The word *India* derives from the Old Persian cognate for the Sanskrit word *Sindhu*, the Indus river. The Constitution of India also recognises *Bhārat* as an official name with equal status.

A centre of important historic trade routes, India is the home to some of the most ancient civilisations. India is the birthplace to four major world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism and has the third largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan. India was a former colony of the British Empire under the British Raj before gaining independence on 15 August 1947. The country has witnessed significant economic and military growth after the liberalisation of the Indian economy.

### Selected article



**Lothal** was one of the most prominent cities of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization. Located in the state of Gujarat in India, it was discovered in 1954, and its existence dates from 2400 BCE. Lothal's dock—the world's earliest—made the city a vital centre of trade between Harappan cities, West Asia and Africa. The dock, its wharf, lock-gate system, and sophisticated drainage system are unusual marvels of engineering. Lothal yielded the most important Indus-era antiquities in modern India. Its scientists divided the horizon and sky into 8–12 whole parts, pioneering the study of stars and advanced navigation. **(more...)**

### Did you know...

- ... that according to Hindu mythology, the sovereign **Prithu** chased the Earth (*pictured*) in the form of a cow, who finally relented and yielded her milk as all grain and vegetation?
- ... that **Mysore mallige** a variety of Jasmine flower endemic to Karnataka state of India, is patented for its unique quality, attribution and reputation?
- ... that when Indian cricketer **Sourav Ganguly** scored a century



interceptor previously seen on the classic Mirage III, Dassault built a totally new design. The Mirage 2000 has a maximum speed of Mach 2.2. In 2005, the IAF expressed its desire to purchase about 200 Mirage 2000-5 aircraft.

Photo credit: Deepak gupta

on test debut at Lord's in 1996, he became the third overall and first since John Hampshire in 1969 to do so?

- ... that in 1870, the **Indian Reform Association** aimed at putting into practice some of the ideas that the Brahma leader Keshub Chunder Sen was exposed to during his visit to Britain?
- ... that the **Durga Vahini**, the women's wing of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, have been accused of instigating violence against religious minorities in India?
- ... that the term **Sindhology** as a subject of knowledge about Sindh was first coined in 1964?
- ... that the **Halegannada**, literally *Old Kannada*, is an ancient form of the Kannada language?
- ... that **Nagpur Improvement Trust**, a local civic government body of Nagpur, India established in 1936, is not an elected body and continues to work along side Nagpur Municipal Corporation?
- ... that Indian scholar **Śāntarakṣita** is believed to have been instrumental in the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet?
- ... that during the **Agra famine of 1837–38** in the North-Western Provinces of India, approximately 800,000 people died of starvation and an even larger number of livestock perished?
- ... that V.D. Savarkar wrote *The Indian War of Independence*, a nationalist history of the 1857 uprising, in response to British celebrations of the 50th anniversary of its suppression?
- ... that India established its **diplomatic representation** in Nigeria in 1958, two years before Nigeria's independence from British rule?
- ... that improving **Indo-South African relations** have led to phenomenal growth in bilateral trade, rising from US\$3 million in 1992-93 to US\$4 *billion* in 2005-06 and targeting US\$12 billion by 2010?
- ... that **M. P. T. Acharya** is associated with Indian Nationalism and communism, as well as the anarchist movement?
- ... that India and Pakistan have expanded **cross-border road and rail transport links**, including across the disputed region of

Kashmir?




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# Republic of China

**2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries**



<b>中華民國</b> <i>Jhonghuá Mínguó</i> <b>Republic of China</b>	
 Flag	 National Emblem
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>National Anthem of the Republic of China</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Taipei
<b>Official languages</b>	Standard Mandarin (Guóyǔ) (Chinese)
<b>Demonym</b>	Taiwanese or Chinese *
<b>Government</b> - President - Vice President - Premier	Semi-presidential system Ma Ying-jeou Vincent Siew Liu Chao-shiuan
<b>Establishment</b> - Start of Xinhai Revolution - Republic established	Xinhai Revolution October 10, 1911 January 1, 1912

- Relocated to Taiwan	December 7, 1949
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	36,188 km <sup>2</sup> ( 136th) 13,975 sq mi
- Water (%)	10.34
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	22,911,292 ( 47th)
- Density	633.12/km <sup>2</sup> ( 14th) 1,639.43/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$695.388 billion ( 19th)
- Per capita	\$30,126 ( 28th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$383,307 billion ( 24th)
- Per capita	\$16,274 ( 36th)
<b>HDI (2005)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.932 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 23rd if ranked)
<b>Currency</b>	New Taiwan dollar (NT\$) ( TWD)
<b>Time zone</b>	CST ( UTC +8)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.tw
<b>Calling code</b>	+886
<p>* Due to the government's territory after 1949 having little overlap with its pre-1945 territory, those who were nationals before 1949 are likely to be identified as "Chinese". Also, due to the controversial political status of Taiwan, those supporting Chinese reunification may refer to themselves as "Chinese" in addition or in place of "Taiwanese." Those favoring Taiwan independence tend to refer to themselves as "Taiwanese" only.</p>	

The **Republic of China** ( Abbr: ROC; traditional Chinese: 中華民國; simplified Chinese: 中华民国; Hanyu Pinyin: Zhōnghuá Mínguó; Tongyong Pinyin: Jhonghuá Mínguó; Wade-Giles: Chung-hua Min-kuo; POJ: Tiong-hoa Bin-kok) is a state in East Asia that has evolved from a single-party state with full global recognition into a multi-party democratic state with limited international recognition. It was a founding member of the United Nations. Established in 1912, the Republic of China encompassed much of mainland China. In 1945 at the end of World War II the Republic of China added the island groups of Taiwan (Formosa) and the Pescadores to its authority. These island groups, together with Kinmen and Matsu, became the full extent of the Republic of China's authority after 1949 when the Kuomintang (KMT) lost the Chinese Civil War to the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in mainland China. Under ROC law, these areas are known as the Free Area of the Republic of China.

**中文** **This article contains Chinese text.**  
Without proper rendering support, you may see question marks, boxes, or other symbols instead of Chinese characters.

Although the Republic of China has governed only Taiwan and outlying islands since 1949, during the early Cold War the ROC was recognized by most Western nations and the United Nations as the sole legitimate government of China. During the 1970s, the ROC began to lose these recognitions in favour of the People's Republic of China. The Republic of China has not formally relinquished its claim as the legitimate government of all China. Both Presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian have held the view that it is a sovereign and independent country separate from mainland China and there is no need for a formal declaration of independence.

During the 1950s and 1960s, it was common to refer to the Republic of China as Nationalist China or Free China. Over subsequent decades, the Republic of China has been commonly referred to as "Taiwan". Since the late 1970s the name "China" is commonly used to refer to the People's Republic of China. Because of diplomatic pressure from the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China is referred to as " Chinese Taipei" in most international organizations. The capital city is Taipei.

The Republic of China was established in 1912, replacing the Qing Dynasty and ending over two thousand years of imperial rule in China. It is the oldest surviving republic in East Asia. The Republic of China on mainland China went through periods of warlordism, Japanese invasion, civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communists. The Republic of China on Taiwan has experienced rapid economic growth and industrialization, and democratization.

Starting in 1928, the Republic of China was ruled by the Kuomintang as an authoritarian one-party state. In the 1950s and 1960s, the KMT went through wide restructuring and decreased corruption and implemented land reform. There followed a period of great economic growth, the Republic of China became one of the Four Asian Tigers, despite the constant threat of war and civil unrest. In the 1980s and 1990s the government peacefully transitioned to a democratic system, with the first direct presidential election in 1996 and the 2000 election of Chen Shui-bian, the first non-KMT after 1949 to become President of the Republic of China. The KMT regained presidency and increased its majority in the legislature in the 2008 presidential and legislative elections.

## Political status

The political status of the Republic of China is a contentious issue. The People's Republic of China claims that the ROC government is illegitimate, referring to it as the "Taiwan Authority", while the ROC views itself as an independent sovereign state. The ROC actively claimed to be the sole legitimate government of all China since its retreat to Taiwan in 1949 until the lift of martial law in 1987. Although the administration of pro-independence President Chen Shui-bian does

not actively claim jurisdiction over all of China, the national boundaries of the ROC have not been redrawn and its outstanding territorial claims from the late 1940s have not been revised. Thus, the claimed area of the ROC continue to include Mainland China, several off-shore islands, Taiwan, Outer Mongolia, northern Burma, and Tuva (now Russian territory).

The political environment is complicated by the potential for military conflict should overt actions toward independence or reunification be taken. It is the policy of the People's Republic of China to use force to ensure reunification if peaceful reunification is no longer possible, as stated in its anti-secession law, and there are substantial military installations on the Fujian coast for this reason. As a result of Cold War politics, the United States has provided military training and sold arms to the ROC armed forces. However, the current status quo, as defined by the U.S., is supported on a *quid pro quo* basis between both Chinese states. The PRC is expected to "use no force or threat[en] to use force against Taiwan" and the ROC is to "exercise prudence in managing all aspects of Cross-Strait relations." Both are to refrain from performing actions or espousing statements "that would unilaterally alter Taiwan's status."

Within the ROC, opinions are polarized between those supporting unification, represented by the Pan-Blue Coalition of parties, and those supporting independence, represented by the Pan-Green Coalition of parties. The Kuomintang, the largest Pan-Blue party, supports the status quo for the indefinite future with a stated ultimate goal of unification. However, it does not support unification in the short term with the PRC as such a prospect would be unacceptable to most of its members and the public. Ma Ying-jeou, former chairman of the KMT and the current ROC President, has set out democracy, economic development to a level near that of the ROC, and equitable wealth distribution as the conditions that the mainland must fulfill for reunification to occur. The DPP, the largest Pan-Green party, also supports the status quo because the risk of provoking the PRC is unacceptable to its members. However, President Chen Shui-bian of the DPP has stated that no matter what, any decision should be decided through a public referendum of the people of the ROC. Both parties' current foreign policy positions support actively advocating ROC participation in international organizations, but the KMT accepts the "One-China" principle and the DPP encourages economic ties with countries other than the PRC for security reasons.

For its part, the People's Republic of China appears to find the retention of the name "Republic of China" far more acceptable than the declaration of a *de jure* independent Taiwan. However, with the rise of the Taiwanese independence movement, the name "Taiwan" has been employed increasingly more often on the island itself. The PRC has stated that any effort in Taiwan to formally abolish the ROC and replace it with a Republic of Taiwan would result in a strong and possibly military reaction. The current position of the United States is that the Taiwan issue must be resolved peacefully and unilateral action by either side is condemned; neither an unprovoked invasion by the PRC or a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan would be acceptable.

Citing its One-China policy, the PRC requires other countries to give no official recognition to the ROC as a condition of maintaining diplomatic relations. As a result, there are only 23 countries that have official diplomatic relations with the Republic of China. However, most countries have unofficial representative offices in the ROC. The United States maintains unofficial relations with the ROC through the instrumentality of the American Institute in Taiwan. The ROC maintains similar *de facto* embassies and consulates in most countries, called "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Offices" (TECRO), with branch offices called "Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices" (TECO). Both TECRO and TECO are "unofficial commercial entities" of the ROC in charge of maintaining diplomatic relations, providing consular services (i.e. Visa applications), and serving the national interests of the ROC in other countries in basically the same way as an embassy or consulate.

Also due to its One-China policy, the PRC only participates in international organizations where the ROC is not recognized as a sovereign country. In 1945, the ROC, as representative of all the territory of China, was one of the founding nations and Security Council member of the United Nations; however, in 1971,

with the passage of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758, it was replaced by the PRC. Each year since 1992, the ROC has petitioned the UN for entry but has been unsuccessful. Most member states, including the United States, do not wish to discuss the issue of the ROC's political status for fear of souring diplomatic ties with the PRC. However, both the U.S. and Japan publicly support the ROC's bid for membership in the World Health Organization as an observer. However, though the ROC has applied for WHO membership every year since 1997 under various denominations, their efforts have consistently been blocked by PRC. Also, the Republic of China is pressured to use the politically neutral name "Chinese Taipei" in international events such as the Olympic Games when the PRC is also a party. The ROC is typically barred from using its national anthem and national flag in international events due to PRC pressure; ROC spectators attending events such as the Olympics are often barred from bringing ROC flags into venues. The ROC is able to participate as "China" in organizations that the PRC does not participate in, such as the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

The relationship with the PRC and the related issues of Taiwan independence and Chinese reunification continue to dominate ROC politics. For any particular resolution public favour shifts greatly with small changes in wording, illustrating the complexity of public opinion on the topic.

## History

### 1911–27

In 1911, after over two thousand years of imperial rule, China overthrew its dynastic system in favour of a republic. The Qing government, having just experienced a century of instability, suffered from both internal rebellion and foreign imperialism. The Neo-Confucian principles that had, to that time, sustained the dynastic system were now called into question and a loss of cultural self-confidence was blamed for a total of 40 million Chinese consumers of opium by 1900 (roughly 10% of the population). By the time of its embarrassing defeat by an expeditionary force led by the world's major powers in 1900 during the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion, the Qing government was already in its final throes, with only the lack of an alternative regime in sight prolonging its existence until 1912.

The establishment of Republican China developed out of the Wuchang Uprising against the Qing on October 10, 1911. The Republic of China was established on January 1, 1912, with Dr. Sun Yat-sen as the provisional president. As part of the agreement to have the last emperor Puyi abdicate, Yuan Shikai was officially elected president in 1913. However, Yuan dissolved the ruling Kuomintang party (KMT), ignored the provisional Constitution by asserting presidential power, and ultimately declared himself Emperor of China in 1915.



Sun Yat-sen (middle) and Chiang Kai-shek (on stage in uniform) at the founding of the Whampoa Military Academy in 1924.

Yuan's supporters deserted him, and many provinces declared independence and became warlord states. Yuan Shikai died of natural causes in 1916. This thrust China into a decade of warlordism. Sun Yat-sen, forced into exile, returned to Guangdong province with the help of southern warlords in 1917 and 1920, and set up successive rival governments. Sun re-established the KMT in October, 1919.

The central power in Beijing struggled to hold on to power. An open and wide-ranging debate evolved regarding how China should confront the West. After the Treaty of Versailles, on May 4, a student protest led to a nationwide uprising and gave the movement its name.

Chinese anarchism, specifically anarchist communism, had been one of the most prominent forms of revolutionary socialism even before the Wuchang Uprising. Following the Russian Revolution, the influence of Marxism spread and became more popular. Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu led the Marxist-Leninist movement in the beginning. The Communist Party of China was founded in July, 1921.



Map of Republic of China printed by Rand McNally & Co. in the year 1914.



Yuan Shikai (*left*) and Sun Yat-sen (*right*) with two different flags representing the early Republic.

## 1927–49

After Sun's death in March 1925, Chiang Kai-shek became the leader of the KMT. Chiang had led the successful Northern Expedition which, with the help of the Soviet Union, defeated the warlords and nominally united China under the KMT. Soviet advisors had provided training, propaganda, popular agitation, and arms. However, Chiang soon dismissed his Soviet advisors, and purged communists and leftists from the KMT, leading to the Chinese Civil War. The Communists were pushed into the interior as Chiang Kai-shek sought to destroy them. Chiang consolidated his rule, establishing a Nationalist Government in Nanjing in 1927. Efforts were made to establish a modern civil society, by creating the Academia Sinica, the Bank of China, and other agencies.

1932 saw the first participation in the Olympic Games by a team, representing a nominally united China under the flag of the Republic of China.

Stability was interrupted by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, with hostilities continuing through the Second Sino-Japanese War, part of World War II, from 1937 to 1945. The government of the Republic of China retreated from Nanjing to Chongqing. In 1945, Japan surrendered and the Republic of China became one of the founding members of the United Nations. The government returned to Nanjing.

## 1945 to present

After the defeat of Japan during World War II, Taiwan was surrendered to the Allies, with ROC troops accepting the surrender of the Japanese garrison. Taiwan was pronounced "retroceded" to the Chinese Republic, the effective successors of the Chinese Qing Dynasty on October 25, 1945, although proponents of Taiwan independence dispute the validity of the proclamation, arguing that the proclamation was made without a peace treaty formally transferring sovereignty. The military administration of the ROC extended over Taiwan, which led to widespread unrest and increasing tensions between Taiwanese and mainlanders. The arrest of a cigarette vendor and the shooting of a bystander on February 28, 1947 triggered island-wide unrest, which was then suppressed with military force in what is now called the 228 Incident. Mainstream estimates of casualties range from 10,000 to 30,000, mainly Taiwanese elites. The administration declared martial law in 1948.

The Chinese civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists resumed and intensified. By the 1950s, the Republic of China lost effective control over mainland China and Hainan. Chiang Kai-shek evacuated the government from Nanjing and made Taipei the provisional capital of China. Accompanying his retreat were some two million refugees from mainland China, adding to the earlier population of approximately six million.

Initially, the United States abandoned the KMT and expected that Taiwan would fall to the Communists. However, in 1950 the conflict between North Korea and South Korea, which had been ongoing since the Japanese withdrawal in 1945, escalated into full-blown war, and in the context of the Cold War, U.S. President Harry S. Truman intervened again and dispatched the 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Straits to prevent hostilities between Taiwan and mainland China. In the Treaty of San Francisco, which came into force on April 28, 1952, and the Treaty of Taipei, which came into force on August 5, 1952, Japan formally renounced all right, claim and title to Formosa (Taiwan) and the Pescadores (Peng-hu), and renounced all treaties signed with China before 1942. Both treaties



Chiang Kai-shek , who assumed the leadership of the Kuomintang (KMT) after the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925



The National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei, built by the ROC government to honour Chiang.

remained silent about who would take control of the island, in part to avoid taking sides in the Chinese Civil War. Advocates of Taiwan independence have used this omission to call into question the PRC and ROC claims on Taiwan, arguing that the future of Taiwan should be decided by self-determination. Continuing conflict of the Chinese Civil War through the 1950s, and intervention by the United States notably resulted in legislations such as the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty and the Formosa Resolution of 1955.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the ROC began to develop into a prosperous, technology-oriented industrialized developed country, while maintaining an authoritarian, single-party government. Because of the Cold War, most Western nations and the United Nations regarded the ROC as the sole legitimate government of China until the 1970s and especially after the termination of the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty; after that, most nations switched diplomatic recognition to the PRC.

## Government

### Republican China

The first national government of the Chinese Republic was established on January 1, 1912, in Nanjing, with Sun Yat-sen as the provisional president. Provincial delegates were sent to confirm the authority of the national government, and they later also formed the first parliament. The power of this national government was both limited and short-lived, with generals controlling both central and northern provinces of China. The limited acts passed by this government included the formal abdication of the Qing dynasty and some economic initiatives.

Shortly after the rise of Yuan Shikai, the parliament's authority became nominal; violations of the Constitution by Yuan were met with half-hearted motions of censure, and Kuomintang members of the parliament that gave up their membership in the KMT were offered £1,000 British pounds. Yuan maintained power locally by sending military generals to be provincial governors or by obtaining the allegiance of those already in power. Foreign powers came to recognize Yuan's power as well: when Japan came to China with 21 demands, it was Yuan who submitted to them, on May 25, 1915.

When Yuan died, the parliament of 1913 was reconvened to give legitimacy to a new government. However, the real power of the time passed to military leaders, forming the warlord period. The impotent government still had its use; when World War I began, several Western powers and Japan wanted China to declare war on Germany, in order to liquidate German holdings.

### Present



The head of state is the President, who is elected by popular vote for a four-year term on the same ticket as the Vice-President. The President has authority over the five administrative branches (*Yuan*): the Control Yuan, Examination Yuan, Executive Yuan, Judicial Yuan and Legislative Yuan. The President appoints the members of the Executive Yuan as his cabinet, including a Premier, who is officially the President of the Executive Yuan; members are responsible for policy and administration.

The main legislative body is the unicameral Legislative Yuan with one hundred and thirteen seats. Seventy-three are elected by popular vote from single-member constituencies; thirty-four are elected based on the proportion of nationwide votes received by participating political parties in a separate party list ballot; and six are elected from two three-member aboriginal constituencies. Members serve three-year terms. Originally the unicameral National Assembly, as a standing constitutional convention and electoral college, held some parliamentary functions, but the National Assembly was abolished in 2005 with the power of constitutional amendments handed over to the Legislative Yuan and all eligible voters of the Republic via referendums.

The Judicial Yuan is ROC's highest judiciary. It interprets the constitution and other laws and decrees, judges administrative suits, and disciplines public functionaries. The President and Vice-President of the Judicial Yuan and fifteen Justices form the Council of Grand Justices. They are nominated and appointed by the President of the Republic, with the consent of the Legislative Yuan. The highest court, the Supreme Court, consists of a number of civil and criminal divisions, each of which is formed by a presiding Judge and four Associate Judges, all appointed for life. In 1993, a separate constitutional court was established to resolve constitutional disputes, regulate the activities of political parties and accelerate the democratization process. There is no trial by jury but the right to a fair public trial is protected by law and respected in practice; many cases are presided over by multiple judges.

The ROC's political system does not fit traditional models. The Premier is selected by the President without the need for approval from the Legislature, but the Legislature can pass laws without regard for the President, as neither he nor the Premier wields veto power. Thus, there is little incentive for the President and the Legislature to negotiate on legislation if they are of opposing parties. In fact, since the election of the pan-Green's Chen Shui-bian as President in 2000 and the continued control of the Legislative Yuan by the pan-Blue majority, legislation has repeatedly stalled, as the two sides have been deadlocked. There is another curiosity of the ROC system; because the ROC was previously dominated by strongman single party politics, real power in the system shifted from one position to another, depending on what position was currently occupied by the leader of the state. This legacy has resulted in executive powers currently being concentrated in the office of the President rather than the Premier.

The term ruling party was previously applied to the Kuomintang, as it was the authoritarian party that controlled all aspects of government (ruling party may also be applied to the majority party in a parliamentary system). The Soviets, who had trained Chiang and the KMT and the Communists, left a lasting mark on the practices of the KMT, and under a Leninist -style single-party state, there was little difference between the ROC government, the KMT, and the army. Today, however, the term "ruling party" has a specific, peculiar use in Taiwan and is used to describe the party holding the Presidency. This is not entirely accurate since Taiwan does not have a parliamentary system, where the executive branch is occupied by the same party or coalition that holds a majority in the legislature. This term is currently used because the Premier is appointed by the President, thus executive powers tend to be dominated by the party holding the Presidency.



The Presidential Building in Taipei has housed the Office of the President of the Republic of China since 1950.

## Administrative regions

According to the 1947 Constitution, written before the ROC government retreated to Taiwan, the highest level administrative division is the province, which includes special administrative regions, regions, and centrally-administered municipalities. However, in 1998 the only provincial government to remain fully functional under ROC jurisdiction, Taiwan Province, was streamlined, with most responsibility assumed by the central government and the county-level governments (the other existing provincial government, Fuchien, was streamlined much earlier). The ROC currently administers two provinces and two provincial level cities.

## Counties

The Republic of China also controls the Pratas Islands (Dong-Sha) and Taiping Island, which are part of the disputed South China Sea Islands. They were placed under Kaohsiung City after the retreat to Taiwan.

Taichung is currently under consideration for elevation to central municipality status. Also, Taipei County and Kaohsiung County are considering mergers with their respective cities.

The ROC has not constitutionally renounced sovereignty over Mainland China and Outer Mongolia, but President Lee Teng-hui announced in 1991 that his government does not dispute the fact that the Communist Party rules Mainland China. In practice, although ROC law still formally recognizes residents of mainland China as citizens of the ROC, it makes a distinction between persons who have household residency in the Free Area of the Republic of China and those that do not, meaning that persons outside the area administered by the ROC must apply for special travel documents and cannot vote in ROC elections. The DPP government under Chen Shui-bian has established a representative office in Mongolia's capital, Ulan Bator. Offices established to create the appearance of domestic governance of those regions, such as the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, lie dormant.

## Municipalities and cities

ROC official boundaries continue to show thirty-five provinces, fourteen municipalities, one special administrative region and two regions, instead of the twenty-three provinces, four municipalities, two special administrative regions and five autonomous regions shown on PRC maps. The former DPP government of Chen Shui-bian had dropped regulations which had required ROC map makers to depict the constitutional boundaries.

## Politics

### 1911–49

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Constitutional administrative division of the Republic of China.

The original founding of the Republic centered on the Three Principles of the People (san min zhuyi): Nationalism, Democracy, and People's Livelihood (also translated "Socialism"). "Nationalism" meant standing up to Japanese and European interference, "democracy" represented elected rule modeled after the Diet of Japan, and the "people's livelihood" meant government regulation of the means of production. Another subordinate principle was the "republic of Five Races" (五族共和), which emphasized the harmony of the five major ethnic groups in China ( Han, Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, and Uyghurs), represented by the colored stripes of the original Five-Colored Flag of the Republic. The Five Races Under One Union principle and the five-colored flag were abandoned in 1927.

The Three Principles were not realized. Republican China was riven by warlordism, foreign invasion, and civil war. There were elected legislators, but Republican China was largely a one-party dictatorship, with some minor parties, such as the Chinese Youth Party, the National Socialist Party, and the Rural Reconstruction Party. Within the KMT, there was suppression of dissent by the Communists. The central government was weak and unable to implement land reform or wealth redistribution. Politics of this era consisted primarily of political and military struggle between the KMT and the CPC between periods of military resistance against Japanese invasion.

## **1949–2005**

The constitution of the Republic of China was drafted before the fall of Mainland China to the Communists. It was created for the purpose of forming a coalition government between the Nationalists and the Communists for ruling all of China, including Taiwan. However, the CPC boycotted the National Assembly, and the Taiwanese representatives were not elected. The constitution went into effect December 25, 1947.

Taiwan remained under martial law from 1948 until 1987 and much of the constitution was not in effect. Political reforms beginning in the late 1970s and continuing through the early 1990s liberalized the ROC from an authoritarian one-party state into a multiparty democracy. Since the lifting of martial law, the Republic of China has democratized and reformed, removing legacy components that were originally meant for the governing of mainland China. Many legacy components that remain are nonfunctional. This process of amendment continues. In 2000, the KMT's monopoly on power ended after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the ROC presidency. In May 2005, a new National Assembly was elected to reduce the number of parliamentary seats and implement several constitutional reforms. These reforms have been passed; the National Assembly has essentially voted to abolish itself and transfer the power of constitutional reform to the popular ballot.

## **Present**

### **Major camps**

The political scene in the ROC is divided into two camps, with the pro-unification and centre-right KMT, People First Party (PFP), and New Party forming the Pan-Blue Coalition, and the pro-independence and centre-left Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and centrist Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) forming the Pan-Green Coalition.

### **Separate identity resolution**

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On September 30, 2007, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party approved a resolution asserting separate identity from China and called for the enactment of a new constitution for a "*normal country*". It called also for general use of "*Taiwan*" as the island's name, without abolishing its formal name, the Republic of China.

The Pan-Green camp tends to favour emphasizing the Republic of China as being a distinct country from the People's Republic of China. Many Pan-Green supporters seek formally declaring Taiwan independence and to drop the title of the Republic of China. Many members of the coalition, such as current President Chen Shui-bian, have moderated their views and explain that it is unnecessary to proclaim independence because "Taiwan is already an independent, sovereign country" and the Republic of China is the same as Taiwan. A small minority claim that the ROC is nonexistent and call for the establishment of an independent Republic of Taiwan. Supporters of this idea have issued self-made "passports" for their Republic of Taiwan. Attempts to use these "passports" however have been currently stopped by officials at the Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport.

Some Pan-Blue members, especially former leaders from the older generation, support the concept of the Republic of China, which remains an important symbol of their links with China. During his visit to mainland China in April 2005, former KMT Party Chairman Lien Chan reiterated his party's belief in the "One China" policy, which states that there is only one China controlled by two governments and that Taiwan is a part of China. PFP Party Chair James Soong expressed the same sentiments during his visit in May. The more mainstream Pan-Blue position is to lift investment restrictions and pursue negotiations with the PRC to immediately open direct transportation links. Regarding independence, the mainstream Pan-Blue position is to maintain the status quo, while being open to negotiations for unification.

### **Current political issues**

The dominant political issue in the ROC is its relationship with the PRC. Some people in the ROC desire the opening of direct transportation links with the People's Republic of China (PRC), including direct flights. This would aid many ROC businesses that have opened factories or branches in the PRC. The current DPP administration fears that such links will lead to tighter economic and political integration with the PRC, and in the 2006 Lunar New Year Speech, President Chen Shui-bian called for managed opening of links.

Other major political issues include the passage of an arms procurement bill that the United States authorized in 2001, and the establishment of a National Communications Commission to take over from the Government Information Office, whose advertising budget exercised great control over ROC media.

The politicians and their parties have themselves become major political issues. Corruption among some DPP administration officials has been exposed. The KMT was once the richest political party in the world and KMT assets continue to be an issue. In early 2006, President Chen Shui-bian was linked to possible corruption. The political effect on President Chen Shui-bian was great, causing a divide in the DPP leadership and supporters alike. It eventually led to the creation of a Pan-Red camp led by Ex-DPP leader Shih Ming-teh which believe the President should resign than stay in disgrace; forming a 3 side standoff. Nearing the end of 2006, KMT's chairman Ma Ying-jeou was also hit by a corruption scandal, although he has since then been cleared of any wrong-doings by the courts.

The merger of the KMT and PFP was thought to be certain, but a string of defections from the PFP to the KMT have increased tensions within the Pan-Blue

camp. There has been talk from both camps of amending the constitution to finally resolve whether the Republic of China should have a presidential system or a parliamentary system.

## Foreign relations

### 1911–49

The foreign policy of Republican China was complicated by a lack of internal unity; competing centers of power all claimed legitimacy. There was also foreign interference and invasion. Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Russia, and other major powers all made claims to various parts of China during this time. During the early years of the Republic, almost all foreign powers recognized the "warlord" government controlled by Yuan Shi-kai in Beijing as the legitimate government of China. In return for recognition, the Republic had to give up control of Outer Mongolia and Tibet. China would remain suzerain, but Russia would be allowed to influence Mongolia while the British would be allowed in Tibet. It was also this government that sent representatives to sign the Treaty of Versailles over protests by students in the May Fourth Movement.

After the defeat of the Beiyang Government in Beijing by the Kuomintang (Nationalists) and the purging of Communists from the party, the 1928 Nanjing Nationalist Government received widespread diplomatic recognition. This recognition lasted throughout the Chinese Civil War and World War II (though Japan established a rival puppet government during the invasion that received some recognition from the Axis Powers). Having fought on the side of the Allied Powers during World War II, the Republic of China became one of the founding members of the UN and held one of the five permanent seats on the UN Security Council.



Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill met at the Cairo Conference in 1943 during World War II.

Despite Chiang's failures as an administrator and military strategist, he is today recognized for several diplomatic successes. In the 1930s, he was able to moderate Japanese advances by negotiating aid from Nazi Germany. Immediately prior to World War II, he was able to secure aid from his former patrons, the Soviets. During World War II and immediately afterwards, he was able to obtain large amounts of support from the US, including lend-lease supplies. Huge infusions of military assistance, equipment, advice, and cash continued even after he evacuated the KMT to Taiwan.

### 1949–present

After the KMT retreat to Taiwan, most countries, notably the countries in the Western Bloc, continued to maintain relations with the ROC. Due to diplomatic pressure, recognition gradually eroded and many countries switched recognition to the PRC in the 1970s. There are now only 23 countries that maintain official diplomatic relations with the ROC.

The PRC refuses to have diplomatic relations with any nation that recognizes the ROC, and requires all nations with which it has diplomatic relations to make a statement recognizing its claims to Taiwan. In practice most major nations maintain unofficial relations with the ROC and the statement required by the PRC is ambiguously worded. The ROC maintains unofficial relations via Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Offices or "Taipei Representative Offices" that

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take on most of the functions of an official embassy, such as issuing visas. Similarly, most nations maintain corresponding trade and economic offices in the ROC, such as the American Institute in Taiwan, which is the *de facto* embassy of the United States in the ROC.

The ROC was a founding member of the United Nations and held China's seat on the Security Council until 1971, when it was expelled by General Assembly Resolution 2758 and replaced in all UN organs with the PRC. Multiple attempts by the ROC to rejoin the UN have not made it past committee. (See China and the United Nations.)

Besides the dispute with the PRC over the mainland, the ROC also has a controversial relationship with Mongolia. Until 1945, the ROC claimed jurisdiction over Greater Mongolia, but under Soviet pressure, it recognized Mongolian independence. Shortly thereafter, it repudiated this recognition and continued to claim jurisdiction over Mongolia until recently. Since the late 1990s, the relationship with Mongolia has become a controversial topic. Any move to renounce sovereignty over Mongolia is controversial because the PRC claims that it is a prelude to Taiwan independence.

The ROC is required to use the name Chinese Taipei to participate in international events due to People's Republic of China's interpretation of the One-China policy which many international organizations choose to follow. Among organizations that have this requirement are international sports federations, including the International Olympic Committee.

## Military

### 1911–49

Several armies were associated with this era, including those of the various warlords, the KMT, and the CPC. There were two armies regarded as the "National army": the Beiyang Army of the Warlord government and later the National Revolutionary Army of the Nationalist Government.

The founding of the Republic was made possible by mutiny within the Qing New Army. When Yuan Shikai took over as president, he was already commander of the Beiyang Army, which controlled North China. However, with Yuan's death in 1916, numerous factions within the Beiyang Army broke loose, and the leading generals of the Beiyang Army became warlords, ruling huge fiefdoms in the following decade. Regulars in these warlord armies often did not wear uniforms and the distinction between bandit and soldier was blurred.

With the help of the Comintern, Sun Yat-sen established the National Revolutionary Army in 1925 in Guangdong with a goal of reunifying China under the Kuomintang. To this end, it initially fought against the warlords who had fractured China, successfully unifying China, and later against the Communist Red Army. A minor Sino-Soviet conflict in 1929 was fought over the administration of the Manchurian Chinese Eastern Railway. The National Revolutionary Army also fought against Japanese invasion during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931 and 1937–45), which became a part of the larger World War II. Leadership of the military during this time empowered political leadership. Following the principles of Leninism the distinctions among party, state, and army were blurred.

When the People's Liberation Army won the Chinese Civil War, much of the National Revolutionary Army retreated to Taiwan along with the government. It was later reformed into the Republic of China Army. Units which surrendered and remained in China were either disbanded or incorporated into the PLA.

## Present

Today, the Republic of China maintains a large and technologically advanced military, mainly as defense against the constant threat of invasion by the PRC under the Anti-Secession Law of the People's Republic of China. From 1949 to the 1970s the military's primary mission was to "retake the mainland." As this mission has shifted to defense, the ROC military has begun to shift emphasis from the traditionally dominant army to the air force and navy. Control of the armed forces has also passed into the hands of the civilian government. As the ROC military shares historical roots with the KMT, the older generation of high ranking officers tends to have Pan-Blue sympathies. However, many have retired and there are many more non-Mainlanders enlisting in the armed forces in the younger generations, so the political leanings of the military have moved closer to the public norm in Taiwan.

The ROC's armed forces number approximately 300,000, with nominal reserves totaling 3,870,000. The ROC began a force reduction program to scale down its military from a level of 430,000 in the 1990s which drew to a close in 2005. Conscription remains universal for qualified males reaching age eighteen, but as a part of the reduction effort many are given the opportunity to fulfill their draft requirement through alternative service and are redirected to government agencies or defense related industries. Current plans call for a transition to a predominantly professional army over the next decade. Conscription periods will decrease by two months each year, with a final result of three months.

The armed forces' primary concern at this time is the possibility of an attack by the PRC, consisting of a naval blockade, airborne assault and/or missile bombardment. Four upgraded Kidd class destroyers were recently purchased from the United States, significantly upgrading Taiwan's air defense and submarine hunting abilities. The Ministry of National Defense planned to purchase diesel-powered submarines and Patriot anti-missile batteries from the United States, but its budget has been stalled repeatedly by the opposition- Pan-Blue Coalition controlled legislature. The defense package has been stalled since 2001 and there is now debate about the relevance of the submarines and whether different hardware should be purchased. A significant amount of military hardware has been bought from the United States, and continues to be legally guaranteed today by the Taiwan Relations Act. In the past, the ROC has also purchased military weapons and hardware from France and the Netherlands.

The first line of defense against invasion by the PRC is the ROC's own armed forces. Current ROC military doctrine is to hold out against an invasion or blockade until the U.S. military responds. A defense pact between the U.S. and Japan signed in 2005 implies that Japan would be involved in any response. Other U.S. allies, such as Australia, could theoretically be involved but this is unlikely in practice. It is also worth noting that there is no guarantee in the Taiwan Relations Act or any other treaty that the United States will attack the PRC, even in the event of invasion.

## Economy

1912–49

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ROC Military Police special forces disembarking from a UH-1H helicopter from the ROC Army 602nd Air Cavalry Brigade during a counter-terrorism exercise ( ROC Ministry of National Defense).



Taiwanese Air Force Indegenous Defense Fighter.



Taiwanese Navy Kang Ding class frigate.



During the first half of the twentieth century the economy of the Republic of China was essentially capitalist, with much foreign interference. Progress was impeded by constant war and internal and external strife.

The weak national government made some attempts to promote economic activity, such as by establishing the Industrial Bank of China. There was little government control of the economy however, other than causing runaway inflation by overprinting money to finance wars against the Japanese and the Communists. Foreign debts also made the national government susceptible to foreign influence. The Nationalists, like Yuan Shi-kai before them, were propped up through massive economic loans by the United States.

China at the time was largely agrarian, with most of the land, and thus the wealth, concentrated in a wide pyramid structure. Much of the land was owned by a few very wealthy landowners; the general population were tenant farmers who did not own land. The founders of both the Republic of China and the Communist Party had aimed to overturn this inequality. The Henan famine (1943–44) aided the collapse of the Republican government. Labor unions had been crushed in the purge of the Communists from the Kuomintang, leading to more inequality. Many of the wealthiest landowners and business leaders were also ministers and officials of the state and were often corrupt, preventing effective measures from being implemented.

## Taiwan Miracle



Bonds that Sun Yat-sen used to raise money for revolutionary cause. (The Republic of China was also once known as the Chunghwa Republic.)

Taiwan's quick industrialization and rapid growth during the latter half of the twentieth century, has been called the "Taiwan Miracle" (台灣奇蹟) or "Taiwan Economic Miracle". As it has developed alongside Singapore, South Korea and Hong Kong, the ROC is one of the industrialized developed countries known as the "Four Asian Tigers".

Japanese rule prior to and during World War II brought forth changes in the public and private sectors of the economy, most notably in the area of public works, which enabled rapid communications and facilitated transport throughout much of the island. The Japanese also improved public education and made the system compulsory for all ROC citizens during this time.

When the KMT government fled to Taiwan it brought the entire gold reserve and the foreign currency reserve of mainland China to the island which stabilized prices and reduced hyperinflation. More importantly, as part of its retreat to Taiwan, KMT brought with them the intellectual and business elites from the mainland. This unprecedented influx of monetary and human capital laid the foundation for Taiwan's later dramatic economic development. The KMT government instituted many laws and land reforms that it had never effectively enacted on mainland China. The government also implemented a policy of import-substitution, attempting to produce imported goods domestically. Much of this was made possible through US economic aid, subsidizing the higher cost of domestic production. Native Taiwanese were largely excluded from the mainlander-dominated government.

In 1962, Taiwan had a per capita gross national product (GNP) of \$170, placing the island's economy squarely between Zaire and Congo. By 2005 Taiwan's per capita GNP, adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP), had soared to \$29,000 (2006 est.), contributing to a Human Development Index equivalent to that of other developed countries.

According to economist Paul Krugman, the rapid growth was made possible by increases in capital and labor, but not an increase in efficiency. In other words, the savings rate increased, and work hours were both lengthened and many more people, such as women, entered the work force.

Dwight Perkins and others cite certain methodological flaws in Krugman's (and Alwyn Young's) research, and suggest that much of Taiwan's growth can be attributed to increases in productivity. These productivity boosts were achieved through land reform, structural change (urbanization and industrialization), and an economic policy of export promotion rather than import substitution.

## Present

Today the Republic of China has a dynamic capitalist, export-driven economy with gradually decreasing state involvement in investment and foreign trade. In keeping with this trend, some large government-owned banks and industrial firms are being privatized. Real growth in GDP has averaged about eight percent during the past three decades. Exports have provided the primary impetus for industrialization. The trade surplus is substantial, and foreign reserves are the world's third largest. The Republic of China's current GDP (PPP) per capita is equal to the average of EU Countries.

The Republic of China has its own currency, the New Taiwan dollar.

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Taipei 101 is a symbol of the success of the Taiwanese economy

Agriculture constitutes only two percent of the GDP, down from 35 percent in 1952. Traditional labor-intensive industries are steadily being moved offshore and with more capital and technology-intensive industries replacing them. The ROC has become a major foreign investor in the PRC, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam. It is estimated that some 50,000 Taiwanese businesses and 1,000,000 businesspeople and their dependents are established in the PRC.

Because of its conservative financial approach and its entrepreneurial strengths, the ROC suffered little compared with many of its neighbors from the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Unlike its neighbors South Korea and Japan, the Taiwanese economy is dominated by small and medium sized businesses, rather than the large business groups. The global economic downturn, however, combined with poor policy coordination by the new administration and increasing bad debts in the banking system, pushed Taiwan into recession in 2001, the first whole year of negative growth since 1947. Due to the relocation of many manufacturing and labor intensive industries to the PRC, unemployment also reached a level not seen since the 1970s oil crisis. This became a major issue in the 2004 presidential election. Growth averaged more than 4% in the 2002-2006 period and the unemployment rate fell below 4%.

The ROC often joins international organizations under a politically neutral name. The ROC is a member of governmental trade organizations such as the World Trade Organization under the name Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu since 2002.

## Education

The Republic of China has a twenty-two year comprehensive educational system influenced by the Japanese educational system. The system has been successful in that pupils in the ROC boast some of the highest test scores in the world, especially in mathematics and science; however, it has also been criticized for placing excessive pressure on students and eschewing creativity in favour of rote memorization.

The literacy rate is 96.1%.

## Demographics

The population of areas under control of the Republic of China was estimated in July 2006 at 23,036,087 spread across a total land area of 35,980 square kilometres (13,890 sq mi) making it the twelfth most densely populated country in the world with a population density of 640/km<sup>2</sup> (1,658/sq mi). 98% of Taiwan's population is made up of Han Chinese while 2% are Austronesian aborigines.

There are approximately over 18,718,600 religious followers in Taiwan as of 2005 (81.3% of total population) and over 14-18% are non-religious. According to the newest census as of 2005 of the ROC government recognizes 26 religions, the five largest religious organizations in Taiwan are: Buddhism (8,086,000 or 35.1%), Taoism (7,600,000 or 33%), I-Kuan Tao (810,000 or 3.5%), Protestantism (605,000 or 2.6%), Catholicism (298,000 or 1.3%) and smaller religions. But according to the CIA World Factbook and other latest sources from U.S. Department of States or the Religious Affairs Section of the MOI, over

Taiwan religiosity		
religion		percent
Buddhism		35.1%
Taoism		33%
Irreligion		14%
Christianity		3.9%
Ikuantao		3.5%


80% to 93% of the population were influenced by the mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Ancestor worship.

Taiwan is undergoing a decline in birth rates with a population growth of just 0.61% for the year 2006. The official national language is Mandarin Chinese though the majority also speak Taiwanese (deriving from the Min Nan speech of Fujian province) and Hakka. Aboriginal languages are becoming extinct as the aborigines have become sinicized and the ROC government has not preserved the Formosan languages.


## Largest cities

The figures below are the 2007 estimates for the ten largest urban populations within administrative city limits; a different ranking exists when considering the total municipal populations (which includes suburban and rural populations).


Rank	Core City	Division	Pop.
1	<b>Taipei</b>	Taipei City	2,629,269
2	<b>Kaohsiung</b>	Kaohsiung City	1,520,555
3	<b>Taichung</b>	Taichung City	1,055,898
4	<b>Tainan</b>	Tainan City	764,658
5	<b>Banciao</b>	Taipei County	543,342
6	<b>Jhonghe</b>	Taipei County	409,698
7	<b>Hsinchu</b>	Hsinchu	400,430
8	<b>Keelung</b>	Keelung	390,397
9	<b>Sinjhuang</b>	Taipei County	389,541
10	<b>Sanchong</b>	Taipei County	388,979




Taipei



Kaohsiung



Taichung



Tainan

2007 Census

## Public health

Health care in the ROC is managed by the Bureau of National Health Insurance (BNHI).

The current program was implemented in 1995 and is considered a social insurance. The government health insurance program maintains compulsory insurance for employed, impoverished, un-employed citizens and persons of natural disasters with fees that correlate to the individual and/or family income; it also maintains protection for non-citizens working in Taiwan. The 2001 premium for the district population was US\$18.88 per person per month. A standardized method of calculation applies to all persons and can optionally be paid by an employer or by individual contributions.

BNHI insurance coverage requires co-payment at the time of service for most services unless it is a preventative health service, for low-income families, veterans, children under three years old, or in the case of catastrophic diseases. Low income households maintain 100% premium coverage by the BNHI and co-pays are reduced for disabled or certain elderly peoples.

According to a recently published survey, out of 3,360 patients surveyed at a randomly chosen hospital, 75.1% of the patients said they are "very satisfied" with the hospital service; 20.5% said they are "okay" with the service. Only 4.4% of the patients said they are either "not satisfied" or "very not satisfied" with the service or care provided.

Taiwan has its own Centre for Disease Control, and during the SARS outbreak occurring in March of 2003 confirmed 347 cases. During the outbreak the CDC and local governments set up monitored stations throughout public transportation, recreational sites and other public areas. With full containment in July of 2003, there has not been a case of SARS reported since.

BNHI Facility Contract Distribution facilities total 17,259, including:

Number	Subject
16,174	outpatient-only facilities
5,701	dental clinics
2,422	Chinese medicine clinics
1,085	inpatient/outpatient facilities
437	local community hospitals
35	Chinese medicine hospitals
23	academic medical centers

Basic coverage areas of the insurance include:

- Inpatient care
- Ambulatory care
- Laboratory tests
- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs
- Dental services
- Mental Illness
- Traditional Chinese medicine
- Home care
- Preventative services\*

\* child check-ups, prenatal care, pap smears, adult check-ups

In 2004 the infant mortality rate was 5.3 with 15 physicians and 63 hospital beds per 10,000 people. The life expectancy for males was 73.5 years and 79.7 years for females according the World Health Report. Since the inception of the BNHI in 1995 the aggregate life expectancy increase is 1.6 years for males and 2 years for females, possibly a key indicator for success in the BNHI program considering the relatively stable life expectancy rate prior to the initiative.

Other health related programs in Taiwan are the Centre for Disease Control and the Department of Health.

## Calendar

Following the imperial tradition of using the sovereign's era name and year of reign, official ROC documents use the Republic (Chinese: 民國; pinyin: míngúo; literally "The Country of the People") system of numbering years in which the first year (民國元年) was 1912, the year of the founding of the Republic of China. For example, 2007 is the "96th year of the Republic" (民國九十六年, 民國96年, or simply 96). As Chinese era names are traditionally two characters long, 民國 (Republic) is employed as an abbreviation of 中華民國 (Republic of China).

Months and days are numbered according to the Gregorian calendar. Based on Chinese National Standard CNS 7648: Data Elements and Interchange Formats — Information Interchange — Representation of Dates and Times, (similar to ISO 8601), year numbering may use the A.D. system as well as the ROC era. For example, May 3, 2004 may be written 2004-05-03 or R.O.C.93-05-03.

The ROC era numbering happens to be the same as the numbering used by North Korea because its founder, Kim Il-sung, was born in 1912. The years in Japan's Taishō period (July 30, 1912 to December 25, 1926) are also coincident with the ROC era.

The use of the ROC era system extends beyond official documents. When used to mark expiration dates on products for export, they can be misunderstood as having an expiration date 11 years earlier than intended. Misinterpretation is more likely in the cases when the prefix (R.O.C. or 民國) is omitted.

Traditional Chinese holidays such as the Chinese New Year, the Lantern Festival, and the Dragon Boat Festival are celebrated regularly.

## International rankings

Context	Organization	Rank	Year	Source
GDP (PPP)	International Monetary Fund / CIA	19/179 (IMF) 18/227 (CIA)	2007	IMF CIA
GDP (PPP) per capita	International Monetary Fund / CIA	28/179 (IMF) 40/227 (CIA)	2007	IMF CIA

Worldwide press freedom index	Reporters Without Borders	32/169	2007	
Freedom of the Press	Freedom House	20/194	2007	
Index of Economic Freedom	The Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundation	26/162	2007	
Economic Freedom of the World	Fraser Institute	24/130	2004	
Ease of Doing Business Index	World Bank	50/178	2008	
Global Competitiveness Report	World Economic Forum	13/125	2006–2007	
Business Competitiveness Index	World Economic Forum	21/121	2006	
Worldwide quality-of-life index	The Economist	21/111	2005	
Global e-Government Study	Brown University	2/198	2006	
Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen IQ and Global Inequality	Dr. Richard Lynn, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Ulster	5/185	2006	
World Competitiveness Yearbook	International Institute for Management Development	13/55	2008	
Network Readiness Index	World Economic Forum	17/127	2007–2008	
Corruption Perceptions Index	Transparency International	34/180	2007	
Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index	World Economic Forum	30/124	2007	
IT industry competitiveness index	Economist Intelligence Unit	6/64	2007	
E-readiness rankings	Economist Intelligence Unit	19/70	2008	
Environmental Performance Index	Yale University	40/149	2008	
Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Status)	Bertelsmann Foundation	4/125	2008	
Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Managem.)	Bertelsmann Foundation	7/125	2008	

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# Russia

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**Russia** (Russian: Россия, *Rossiya*), also the **Russian Federation** (Russian: Российская Федерация, *Rossiyskaya Federatsiya*), is a transcontinental country extending over much of northern Eurasia. It is a semi-presidential republic comprising 83 federal subjects. Russia shares land borders with the following countries (counter-clockwise from northwest to southeast): Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (Kaliningrad Oblast), Poland (Kaliningrad Oblast), Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia and North Korea. It is also close to the U.S. state of Alaska, Sweden, Denmark, Turkey and Japan across relatively small stretches of water (the Bering Strait, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and La Pérouse Strait, respectively).

At 17,075,400 square kilometers, Russia is by far the largest country in the world, covering more than an eighth of the Earth's land area; with 142 million people, it is the ninth largest by population. It extends across the whole of northern Asia and 40% of Europe, spanning 11 time zones and incorporating a great range of environments and landforms. Russia has the world's largest mineral and energy resources, and is considered an energy superpower. It has the world's largest forest reserves and its lakes contain approximately one-quarter of the world's unfrozen fresh water.

The nation's history began with that of the East Slavs. The Slavs emerged as a recognizable group in Europe between the 3rd and 8th centuries AD. Founded and ruled by Vikings and their descendants, the first East Slavic state, Kievan Rus', arose in the 9th century and adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire in 988, beginning the synthesis of Byzantine and Slavic cultures that defined Russian culture for the next millennium. Kievan Rus' ultimately disintegrated and the lands were divided into many small feudal Russian states. The most powerful successor state to Kievan Rus' was Moscow, which served as the main force in the Russian reunification process and independence struggle against the Golden Horde. Moscow gradually reunified the surrounding Russian principalities and came to dominate the cultural and political legacy of Kievan Rus'. By the 18th century, the nation had greatly expanded through conquest, annexation and exploration to become the huge Russian Empire, stretching from Poland eastward to the Pacific Ocean.

<b>Российская Федерация</b> <i>Rossiyskaya Federatsiya</i> <b>Russian Federation</b>	
 Flag	 Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> Государственный гимн Российской Федерации (Russian) <i>Gosudarstvenny gimn Rossiyskoy Federatsii</i> (transliteration) <i>National Anthem of the Russian Federation</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Moscow



Russia established worldwide power and influence from the times of the Russian Empire to being the largest and leading constituent of the Soviet Union, the world's first and largest constitutionally socialist state and a recognized superpower. The nation can boast a long tradition of excellence in every aspect of the arts and sciences. The Russian Federation was founded following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, but is recognized as the continuing legal personality of the Soviet Union. Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a leading member of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the G8. It is one of the five recognized nuclear weapons states and possesses the world's largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction.

## Geography

The Russian Federation stretches across much of the north of the super-continent of Eurasia. Because of its size, Russia displays both monotony and diversity. As with its topography, its climates, vegetation, and soils span vast distances. From north to south the East European Plain is clad sequentially in tundra, coniferous forest ( taiga), mixed and broad-leaf forests, grassland ( steppe), and semi-desert (fringing the Caspian Sea) as the changes in vegetation reflect the changes in climate. Siberia supports a similar sequence but is taiga. The country contains 23 World Heritage Sites and 40 UNESCO Biosphere reserves.

## Topography

The two widest separated points in Russia are about 8,000 km (5,000 mi) apart along a geodesic line. These points are: the boundary with Poland on a 60 km long (40-mi long) spit of land separating the Gulf of Gdańsk from the Vistula Lagoon; and the farthest southeast of the Kuril Islands, a few miles off Hokkaidō Island, Japan. The points which are furthest separated in longitude are 6,600 km (4,100 mi) apart along a geodesic. These points are: in the West, the same spit; in the East, the Big Diomedes Island (Ostrov Ratmanova). The Russian Federation spans 11 time zones.

<b>Official languages</b>	Russian official throughout nation; twenty-seven others co-official in various regions
<b>Demonym</b>	Russian
<b>Government</b>	Federal semi-presidential republic
- President	Dmitry Medvedev
- Prime Minister	Vladimir Putin
<b>Founded (862)<sup>1</sup></b>	Novgorodians invited prince Rurik to keep law and order, thus giving birth to the Rurik dynasty that ruled over all Russian lands throughout more than 700 years
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	17,075,400 km <sup>2</sup> ( 1st) 6,592,800 sq mi
- Water (%)	13
<b>Population</b>	
- 2008 estimate	142,008,838 ( 9th)
- 2002 census	145,166,731
- Density	8.3/km <sup>2</sup> ( 209th) 21.5/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$2.088 trillion ( 6th)
- Per capita	\$14,692 ( 52nd)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1.290 trillion ( 10th)
- Per capita	\$9,075 ( 54th)
<b>Gini (2005)</b>	40.5



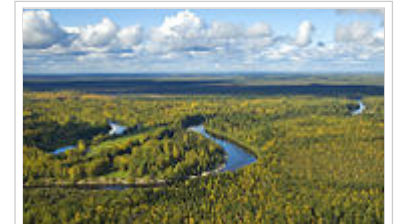
Central Russian Upland,  
Zaraysk

Russia has the world's largest forest reserves and is known as "the lungs of Europe", second only to the Amazon Rainforest in the amount of carbon dioxide it absorbs. It provides a huge amount of oxygen for not just Europe, but the world. With access to three of the world's oceans—the Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific—Russian fishing fleets are a major contributor to the world's fish supply. The Caspian is the source of what is considered the finest caviar in the world.



Sochi, Krasnodar Krai

<b>HDI (2005)</b>	▲ 0.802 (high) ( 67th)
<b>Currency</b>	Ruble ( RUB)
<b>Time zone</b> - Summer ( DST)	( UTC+2 to +12) ( UTC+3 to +13)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ru ( .su reserved), ( .рф <sup>2</sup> proposed)
<b>Calling code</b>	+7
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The Russian Federation is the successor to earlier forms of continuous statehood, starting from 9 century AD when Rurik, a viking warrior, establishes "Russ" or "Rhos" state at Novgorod, traditionally taken as the beginning of Russian statehood</li> <li>2 The .рф Top-level domain has been proposed for the Russian Federation as of 2008 and will only accept domains which use the Cyrillic alphabet.</li> </ol>	



The plains of Western Siberia,  
Vasyugan River

Most of Russia consists of vast stretches of plains that are predominantly steppe to the south and heavily forested to the north, with tundra along the northern coast. Mountain ranges are found along the southern borders, such as the Caucasus (containing Mount Elbrus, Russia's and Europe's highest point at 5,642 m / 18,511 ft) and the Altai, and in the eastern parts, such as the Verkhoyansk Range or the volcanoes on Kamchatka. The Ural Mountains form a north-south range that divides Europe and Asia, rich in mineral resources. Russia possesses 10% of the world's arable land.

Russia has an extensive coastline of over 37,000 kilometers (23,000 mi) along the Arctic and Pacific Oceans, as well as the Baltic Sea, Sea of Azov, Black and Caspian seas. The Barents Sea, White Sea, Kara Sea, Laptev Sea, East Siberian Sea, Chukchi Sea, Bering Sea, Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan are linked to Russia. Major islands and archipelagos include Novaya Zemlya, the Franz Josef Land, the Severnaya Zemlya, the New Siberian Islands, Wrangel Island, the Kuril Islands and Sakhalin. The Diomed Islands (one controlled by Russia, the other by the United States) are just three kilometers (1.9 mi) apart, and Kunashir Island is about twenty kilometers (12 mi) from Hokkaidō.

Russia has thousands of rivers and inland bodies of water, providing it with one of the world's largest surface water resources. The most prominent of Russia's bodies of fresh water is Lake Baikal, the world's deepest, purest and most capacious freshwater lake. Lake Baikal alone contains over one fifth of the world's fresh surface water. Of its 100,000 rivers, The Volga is the most famous—not only because it is the longest river in Europe but also because of its major role in Russian history. Major lakes include Lake Baikal, Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega. Russia has a wide natural resource base unmatched by any other country, including major deposits of petroleum, natural gas, coal, timber and mineral resources.

## Climate

The climate of the Russian Federation formed under the influence of several determining factors. The enormous size of the country and the remoteness of many areas from the sea result in the dominance of the continental climate, which is prevalent in European and Asian Russia except for the tundra and the extreme southeast. Mountains in the south obstructing the flow of warm air masses from the Indian Ocean and the plain of the west and north makes the country open to Arctic and Atlantic influences.

Throughout much of the territory there are only two distinct seasons — winter and summer; spring and autumn are usually brief periods of change between extremely low temperatures and extremely high. The coldest month is January (on the shores of the sea—February), the warmest usually is July. Great ranges of temperature are typical. In winter, temperatures get colder both from south to north and from west to east. Summers can be quite hot and humid, even in Siberia. A small part of Black Sea coast around Sochi is considered in Russia to have subtropical climate. The continental interiors are the driest areas.

## History

### Early periods



Saranpaul, Khanty-Mansi  
Autonomous Okrug

In prehistoric times, the vast steppes of Southern Russia were home to disunited tribes of nomadic pastoralists. In classical antiquity, the Pontic Steppe was known as Scythia. Remnants of these steppe civilizations were discovered in the course of the 20th century in such places as Ipatovo, Sintashta, Arkaim, and Pazyryk. In the latter part of the eighth century BC, Greek traders brought classical civilization to the trade emporiums in Tanais and Phanagoria. Between the third and sixth centuries BC, the Bosporean Kingdom, a Hellenistic polity which succeeded the Greek colonies, was overwhelmed by successive waves of nomadic invasions, led by warlike tribes, such as the Huns and Turkic Avars. A Turkic people, the Khazars, ruled the lower Volga basin steppes between the Caspian and Black Seas until the 8th century.



An approximate map of the cultures in European Russia at the arrival of the Varangians

The ancestors of modern Russians are the Slavic tribes, whose original home is thought by some scholars to have been the wooded areas of the Pinsk Marshes. Moving into the lands vacated by the migrating Germanic tribes, the Early East Slavs gradually settled Western Russia in two waves: one moving from Kiev toward present-day Suzdal and Murom and another from Polotsk toward Novgorod and Rostov. From the 7th century onwards, the East Slavs constituted the bulk of the population in Western Russia and slowly but peacefully assimilated the native Finno-Ugric tribes, including the Merya, the Muromians, and the Meshchera.

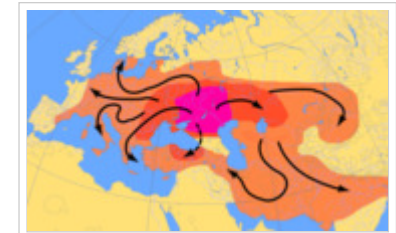
### Kievan Rus

Scandinavian Norsemen, called "Vikings" in Western Europe and "Varangians" in the East, combined piracy and trade in their roamings over much of Northern Europe. In the mid-9th century, they ventured along the waterways extending from the eastern Baltic to the Black and Caspian Seas. According to the earliest Russian chronicle, a Varangian named Rurik was elected ruler (*konung* or *knyaz*) of Novgorod around the year 860; his successors moved south and extended their authority to Kiev, which had been previously dominated by the

Khazars.

In the 10th to 11th centuries this state of Kievan Rus' became the largest and most prosperous in Europe. The reigns of Vladimir the Great (980-1015) and his son Yaroslav I the Wise (1019-1054) constitute the Golden Age of Kiev, which saw the acceptance of Orthodox Christianity and the creation of the first East Slavic written legal code, the *Russkaya Pravda*.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, constant incursions by nomadic Turkic tribes, such as the Kipchaks and the Pechenegs, caused a massive migration of Slavic populations to the safer, heavily forested regions of the north, particularly to the area known as Zalesye. Like many other parts of Eurasia, these territories were overrun by the Mongols. The invaders, later known as Tatars, formed the state of the Golden Horde, which pillaged the Russian principalities and ruled the southern and central expanses of Russia for over three centuries. Mongol rule retarded the country's economic and social development. However, the Novgorod Republic together with Pskov retained some degree of autonomy during the time of the Mongol yoke and was largely spared the atrocities that affected the rest of the country. Led by Alexander Nevsky, Novgorodians repelled the Germanic crusaders who attempted to colonize the region. Kievan Rus' ultimately disintegrated as a state because of in-fighting between members of the princely family that ruled it collectively. Kiev's



Kurgan hypothesis: South Russia as the urheimat of Indo-European peoples



Kievan Rus' in the 11th century

dominance waned, to the benefit of Vladimir-Suzdal in the north-east, Novgorod in the north-west, and Galicia-Volhynia in the south-west. Conquest by the Golden Horde in the 13th century was the final blow and resulted in the destruction of Kiev in 1240. Galicia-Volhynia was eventually absorbed into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, while the Mongol-dominated Vladimir-Suzdal and the independent Novgorod Republic, two regions on the periphery of Kiev, established the basis for the modern Russian nation.

## Grand Duchy of Moscow and Tsardom of Russia



A scene from medieval Russian history

The most powerful successor state to Kievan Rus' was Grand Duchy of Moscow. It would annex rivals such as Tver and Novgorod, and eventually become the basis of the modern Russian state. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow claimed succession to the legacy of the Eastern Roman Empire. While still under the domain of the Mongol-Tatars and with their connivance, the Duchy of Moscow (or "Muscovy") began to assert its influence in Western Russia in the early 14th century. Assisted by the Russian Orthodox Church and Saint Sergius of Radonezh's spiritual revival, Russia inflicted a defeat on the Mongol-Tatars in the Battle of Kulikovo (1380). Ivan III (*Ivan the Great*) eventually threw off the control of the invaders, consolidated surrounding areas under Moscow's dominion and was the first to take the title "grand duke of all the Russias".

In 1547, Ivan IV (*Ivan the Terrible*) was officially crowned the first Tsar of Russia. During his long reign, Ivan IV annexed the Tatar khanates (Kazan, Astrakhan) along the Volga River and transformed Russia into a multiethnic and multiconfessional state. Ivan IV promulgated a new code of laws (Sudebnik of 1550), established the first Russian feudal representative body (Zemsky Sobor) and introduced local self-management into the rural regions. But Ivan IV's rule was also marked by the long and unsuccessful Livonian War against the coalition of Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden for access to the Baltic coast and sea trade. The military losses, epidemics and poor harvests weakened the state, and the Crimean Tatars were able to burn down Moscow. The death of Ivan's sons, combined with famine (1601–1603), led to the civil war and foreign intervention of the Time of Troubles in the early 1600s. By the mid-17th century there were Russian settlements in Eastern Siberia, on the Chukchi Peninsula, along the Amur River, and on the Pacific coast. The Bering Strait between North America and Asia was first sighted by a Russian explorer in 1648.

## Imperial Russia





Peter the Great  
officially proclaimed the  
existence of the Russian  
Empire in 1721

Under the Romanov dynasty and Peter I (*Peter the Great*), the Russian Empire became a world power. Ruling from 1682 to 1725, Peter defeated Sweden in the Great Northern War, forcing it to cede West Karelia and Ingria (two regions lost by Russia in the Time of Troubles), Estland, and Livland, securing Russia's access to the sea and sea trade. It was in Ingria that Peter founded a new capital, Saint Petersburg. Peter's reforms brought considerable Western European cultural influences to Russia. Catherine II (*Catherine the Great*), who ruled from 1762 to 1796, continued the efforts to establish Russia as one of the Great Powers of Europe. In alliance with Prussia and Austria, Russia stood against Napoleon's France and eliminated its rival Poland-Lithuania in a series of partitions, gaining large areas of territory in the west. As a result of its victories in the Russo-Turkish War, by the early 19th century Russia had made significant territorial gains in Transcaucasia. Napoleon's invasion failed miserably as obstinate Russian resistance combined with the bitterly cold Russian winter dealt him a disastrous defeat, in which more than 95% of his invading force perished. The officers in the Napoleonic Wars brought ideas of liberalism back to Russia with them and even attempted to curtail the tsar's powers during the abortive Decembrist revolt of 1825, which was followed by several decades of political repression.

The prevalence of serfdom and the conservative policies of Nicholas I impeded the development of Russia in the mid-nineteenth century. Nicholas's successor Alexander II (1855–1881) enacted significant reforms, including the abolition of serfdom in 1861; these "Great Reforms" spurred industrialization. However, many socio-economic conflicts were aggravated during Alexander III's reign and under his son, Nicholas II. Harsh conditions in factories created mass support for the revolutionary socialist movement. In January 1905, striking workers peaceably demonstrated for reforms in Saint Petersburg but were fired upon by troops, killing and wounding hundreds. The abject failure of the Tsar's military forces in the initially-popular Russo-Japanese War, and the event known as "Bloody Sunday", ignited the Russian Revolution of 1905. Although the uprising was swiftly put down by the army and although Nicholas II retained much of his power, he was forced to concede major reforms, including granting the freedoms of speech and assembly, the legalization of political parties and the creation of an elected legislative assembly, the Duma; however, the hopes for basic improvements in the lives of industrial workers were unfulfilled.

Russia entered World War I in aid of its ally Serbia and fought a war across three fronts while isolated from its allies. Russia did not want war but felt that the only alternative was German domination of Europe. Although the army was far from defeated in 1916, the already-existing public distrust of the regime was deepened by the rising costs of war, casualties (Russia suffered the highest number of both military and civilian deaths of the Entente Powers), and tales of corruption and even treason in high places, leading to the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917. A series of uprisings were organized by workers and peasants throughout the country, as well as by soldiers in the Russian army, who were mainly of peasant origin. Many of the uprisings were organized and led by democratically-elected councils called Soviets. The February Revolution overthrew the Russian monarchy, which was replaced by a shaky coalition of political parties that declared itself the Provisional Government. The abdication marked the end of imperial rule in Russia, and Nicholas and his family were imprisoned and later executed during the Civil War. While initially receiving the support of the Soviets, the Provisional Government proved unable to resolve many problems which had led to the February Revolution. The second revolution, the October Revolution, led by Vladimir Lenin, overthrew the Provisional Government and created the world's first Communist state.



Napoleon's retreat from  
Moscow



The Russian Empire in 1866  
and its spheres of influence

## Soviet Russia



Vladimir Lenin

Following the October Revolution, a civil war broke out between the new regime and the Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, and the White movement. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk concluded hostilities with the Central Powers in World War I. Russia lost its Ukrainian, Polish and Baltic territories, and Finland by signing the treaty. The Allied powers launched a military intervention in support of anti-Communist forces and both the Bolsheviks and White movement carried out campaigns of deportations and executions against each other, known respectively as the Red Terror and White Terror. By the end of the Civil War, some 20 million had died and the Russian economy and infrastructure were completely devastated. Following victory in the Civil War, the Russian SFSR together with three other Soviet republics formed the Soviet Union on December 30, 1922. The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic dominated the Soviet Union for its entire 74-year history; the USSR was often referred to as "Russia" and its people as "Russians." The largest of the republics, Russia contributed over half the population of the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks introduced free universal health care, education and social-security benefits, as well as the right to work and housing. Women's rights were greatly increased through new laws aimed to wipe away centuries-old inequalities. Notably, Russia became the first country in the world with full freedom of divorce and legalized abortion. After Lenin's death in 1924 Joseph Stalin consolidated power and became dictator. Stalin launched a command economy, rapid industrialization of the largely rural country and collectivization of its agriculture and the Soviet Union was transformed from an agrarian economy to a major industrial powerhouse

in a short span of time.



First human in space,  
Yuri Gagarin

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union with the largest and most powerful invasion force in human history, opening the largest theatre of the Second World War. Although the German army had considerable success early on, they suffered defeats after reaching the outskirts of Moscow and were dealt their first major defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad in the winter of 1942–1943. Soviet forces drove through Eastern Europe in 1944–45 and captured Berlin in May, 1945. In the conflict, Soviet military and civilian death toll were 10.6 million and 15.9 million respectively, accounting for half of all World War II casualties. The Soviet economy and infrastructure suffered massive devastation but the Soviet Union emerged as an acknowledged superpower. The Red Army occupied Eastern Europe after the war, including the eastern half of Germany; Stalin installed communist governments in these satellite states. Becoming the world's second nuclear weapons power, the USSR established the Warsaw Pact alliance and entered into a struggle for global dominance with the United States, which became known as the Cold War.



Stalingrad, 1942. The vast majority of the fighting in World War II took place on the Eastern Front. Nazi Germany suffered 80% to 93% of all casualties there

Under Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Union launched the world's first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1 and the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human being to orbit the Earth aboard the first manned spacecraft, Vostok 1. Tensions with the United States heightened when the two rivals clashed over the deployment of the U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey and Soviet missiles in Cuba. Following the ousting of Khrushchev, another period of rule by collective leadership ensued until Leonid Brezhnev established himself in the early 1970s as the pre-eminent figure in Soviet politics. Brezhnev's rule oversaw economic stagnation and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan,

which dragged on without success and with continuing casualties inflicted by insurgents. Soviet citizens became increasingly discontented with the war, ultimately leading to the withdrawal of Soviet forces by 1989.

From 1985 onwards, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced the policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) in an attempt to modernize the country. The USSR economy was the second largest in the world prior to the Soviet collapse. During its last years, the economy was afflicted by shortages of goods in grocery stores, huge budget deficits and explosive growth in money supply leading to inflation. In August 1991, an unsuccessful military coup against Gorbachev aimed at preserving the Soviet Union instead led to its collapse. In Russia, Boris Yeltsin came to power and declared the end of Communist rule. The USSR splintered into fifteen independent republics and was officially dissolved in December 1991. Boris Yeltsin was elected the President of Russia in June 1991, in the first direct presidential election in Russian history.

## Russian Federation

During and after the disintegration of the USSR when wide ranging reforms including privatisation and market and trade liberalization were being undertaken, the Russian economy went through a major crisis. This period was characterized by deep contraction of output, with GDP declining by roughly 50 percent between 1990 and the end of 1995 and industrial output declining by over 50 percent. In October 1991, Yeltsin announced that Russia would proceed with radical, market-oriented reform along the lines of "shock therapy", as recommended by the United States and International Monetary Fund. Price controls were abolished, privatization was started. Millions were plunged into poverty. According to the World Bank, whereas 1.5% of the population was living in poverty in the late Soviet era, by mid-1993 between 39% and 49% of the population was living in poverty. Delays in wage payment became a chronic problem with millions being paid months, even years late. Russia took up the responsibility for settling the USSR's external debts, even though its population made up just half of the population of the USSR at the time of its dissolution. The privatization process largely shifted control of enterprises from state agencies to groups of individuals with inside connections in the Government and the mafia. Violent criminal groups often took over state enterprises, clearing the way through assassinations or extortion. Corruption of government officials became an everyday rule of life. Many of the newly rich mobsters and businesspeople took billions in cash and assets outside of the country in an enormous capital flight. The long and wrenching depression was coupled with social decay. Social services collapsed and the birth rate plummeted while the death rate skyrocketed. The early and mid-1990s was marked by extreme lawlessness. Criminal gangs and organized crime flourished and murders and other violent crime spiraled out of control.



1140th Anniversary of Russian statehood (2002)





Moscow-City under construction. Moscow is the world's most expensive city to live in.

In 1993 a constitutional crisis resulted in the worst civil strife in Moscow since the October Revolution. President Boris Yeltsin illegally dissolved the country's legislature which opposed his moves to consolidate power and push forward with unpopular neo-liberal reforms; in response, legislators barricaded themselves inside the White House, impeached Yeltsin and elected a new President and major protests against Yeltsin's government resulted in hundreds killed. With military support, Yeltsin sent the army to besiege the parliament building and disperse its defenders and used tanks and artillery to eject the legislators.

The 1990s were plagued by armed ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus. Such conflicts took a form of separatist Islamist insurrections against federal power (most notably in Chechnya), or of ethnic/clan conflicts between local groups (e.g., in North Ossetia-Alania between Ossetians and Ingushs, or between different clans in Chechnya). Since the Chechen separatists declared independence in the early 1990s, an intermittent guerrilla war ( First Chechen War, Second Chechen War) has been fought between disparate Chechen rebel groups and the Russian military. Terrorist attacks against civilians carried out by Chechen separatists, most notably the Moscow theatre hostage crisis and Beslan school siege, caused hundreds of deaths and drew worldwide attention. High budget deficits and the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis caused the financial crisis of 1998 and

resulted in further GDP decline. On December 31, 1999 Boris Yeltsin resigned from the presidency, handing the post to the recently appointed prime minister, Vladimir Putin, who then won the 2000 election. Putin won popularity for suppressing the Chechen insurgency, although sporadic violence still occurs throughout the North Caucasus. High oil prices and initially weak currency followed by increasing domestic demand, consumption and investments has helped the economy grow for nine straight years, alleviating the standard of living and increasing Russia's clout on the world stage. While many reforms made under Putin's rule have been generally criticized by Western nations as un-democratic, Putin's leadership over the return of order, stability and progress has won him widespread popularity in Russia, as well as recognition abroad.

## Government and politics

According to the Constitution, which was adopted by national referendum on December 12, 1993 following the 1993 Russian constitutional crisis, Russia is a federation and a semi-presidential republic, wherein the President is the head of state and the Prime Minister is the head of government. The Russian Federation is fundamentally structured as a representative democracy. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of the Federal Assembly. The government is regulated by a system of checks and balances defined by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which serves as the country's supreme legal document and as a social contract for the people of the Russian Federation.



The State Duma building

The federal government is composed of three branches:

- Legislative: The bicameral Federal Assembly, made up of the State Duma and the Federation Council makes federal law, declares war, approves treaties, has the power of the purse, and has power of impeachment, by which it can remove sitting members of the government.
- Executive: The president is the commander-in-chief of the military, can veto legislative bills before they become law, and appoints the Cabinet and other

officers, who administer and enforce federal laws and policies.

- **Judiciary:** The Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Court of Arbitration and lower federal courts, whose judges are appointed by the Federation Council on the recommendation of the president, interpret laws and can overturn laws they deem unconstitutional.

According to the Constitution of Russia, constitutional justice in the court is based on the equality of all citizens, judges are independent and subject only to the law, trials are to be open and the accused is guaranteed a defense. Since 1996, Russia has instituted a moratorium on the death penalty in Russia, although capital punishment has not been abolished by law.

The president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term (eligible for a second term but constitutionally barred for a third consecutive term); election last held 2 March 2008. Ministries of the government are composed of the premier and his deputies, ministers, and selected other individuals; all are appointed by the president. The national legislature is the Federal Assembly, which consists of two chambers; the 450-member State Duma and the 176-member Federation Council. Leading political parties in Russia include United Russia, the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and Fair Russia.

## Subdivisions

### Federal subjects

The Russian Federation comprises 83 federal subjects. These subjects have equal representation—two delegates each—in the Federation Council. However, they differ in the degree of autonomy they enjoy.

- 46 oblasts (provinces): most common type of federal subjects, with federally appointed governor and locally elected legislature.
- 21 republics: nominally autonomous; each has its own constitution, president, and parliament. Republics are allowed to establish their own official language alongside Russian but are represented by the federal government in international affairs. Republics are meant to be home to specific ethnic minorities.
- Nine krais (territories): essentially the same as oblasts. The "territory" designation is historic, originally given to frontier regions and later also to administrative divisions that comprised autonomous okrugs or autonomous oblasts.
- Four autonomous okrugs (autonomous districts): originally autonomous entities within oblasts and krais created for ethnic minorities, their status was elevated to that of federal subjects in the 1990s. With the exception of Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, all autonomous okrugs are still administratively subordinated to a krai or an oblast of which they are a part.
- One autonomous oblast (the Jewish Autonomous Oblast): originally autonomous oblasts were administrative units subordinated to krais. In 1990, all of them except the Jewish AO were elevated in status to that of a republic.
- Two federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg): major cities that function as separate regions.

### Federal districts and economic regions

Federal subjects are grouped into seven federal districts, each administered by an envoy appointed by the President of Russia. Unlike the federal subjects, the federal districts are not a subnational level of government, but are a level of administration of the federal government. Federal districts' envoys serve as liaisons

between the federal subjects and the federal government and are primarily responsible for overseeing the compliance of the federal subjects with the federal laws.



## Foreign relations and military

The Russian Federation is recognized in international law as continuing the legal personality of the former Soviet Union. Russia continues to implement the international commitments of the USSR, and has assumed the USSR's permanent seat on the UN Security Council, membership in other international organizations, the rights and obligations under international treaties and property and debts. Russia has a multifaceted foreign policy. It maintains diplomatic relations with 178 countries and has 140 embassies. Russia's foreign policy is determined by the President and implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Russia plays a major role in maintaining international peace and security, and plays a major role in resolving international conflicts by participating in the Quartet on the Middle East, the Six-party talks with North Korea, promoting the resolution of the Kosovo conflict and resolving nuclear proliferation issues. Russia is a member of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations, the Council of Europe, OSCE and APEC. Russia usually takes a leading role in regional organizations such as the CIS, EurAsEC, CSTO, and the SCO. Former President Vladimir Putin had

advocated a strategic partnership with close integration in various dimensions including establishment of four common spaces between Russia and the EU. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has developed a friendlier, albeit volatile relationship with NATO. The NATO-Russia Council was established in 2002 to allow the 26 Allies and Russia to work together as equal partners to pursue opportunities for joint collaboration.



Russian paratroopers at an exercise in Kazakhstan

Russia assumed control of Soviet assets abroad and most of the Soviet Union's production facilities and defense industries are located in the country. The Russian military is divided into the Ground Forces, Navy, and Air Force. There are also three independent arms of service: Strategic Rocket Forces, Military Space Forces, and the Airborne Troops. In 2006, the military had 1.037 million personnel on active duty. Russia has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world. It has the second largest fleet of ballistic missile submarines and is the only country apart from the U.S. with a modern strategic bomber force. The country has a large and fully indigenous arms industry, producing all of its own military equipment. Russia is the world's top supplier of weapons, a spot it has held since 2001, accounting for around 30% of worldwide weapons sales and exporting weapons to about 80 countries. Following the Soviet practice, it is mandatory for all male citizens aged 18–27 to be drafted for two years' Armed Forces service, though various problems associated with this is why the armed forces are from 2008 reducing the conscription term from 18 months to 12, and plan to increase contract servicemen to compose 70% of the armed forces by 2010. Defense expenditure has quadrupled over the past six years. Official government military spending for 2008

is \$40 billion, though various sources, including US intelligence, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, have estimated Russia's military expenditures to be considerably higher. Currently, the military is undergoing a major equipment upgrade with about \$200 billion on procurement of military equipment between 2006 and 2015.

## Economy

Since the turn of the century, rising oil prices, increased foreign investment, higher domestic consumption and greater political stability have bolstered economic growth in Russia. The country ended 2007 with its ninth straight year of growth, averaging 7% annually since the financial crisis of 1998. In 2007, Russia's GDP was \$2.076 trillion (est. PPP), the 7th largest in the world, with GDP growing 8.1% from the previous year. Growth was primarily driven by non-traded services and goods for the domestic market, as opposed to oil or mineral extraction and exports. The average salary in Russia was \$640 per month in early 2008, up from \$80 in 2000. Approximately 14% of Russians lived below the national poverty line in 2007, significantly down from 40% in 1998 at the worst of the post-Soviet collapse. Unemployment in Russia was at 6% in 2007, down from about 12.4% in 1999.



Regional product per capita as of 2006 (darker is higher)



A Rosneft petrol station. Russia is the world's leading natural gas exporter and the second leading oil exporter.

Russia has the world's largest natural gas reserves, the second largest coal reserves and the eighth largest oil reserves. It is the world's leading natural gas exporter and the second leading oil exporter. Oil, natural gas, metals, and timber account for more than 80% of Russian exports abroad. Since 2003, however, exports of natural resources started decreasing in economic importance as the internal market strengthened considerably. Despite higher energy prices, oil and gas only contribute to 5.7% of Russia's GDP and the government predicts this will drop to 3.7% by 2011. Russia is also considered well ahead of most other resource-rich countries in its economic development, with a long tradition of education, science, and industry. The country has more higher education graduates than any other country in Europe.



Soyuz TMA-2 moves to launch pad, about to carry the first resident crew to the International Space Station

A simpler, more streamlined tax code adopted in 2001 reduced the tax burden on people, and dramatically increased state revenue. Russia has a flat personal income tax rate of 13 percent. This ranks it as the country with the second most attractive personal tax system for single managers in the world after the United Arab Emirates, according to a 2007 survey by investment services firm Mercer Human Resource Consulting. The federal budget has run surpluses since 2001 and ended 2007 with a surplus of 6% of GDP. Over the past several years, Russia has used oil revenues from its Stabilization Fund of the Russian Federation to prepay all Soviet-era sovereign debt to Paris Club creditors and the IMF. Oil export earnings have allowed Russia to increase its foreign reserves from \$12 billion in 1999 to some \$470 billion at the end of 2007, the third largest reserves in the world. The country has also been able to substantially reduce its formerly massive foreign debt.

The economic development of the country though has been uneven geographically with the Moscow region contributing a disproportionately high amount of the country's GDP. Much of Russia, especially indigenous and rural communities in Siberia, lags significantly behind. Nevertheless, the middle class has grown from just 8 million persons in 2000 to 55 million persons in 2006. Russia is home to the largest number of billionaires in the world after the United States, gaining 50 billionaires in 2007 for a total of 110.

Over the last five years, fixed capital investments have averaged real gains greater than 10% per year and personal incomes have achieved real gains more than 12% per year. During this time, poverty has declined steadily and the middle class has continued to expand. Russia has also improved its international financial position since the 1998 financial crisis. A principal factor in Russia's growth has been the combination of strong growth in productivity, real wages, and consumption. Despite the country's strong economic performance since 1999, however, the World Bank lists several challenges facing the Russian economy including diversifying the economy, encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises, building human capital and improving corporate governance. Inflation grew to about 12% by the end of 2007, up from 9% in 2006. The upward trend continued in the first quarter of 2008, driven largely by rising food costs.

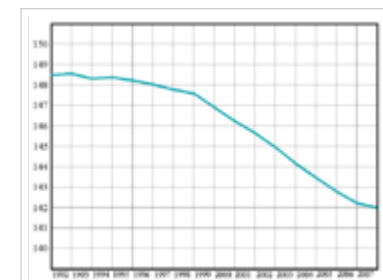
## Demographics

### Ethnic composition (2002)

According to preliminary estimates, the resident population of the Russian Federation on 1 January 2008 was 142 million people. In 2007, the population shrank by 237,800 people, or by 0.17% (in 2006 - by 532,600 people, or by 0.37%). Migration grew by 50.2% in 2007 to reach 274,000. The vast majority of migrants came from CIS states and were Russians or Russian-speaking. The Russian Federation is a diverse, multi-ethnic society, home to as many as 160 different ethnic groups and indigenous peoples. Though Russia's population is comparatively large, its population density is low because of the country's enormous size. Population is densest in European Russia, near the Ural Mountains, and in the southwest Siberia.

73% of the population lives in urban areas. As of the 2002 Census, the two largest cities in Russia are Moscow (10,126,424 inhabitants) and Saint Petersburg (4,661,219). Eleven other cities have between one and two million inhabitants: Chelyabinsk, Kazan, Novosibirsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Omsk, Perm, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, Ufa, Volgograd, and Yekaterinburg. In 2006, 186,380 migrants arrived to the Russian Federation of which 95% came from CIS countries. There are also an estimated 10 million illegal immigrants from the ex-Soviet states in Russia.

Russia's population peaked in 1991 at 148,689,000. The number of deaths during 2007 was 477,700 greater than the number of births. This is down from 687,100 in 2006. According to data published by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service, the mortality rate in Russia declined 4% in 2007, as compared to 2006, reaching some 2 million deaths, while the birth rate grew 8.3% year-on-year to an estimated 1.6 million live births. The primary causes of Russia's population decrease are a high death rate and low birth rate. While Russia's birth-rate is comparable to that of other European countries (11.3 births per 1000 people in 2007 compared to the European Union average of 10.00 per 1000) its population declines at much greater rate due to a substantially higher death rate (In 2007, Russia's death rate was 14.7 per 1000 people compared to the European Union average of 10.00 per 1000). However, the Russian health ministry predicts that by 2011, the death rate will equal the birth rate due to increases in fertility and decline in mortality.



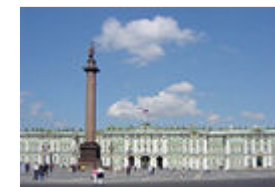
Population 1992–2008.  
Number of inhabitants in  
millions

Rank	Core City	Federal Subject	Pop.	Rank	Core City	Federal Subject	Pop.
1	<b>Moscow</b>	Moscow	10,126,424	11	<b>Ufa</b>	Bashkortostan	1,042,437
2	<b>Saint Petersburg</b>	Saint Petersburg	4,661,219	12	<b>Volgograd</b>	Volgograd	1,011,417
3	<b>Novosibirsk</b>	Novosibirsk	1,425,508	13	<b>Perm</b>	Perm	1,001,653
4	<b>Nizhny Novgorod</b>	Nizhny Novgorod	1,311,252	14	<b>Krasnoyarsk</b>	Krasnoyarsk	909,341
5	<b>Yekaterinburg</b>	Sverdlovsk	1,293,537	15	<b>Saratov</b>	Saratov	873,055
6	<b>Samara</b>	Samara	1,157,880	16	<b>Voronezh</b>	Voronezh	848,752
7	<b>Omsk</b>	Omsk	1,134,016	17	<b>Tolyatti</b>	Samara	702,879
8	<b>Kazan</b>	Tatarstan	1,105,289	18	<b>Krasnodar</b>	Krasnodar	646,175
9	<b>Chelyabinsk</b>	Chelyabinsk	1,077,174	19	<b>Ulyanovsk</b>	Ulyanovsk	635,947
10	<b>Rostov-on-Don</b>	Rostov	1,068,267	20	<b>Izhevsk</b>	Udmurtia	632,140

2002 Census



**Moscow**



**Saint Petersburg**

## Education

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 390 of 537



Moscow State University

Russia has a free education system guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution, and has a literacy rate of 99.4%. The country came first in the world in the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study conducted by Boston College. Entry to higher education is highly competitive. As a result of great emphasis on science and technology in education, Russian medical, mathematical, scientific, and space and aviation research is still generally of a high order.

The Russian Constitution grants a universal right to higher education free of charge through competitive entry. The Government allocates funding to pay the tuition fees within an established quota, or number of students for each state institution. This is considered crucial because it provides access to higher education to all skilled students, as opposed to only those who can afford it. In addition, students are paid a small stipend and provided with free housing. However, the institutions have to be funded entirely from the federal and regional budgets; institutions have found themselves unable to provide adequate teachers' salaries, students' stipends, and to maintain their facilities. To address the issue, many state institutions started to open commercial positions, which have been growing steadily since. Many private higher education institutions have emerged to address the need for a skilled work-force for high-tech and emerging industries and economic sectors.

## Health

Russia's constitution guarantees free, universal health care for all citizens. While Russia has more physicians, hospitals, and health care workers than almost any other country in the world, since the collapse of the Soviet Union the health of the Russian population has declined considerably as a result of social, economic, and lifestyle changes. As of 2007, the average life expectancy in Russia is 61.5 years for males and 73.9 years for females. The average Russian life expectancy of 67.7 years at birth is 10.8 years shorter than the overall figure in the European Union. The biggest factor contributing to this relatively low life expectancy for males is a high mortality rate among working-age males from preventable causes (e.g., alcohol poisoning, stress, smoking, traffic accidents, violent crimes). Mortality among Russian men rose by 60% since 1991, four to five times higher than in Europe. As a result of the large difference in life expectancy between men and women and because of the lasting effect of World War II, where Russia lost more men than any other nation in the world, the gender imbalance remains to this day and there are 0.859 males to every female.



Rostov seen from Lake Nero

Heart diseases account for 56.7% of total deaths, with about 30% involving people still of working age. About 16 million Russians suffer from cardiovascular diseases, placing Russia second in the world, after Ukraine, in this respect. Death rates from homicide, suicide and cancer are also especially high. According to a 2007 survey by Romir Monitoring, 52% of men and 15% of women smoke. More than 260,000 lives are lost each year as a result of tobacco use. HIV/AIDS, virtually non-existent in the Soviet era, rapidly spread following the collapse, mainly through the explosive growth of intravenous drug use. According to official statistics, there are currently more than 364,000 people in Russia registered with HIV, but independent experts place the number significantly higher. In increasing efforts to combat the disease, the government increased spending on HIV control measures 20-fold in 2006, and the 2007 budget doubled that of 2006. Since the Soviet collapse, there has also been a dramatic rise in both cases of and deaths from tuberculosis, with the disease being particularly widespread amongst prison inmates.

In an effort to stem Russia's demographic crisis, the government is implementing a number of programs designed to increase the birth rate and attract more migrants to alleviate the problem. The government has doubled monthly child support payments and offered a one-time payment of 250,000 Rubles (around US\$10,000) to women who had a second child since 2007. In 2007, Russia saw the highest birth rate since the collapse of the USSR. The First Deputy PM also said about 20 billion rubles (about US\$1 billion) will be invested in new prenatal centres in Russia in 2008–2009. Immigration is increasingly seen as necessary to sustain the country's population.

## Language

Russia's 160 ethnic groups speak some 100 languages. According to the 2002 census, 142.6 million people speak Russian, followed by Tatar with 5.3 million and German with 2.9 million speakers. Russian is the only official state language, but the Constitution gives the individual republics the right to make their native language co-official next to Russian. Despite its wide dispersal, the Russian language is homogeneous throughout Russia. Russian is the most geographically widespread language of Eurasia and the most widely spoken Slavic language. Russian belongs to the Indo-European language family and is one of three (or, according to some authorities, four) living members of the East Slavic languages; the others being Belarusian and Ukrainian (and possibly Rusyn). Written examples of Old East Slavic (*Old Russian*) are attested from the 10th century onwards.

Over a quarter of the world's scientific literature is published in Russian. Russian is also applied as a means of coding and storage of universal knowledge—60–70% of all world information is published in English and Russian languages. The language is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.



## Religion



Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, demolished during the Soviet period, was reconstructed from 1990–2000

Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism are Russia's traditional religions, deemed part of Russia's "historical heritage" in a law passed in 1997. Estimates of believers widely fluctuate among sources, and some reports put the number of non-believers in Russia as high as 16–48% of the population. Russian Orthodoxy is the dominant religion in Russia. 95% of the registered Orthodox parishes belong to the Russian Orthodox Church while there are a number of smaller Orthodox Churches. However, the vast majority of Orthodox believers do not attend church on a regular basis. Nonetheless, the church is widely respected by both believers and nonbelievers, who see it as a symbol of Russian heritage and culture. Smaller Christian denominations such as Roman Catholics, Armenian Gregorian and various Protestants exist.

The ancestors of many of today's Russians adopted Orthodox Christianity in the 10th century. The 2007 International Religious Freedom Report published by the US Department of State said that approximately 100 million citizens consider themselves Russian Orthodox Christians. According to a poll by the Russian Public Opinion Research Centre, 63% of respondents considered themselves Russian Orthodox, 6% of respondents considered themselves Muslim and less than 1% considered themselves either Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant or Jewish. Another 12% said they believe in God, but did not



practice any religion, and 16% said they are non-believers.

It is estimated that Russia is home to some 15–20 million Muslims. However, surveys say that there are only 7 to 9 million people who adhere to the Islamic faith in Russia. Russia also has an estimated 3 million to 4 million Muslim migrants from the ex-Soviet states. Most Muslims live in the Volga-Ural region, as well as in the North Caucasus, Moscow, Saint Petersburg and western Siberia. Buddhism is traditional for three regions of the Russian Federation: Buryatia, Tuva and Kalmykia. Some residents of the Siberian and Far Eastern regions, Yakutia, Chukotka, etc., practice pantheistic and pagan rites, along with the major religions. Induction into religion takes place primarily along ethnic lines. Slavs are overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian. Turkic speakers are predominantly Muslim, although several Turkic groups in Russia are not.

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# Singapore

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries



**Singapore** ( Mandarin: 新加坡, *Xīnjiāpō*; in Malay: Singapura; in Tamil: சிங்கப்பூர், *Cingappūr*) is an island country located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. It lies 137 kilometres (85 mi) north of the equator, south of the Malaysian state of Johor and north of Indonesia's Riau Islands. At 707.1 km<sup>2</sup> (272 sq mi), Singapore is one of three remaining true city-states in the world. It is the smallest nation in Southeast Asia.

Prior to European settlement, the island now known as Singapore was the site of a Malay fishing village at the mouth of the Singapore River. Several hundred indigenous Orang Laut people also lived along the nearby coast, rivers and on smaller islands. In 1819 the British East India Company established a trading post on the island, which was used thereafter as a strategic trading post along the spice route. Singapore would become one of the most important commercial and military centres of the British Empire, and the hub of British power in Southeast Asia. The city was occupied by the Japanese during World War II, which Winston Churchill called "Britain's greatest defeat". Singapore reverted to British rule immediately postwar, in 1945. Eighteen years later the city, having achieved independence from Britain, merged with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak to form Malaysia. However, less than two years later it seceded from the federation and became an independent republic on 9 August 1965. Singapore joined the United Nations on September 21 that same year.

Since independence, Singapore's standard of living has been on the rise. Foreign direct investment and a state-led drive to industrialization based on plans drawn up by the Dutch economist Albert Winsemius have created a modern economy focused on electronics manufacturing, petrochemicals, tourism and financial services alongside traditional entrepôt trade. Singapore is the 6th wealthiest country in the world in terms of GDP per capita. The small nation has foreign exchange reserves of US\$171.7353 billion.

The population of Singapore is approximately 4.59 million. Though Singapore is highly cosmopolitan and diverse, ethnic Chinese form the majority of the population. English is the administrative language of the country.

The Constitution of the Republic of Singapore established the nation's political system as a representative democracy, while the country is recognized as a parliamentary republic. The People's Action Party (PAP)

<p><b><i>Republik Singapura</i> (Malay)</b>  <b>新加坡共和国</b> (Simplified Chinese)  <b>சிங்கப்பூர் குடியரசு</b> (Tamil)  <b>Republic of Singapore</b></p>	
 <p>Image:Singapore coa.svg</p>	
<p><b>Motto:</b> <i>Majulah Singapura</i> (Malay)  "Onward, Singapore"</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Majulah Singapura</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b>	Singapore City (Downtown Core) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Official languages</b>	English Malay

dominates the political process and has won control of Parliament in every election since self-government in 1959.

## History

### Etymology

The name *Singapura* comes from the Malay, Singapura. According to the Malay Annals, this name was given by a 14th century Sumatran prince named Sang Nila Utama, who, landing on the island after a thunderstorm, spotted an auspicious beast on the shore, which his chief minister erroneously identified as a 'singha' or lion. Recent studies of Singapore, however, indicate that lions have never lived there, not even Asiatic lions; the beast seen by Sang Nila Utama was most likely a tiger, probably the Malayan Tiger.

### First settlement

The first records of settlement in Singapore are from the 2nd century AD. The island was an outpost of the Sumatran Srivijaya empire and originally had the Javanese name *Temasek* ('sea town'). Temasek (Tumasek) rapidly became a significant trading settlement, but declined in the late 14th century. There are few remnants of old Temasek in Singapore, but archaeologists in Singapore have uncovered artifacts of that and other settlements. Between the 16th and early 19th centuries, Singapore island was part of the Sultanate of Johor. During the Malay-Portugal wars in 1613, the settlement was set ablaze by Portuguese troops. The Portuguese subsequently held control in that century and the Dutch in the 17th, but throughout most of this time the island's population consisted mainly of fishermen.

### Colonial rule

	Mandarin (Chinese) Tamil
<b>Demonym</b>	Singaporean
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary republic
<span> </span> - President	Sellapan Ramanathan
<span> </span> - Prime Minister	Lee Hsien Loong
<b>Independence</b>	
<span> </span> - City status	July 24, 1951
<span> </span> - Self-government under the United Kingdom	3 June 1959
<span> </span> - Declaration of independence	31 August 1963
<span> </span> - Merger with Malaysia	16 September 1963
<span> </span> - Separation from Malaysia	9 August 1965
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	707.1 km <sup>2</sup> ( 190th) 270 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	1.444
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - 2007 estimate	4,588,600 ( 117th)
<span> </span> - 2000 census	4,117,700
<span> </span> - Density	6,489/km <sup>2</sup> ( 2nd) 16,392/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	US\$228.116 billion ( 44th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	US\$49,714 ( 6th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2007 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	US\$171.95 billion

On 29 January 1819, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles landed on the main island. Spotting its potential as a strategic geographical trading post in Southeast Asia, Raffles signed a treaty with Sultan Hussein Shah on behalf of the British East India Company on 6 February 1819 to develop the southern part of Singapore as a British trading post and settlement. Until August 1824, Singapore was still a territory controlled by a Malay Ruler. Singapore only officially became a British colony in August 1824 when the British extended control over the whole island. John Crawfurd, the second resident of Singapore, was the one who made Singapore a British possession. He signed a treaty with Sultan Hussein Shah on 2 August 1824 in which the Sultan and the Temmenggong handed over the whole island to the British East India Company thus marking the start of the island's modern era. Raffles's deputy, William Farquhar, oversaw a period of growth and ethnic migration, which was largely spurred by a no-restriction immigration policy. The British India office governed the island from 1858, but Singapore was made a British crown colony in 1867, answerable directly to the Crown. By 1869, 100,000 lived on the island.

The early onset of town planning in colonial Singapore came largely through a "divide and rule" framework where the different ethnic groups were settled in different parts of the South of the island. The Singapore River was largely a commercial area that was dominated by traders and bankers of various ethnic groups with mostly Chinese and Indian coolies working to load and unload goods from barge boats known locally as "bumboats". The Malays, consisting of the local "Orang Lauts" who worked mostly as fishermen and sea-farers, and Arab traders and scholars were mostly found in the South-east part of the river mouth, where Kampong Glam stands today. The European settlers, who were few then, settled around Fort Canning Hill and further upstream from the Singapore River. Like the Europeans, the early Indian migrants also settled more inland of the Singapore River, where Little India stands today. Very little is known about the rural private settlements in those times (known as *kampongs*), other than the major move by the post-independent Singapore government to re-settle these residents in the late 1960s.

## World War II

During World War II, the Imperial Japanese Army invaded Malaya, culminating in the Battle of Singapore. The ill-prepared British were defeated in six days, and surrendered the supposedly impregnable fortress to General Tomoyuki Yamashita on 15 February 1942. The surrender was described by British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill as "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history." The Japanese renamed Singapore *Shōnantō* (昭南島<sup>?</sup>), from Japanese "Shōwa no jidai ni eta minami no shima" ("昭和の時代に得た南の島"<sup>?</sup>), or "southern island obtained in the age of Shōwa", and occupied it until the British repossessed the island on 12 September 1945, a month after the Japanese surrender.

The name Shōnantō was, at the time, romanized as "Syonan-to" or "Syonan", which means "Light of the South".

## Independence

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 396 of 537

- Per capita	US\$39,952.44
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: blue;">—</span> 0.922 ( <b>high</b> ) (25th)
<b>Currency</b>	Singapore dollar (SGD)
<b>Time zone</b>	SST (UTC+8)
- Summer (DST)	not observed (UTC+8)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.sg
<b>Calling code</b>	+65 <sup>2</sup>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Singapore is a city-state.</li> <li>2 02 from Malaysia.</li> </ul>



Statue of Thomas Stamford Raffles by Thomas Woolner, erected at the location where he first landed at Singapore. He is recognized as the founder of modern Singapore.

Singapore became a self-governing state within the British Empire in 1959 with Yusof bin Ishak its first *Yang di-Pertuan Negara* and Lee Kuan Yew its first Prime Minister. It declared independence from Britain unilaterally in August 1963, before joining the Federation of Malaysia in September along with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak as the result of the 1962 Merger Referendum of Singapore. Singapore left the federation two years later after heated ideological conflict between the state's PAP government and the federal Kuala Lumpur government. Singapore officially gained sovereignty on 9 August 1965. Yusof bin Ishak was sworn in as the first President of Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew remained prime minister.

While trying to be self-sufficient, the fledging nation faced problems like mass unemployment, housing shortages, and a dearth of land and natural resources. During Lee Kuan Yew's term as prime minister from 1959 to 1990, his administration tackled the problem of widespread unemployment, raised the standard of living, and implemented a large-scale public housing programme. It was during this time that the foundation of the country's economic infrastructure was developed; the threat of racial tension was curbed; and an independent national defence system centring around compulsory male military service was created.

In 1990, Goh Chok Tong succeeded Lee as Prime Minister. During his tenure, the country tackled the impacts of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the 2003 SARS outbreak, and terrorist threats posed by Jemaah Islamiyah after the September 11 attacks. In 2004, Lee Hsien Loong, the eldest son of Lee Kuan Yew, became the third prime minister. Amongst his more notable decisions is the plan to open casinos to attract more foreign tourists.

## Government and politics

Singapore is a parliamentary democracy with a Westminster system of unicameral parliamentary government representing different constituencies. The bulk of the executive powers rests with the Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, currently Lee Hsien Loong. The office of President of Singapore, historically a ceremonial one, was granted some veto powers as of 1991 for a few key decisions such as the use of the national reserves and the appointment of judiciary positions. Although the position is to be elected by popular vote, only the 1993 election has been contested to date. The legislative branch of government is the Parliament.

Parliamentary elections in Singapore are plurality-based for group representation constituencies since the Parliamentary Elections Act was modified in 1991.

The Members of Parliament (MPs) consist of either elected, non-constituency or nominated Members. The majority of the Members of Parliament are elected into Parliament at a General Election on a first-past-the-post basis and represent either Single Member or Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs).

The elected Members of Parliament act as a bridge between the community and the Government by ensuring that the concerns of their constituents are heard in the Parliament. The present Parliament has 94 Members of Parliament consisting of 84 elected Members of Parliament, one



Shenton Way circa 1970, the period of time where Singapore underwent immense economic development under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew.



The Downtown Core at dusk, the civic and business district of Singapore.



Parliament House

NCMP and nine Nominated members of Parliament.

- Elected Members, In Group Representation Constituencies, political parties field a team of between three to six candidates. At least one candidate in the team must belong to a minority race. This requirement ensures that parties contesting the elections in Group Representation Constituencies are multi-racial so that minority races will be represented in Parliament. Presently there are 14 Group Representation Constituencies and 9 Single Member constituencies.
- Non-Constituency Members, This is to ensure that there will be a minimum number of opposition representatives in Parliament and that views other than the Government's can be expressed in Parliament.
- Nominated Members, up to nine Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs) was made in 1990 to ensure a wide representation of community views in Parliament. Nominated Members of Parliament are appointed by the President of Singapore for a term of two and a half years on the recommendation of a Special Select Committee of Parliament chaired by the Speaker. Nominated Members of Parliament are not connected to any political parties.



The Istana, the official residence and office of the President of Singapore.

Politics in Singapore have been controlled by the People's Action Party (PAP) since self-government was attained. In consequence, foreign political analysts and several opposition parties like the Workers' Party of Singapore, the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) and the Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA) have argued that Singapore is essentially a one-party state. Many analysts consider Singapore to be an illiberal or procedural democracy than a true democracy. The Economist Intelligence Unit describes Singapore as a "hybrid regime" of democratic and authoritarian elements. Freedom House ranks the country as "partly free". Though general elections are free from irregularities and vote rigging, the PAP has been criticised for manipulating the political system through its use of censorship, gerrymandering, and civil libel suits against opposition politicians. Francis Seow, the exiled former Solicitor-General of Singapore, is a prominent critic. Seow and opposition politicians such as J.B. Jeyaretnam and Chee Soon Juan claim that Singapore courts favour the PAP government, and there is no separation of powers.

Singapore has a successful and transparent market economy. Government-linked companies are dominant in various sectors of the local economy, such as media, utilities, and public transport. Singapore has consistently been rated as the least corrupt country in Asia and among the world's ten most free from corruption by Transparency International.

Although Singapore's laws are inherited from British and British Indian laws, including many elements of English common law, the PAP has also consistently rejected liberal democratic values, which it typifies as Western and states there should not be a 'one-size-fits-all' solution to a democracy. There are no jury trials. Laws restricting the freedom of speech are justified by claims that they are intended to prohibit speech that may breed ill will or cause disharmony within Singapore's multiracial, multi-religious society. For example, in September 2005, three bloggers were convicted of sedition for posting racist remarks targeting minorities. Some offences can lead to heavy fines or caning and there are laws which allow capital punishment in Singapore for first-degree murder and drug trafficking. Amnesty International has criticised Singapore for having "possibly the highest execution rate in the world" per capita. The Singapore government argues that there is no international consensus on the appropriateness of the death penalty and that Singapore has the sovereign right to determine its own judicial system and impose capital punishment for the most serious crimes. Singapore has been given "Partly Free" status by Freedom House.

## Geography and climate

Singapore consists of 63 islands, including mainland Singapore. There are two man-made connections to Johor, Malaysia — Johor-Singapore Causeway in the north, and Tuas Second Link in the west. Jurong Island, Pulau Tekong, Pulau Ubin and Sentosa are the largest of Singapore's many smaller islands. The highest natural point of Singapore is Bukit Timah Hill at 166 m (545 ft).

The south of Singapore, around the mouth of the Singapore River and what is now the Downtown Core, used to be the only concentrated urban area, while the rest of the land was either undeveloped tropical rainforest or used for agriculture. Since the 1960s, the government has constructed new residential towns in outlying areas, resulting in an entirely built-up urban landscape. The Urban Redevelopment Authority was established on 1 April 1974, responsible for urban planning.

Singapore has on-going land reclamation projects with earth obtained from its own hills, the sea-bed, and neighbouring countries. As a result, Singapore's land area grew from 581.5 km<sup>2</sup> (224.5 sq mi) in the 1960s to 704 km<sup>2</sup> (271.8 sq mi) today, and may grow by another 100 km<sup>2</sup> (38.6 sq mi) by 2030. The projects sometimes involve some of the smaller islands being merged together through land reclamation in order to form larger, more functional islands, such as in the case of Jurong Island.

Under the Köppen climate classification system, Singapore has a tropical rainforest climate with no distinctive seasons. Its climate is characterized by uniform temperature and pressure, high humidity, and abundant rainfall. Temperatures range from 22 °C to 34 °C (72° to 93 °F). On average, the relative humidity is around 90 percent in the morning and 60 percent in the afternoon. During prolonged heavy rain, relative humidity often reaches 100 percent. The lowest and highest temperatures recorded in its maritime history are 18.4 °C (65.1 °F) and 37.8 °C (100.0 °F) respectively. The highest wind speed recorded was 150 km/h (93 mph) on 26 May 2007. June and July are the hottest months, while November and December make up the wetter monsoon season. From August to October, there is often haze, sometimes severe enough to prompt public health warnings, due to bushfires in neighbouring Indonesia. Singapore does not observe daylight saving time or a summer time zone change. The length of the day is nearly constant year round due to the country's location near the equator.

About 23 percent of Singapore's land area consists of forest and nature reserves. Urbanization has eliminated many areas of former primary rainforest, with the only remaining area of primary rainforest being Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. A variety of parks are maintained with human intervention, such as the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

## Economy

Singapore has a highly developed market-based economy, which historically revolves around extended entrepot trade. Along with Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, Singapore is one of the Four Asian Tigers. The economy depends heavily on exports refining imported goods, especially in manufacturing.



Singapore Downtown as seen from the DHL Balloon.



Singapore Botanic Gardens, a 67.3-hectare (166 acre) Botanic Gardens in Singapore that includes the National Orchid Garden, which has a collection of more than 3,000 species of orchids.

Manufacturing constituted 26 percent of Singapore's GDP in 2005. The manufacturing industry is well-diversified into electronics, petroleum refining, chemicals, mechanical engineering and biomedical sciences manufacturing. In 2006, Singapore produced about 10 percent of the world's foundry wafer output. Singapore is the busiest port in the world in terms of tonnage shipped. Singapore is the world's fourth largest foreign exchange trading centre after London, New York City and Tokyo.

Singapore has been rated as the most business-friendly economy in the world, with thousands of foreign expatriates working in multi-national corporations. The city-state also employs tens of thousands of foreign blue-collared workers around the world.



Singapore's Central Business District (CBD).

As a result of global recession and a slump in the technology sector, the country's GDP contracted 2.2 percent in 2001. The Economic Review Committee (ERC) was set up in December 2001, and recommended several policy changes with a view to revitalising the economy. Singapore has since recovered from the recession, largely due to improvements in the world economy; the Singaporean economy itself grew by 8.3 percent in 2004, 6.4 percent in 2005 and 7.9 percent in 2006. In the first half of Year 2007, the economy grew by 7.6 percent. The growth forecast for the whole year is expected to be between 7 percent to 8 percent, up from the original estimation of 5 percent to 7 percent. On August 19 2007, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced in his National Day Rally Speech that Singapore's economy is expected to grow by at least 4-6 percent annually over the next 5-10 years.

The per capita GDP in 2006 was US\$29,474. As of September 2007, the unemployment rate is 1.7 percent, which is the lowest in a decade, having improved to around pre-Asian crisis level. Employment continued to grow strongly as the economy maintained its rapid expansion. In the first three quarters of 2007, 171,500 new jobs were created, which is close to the 176,000 for the whole of 2006. For the whole of 2007, Singapore's economy has grown 7.5 percent and drew in a record S\$16 billion of fixed asset investments in manufacturing and projects generating S\$3 billion of total business spending in services. The government expects the Singapore economy to grow by 4.5 percent to 6.5 percent in 2008.

Singapore introduced a Goods and Services Tax (GST) with an initial rate of 3 percent on 1 April 1994 substantially increasing government revenue by S\$1.6 billion and stabilizing government finances. The taxable GST was increased to 4 percent in 2003, to 5 percent in 2004, and to 7 percent on 1st July 2007.

Singapore is a popular travel destination, making tourism one of its largest industries. About 9.7 million tourists visited Singapore in 2006. The Orchard Road shopping district is one of Singapore's most well-known and popular tourist draws. To attract more tourists, the government decided to legalise gambling and to allow two casino resorts (euphemistically called Integrated Resorts) to be developed at Marina South and Sentosa in 2005. To compete with regional rivals like Hong Kong, Tokyo and Shanghai, the government has announced that the city area would be transformed into a more exciting place by lighting up the civic and commercial buildings. Cuisine has also been heavily promoted as an attraction for tourists, with the Singapore Food Festival in July organized annually to celebrate Singapore's cuisine.



Orchard Road is decorated for Christmas, 2005.

Singapore is fast positioning itself as a medical tourism hub — about 200,000 foreigners seek medical care in the country each year and Singapore medical



services aim to serve one million foreign patients annually by 2012 and generate USD 3 billion in revenue. The government expects that the initiative could create an estimated 13,000 new jobs within the health industries.

Under the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), Wireless@SG is a government initiative to build Singapore's infocomm infrastructure. Working through IDA's Call-for-Collaboration, SingTel, iCell and QMax deploy a municipal wireless network throughout Singapore. Since late 2006, users have enjoyed free wireless access through Wi-Fi under the "basic-tier" package offered by all three operators for 3 years.

## Free Trade Agreements

Singapore has 14 bilateral and multilateral trade agreements:

- ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA)
- ASEAN-China (ACFTA)
- ASEAN-Korea (AKFTA)
- Australia (SAFTA)
- EFTA (European Free Trade Association: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland)
- Jordan (SJFTA)
- India (CECA)
- Japan (JSEPA)
- New Zealand (ANZSCEP)
- Panama (PSFTA)
- Peru
- South Korea (KSFTA)
- Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (Trans-Pacific SEP): Brunei, New Zealand, Chile, Singapore
- United States of America USSFTA



Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and President of the United States George W. Bush signing the US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement in the White House, May 6, 2003.

## Currency

The currency of Singapore is the Singapore dollar, represented by the symbol **S\$** or the abbreviation **SGD**. The central bank of Singapore is the Monetary Authority of Singapore, responsible for issuing currency. Singapore established the Board of Commissioners of Currency, Singapore, on 7 April 1967 and issued its first coins and notes. The Singapore dollar was exchangeable at par with the Malaysian ringgit until 1973. Interchangeability with the Brunei dollar is still maintained.

On 27 June 2007, to commemorate 40 years of currency agreement with Brunei, a commemorative S\$20 note was launched; the back is identical to the Bruneian \$20 note launched concurrently.

## Military

Image:RSS Formidable Ex  
Malabar 07.jpg  
RSS *Formidable* during  
Exercise Malabar 07

The Ministry of Defence (MINDEF), currently headed by Minister Teo Chee Hean, oversees the Singapore Army, the Republic of Singapore Navy, and the Republic of Singapore Air Force, collectively known as the Singapore Armed Forces, along with volunteer private companies involved in supporting roles. The Chief of Defence Forces is Lieutenant-General Desmond Kuek Bak Chye.

The armed forces serve primarily as a deterrent against potential aggressors and also provide humanitarian assistance to other countries. Singapore has mutual defence pacts with several countries, most notably the Five Power Defence Arrangements. There is an extensive overseas network of training grounds in the United States, Australia, Republic of China (Taiwan), New Zealand, France, Thailand, Brunei, India and South Africa. Since 1980, the concept and strategy of " Total Defence" has been adopted in all aspects of security; an approach aimed at strengthening Singapore against all kinds of threats.

The recent rise in unconventional warfare and terrorism has cast increasing emphasis on non-military aspects of defence. The Gurkha Contingent, part of the Singapore Police Force, is also a counter-terrorist force. In 1991, the hijacking of Singapore Airlines Flight 117 ended in the storming of the aircraft by Singapore Special Operations Force and the subsequent deaths of all four hijackers without injury to either passengers or SOF personnel. A concern is Jemaah Islamiyah, a militant Islamic group whose plan to attack the Australian High Commission was ultimately foiled in 2001.

Singapore's defence resources have been used in international humanitarian aid missions, including United Nations peacekeeping assignments involved in 11 different countries. In September 2005, the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) sent three CH-47 Chinook helicopters to Louisiana to assist in relief operations for Hurricane Katrina. In the aftermath of the 2004 Asian Tsunami (or Boxing Day Tsunami), the SAF deployed 3 tank landing ships, 12 Super Puma and 8 Chinook helicopters to aid in relief operations to the countries that were affected by the tsunami.

### Singapore Armed Forces

The Singapore Armed Forces, the military forces of Singapore, takes charge of the overall defence of the country. It comprises three branches: the Singapore Army, Republic of Singapore Air Force, and the Republic of Singapore Navy.

The Singapore Army is one of the three services of the Singapore Armed Forces. It is headed by the Chief of Army (COA), currently Major General Neo Kian Hong. The Army focuses on leveraging technology and weapon systems as " force-multipliers". It is currently undergoing the transformation into, what it calls a 3rd Generation fighting force.

The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), the air force branch, guards the airspace of Singapore. The RSAF was established in 1968 as the Singapore Air Defence Command. It operates from four air bases. It also operates its aircraft in several overseas locations in order to provide greater exposure to its pilots. The main aircrafts found in its fleet include F-16 Fighting Falcons, CH-47 Chinook and C-130 Hercules.



An RSAF CH-47SD lands aboard USS *Rushmore* during Exercise CARAT 2001

The final branch, the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN), is the navy of the Singapore Armed Forces, responsible for the defence of Singapore against sea-borne threats and protection of its sea lines of communications. Operating within the crowded littoral waters of the Singapore Strait, the RSN is regarded as one of the best in the region. The RSN operates from two bases, Tuas Naval Base and Changi Naval Base, and has a large number of vessels, including 4 submarines, 6 frigates, and 4 amphibious transport docks. All commissioned ships of the RSN have a prefix *RSS*, which means *Republic of Singapore Ship*.

## Singapore Police Force

The Singapore Police Force (SPF) is the main agency tasked with maintaining law and order in the country. Formerly known as the Republic of Singapore Police, it has grown from an 11-man organisation to a 38,587 strong force. It enjoys a relatively positive public image, and is credited for helping to arrest Singapore's civic unrests and lawlessness in its early years, and maintaining the low crime rate today. The organisation structure of the SPF is split between the staff and line functions, roughly modelled after the military. There are currently 15 staff departments and 13 line units. The SPF is headquartered in a block at New Phoenix Park in Novena, adjacent to a twin block occupied by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Police officers typically respond to calls in rapid-deployment vehicles known as the Fast Response Car. They have been staunch users of Japanese-made saloon cars since the 1980s for patrol duties, with the mainstay models in use being the various generations of the Mitsubishi Lancers, Mazda 323s, Toyota Corollas & Subaru Impreza.



An SCDF Combined Platform Ladder (CPL) Vehicle

## Singapore Civil Defence Force

The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) is the main agency in charge of the provision of emergency services in Singapore during peacetime and emergencies. A uniformed organisation under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the SCDF provides ambulance, fire fighting and emergency response services to the Republic of Singapore. It also plays a major role in the Republic's disaster relief operations. It is branched into 6 Operational and Training Divisions beneath the Headquarters Element. Of these six, four are known as Operational Divisions, also known as Territorial Divisions, and each cover vast sections of Singapore corresponding roughly to the four cardinal points of the compass.

The SCDF maintains a large fleet of custom vehicles, called appliances, to provide an emergency response force capable of mitigating any and all kinds of fires and disasters. Ranging from the generic fire truck and ambulance to more sophisticated mobile command structures and disaster mitigation vehicles of all kinds, many of the appliances were designed and commissioned by the Force itself rather than obtaining ready-made designs from industries.

## National Service

Singapore legislation requires every able-bodied male Singapore citizen and second-generation permanent resident to undertake National Service for a minimum of 2 years upon reaching 18 years of age or completion of his studies (whichever comes first), with exemption on medical or other grounds. After serving for two years, every male is considered operationally ready, and is liable for reservist national service to the age of 40 (50 for commissioned officers). More than

350,000 men serve as operationally-ready servicemen assigned to reservist combat units, and another 72,500 men form the full-time national service and regular corps.

## Demographics

### Population

According to government statistics, the population of Singapore as of 2007 was 4.59 million, of whom 3.58 million were Singaporean citizens and permanent residents (termed 'Singapore Residents'). Chinese formed 75.2% of 'Singapore Residents', Malays 13.6%, Indians 8.8%, while Eurasians and other groups formed 2.4%.

In 2006 the crude birth rate stood at 10.1 per 1000, a very low level attributed to birth control policies, and the crude death rate was also one of the lowest in the world at 4.3 per 1000. The total population growth was 4.4% with Singapore residents growth at 1.8%. The higher percentage growth rate is largely from net immigration, but also increasing life expectancy. Singapore is the second-most densely populated independent country in the world after Monaco, excluding Macau and Hong Kong, which are special administrative regions of the People's Republic of China. In 1957, Singapore's population was approximately 1.45 million, and there was a relatively high birth rate. Aware of the country's extremely limited natural resources and small territory, the government introduced birth control policies in the late 1960s. In the late 1990s, the population was ageing, with fewer people entering the labour market and a shortage of skilled workers. In a dramatic reversal of policy, the Singapore government introduced a "baby bonus" scheme in 2001 (enhanced in August 2004) that encouraged couples to have more children.

In 2006, the total fertility rate was only 1.26 children per woman, the 3rd lowest in the world and well below the 2.10 needed to replace the population. In 2006, 38,317 babies were born, compared to around 37,600 in 2005. This number, however, is not sufficient to maintain the population's growth. To overcome this problem, the government is encouraging foreigners to immigrate to Singapore. These large numbers of immigrants have kept Singapore's population from declining.

### Religion



Built in 1843, the Sri Mariamman Temple is the largest Hindu temple in Singapore. It is also one of the many religious buildings marked as national monuments for their historical value.



Saint Andrew's Cathedral

Singapore is a multi-religious country. According to *Statistics Singapore*, around 51 percent of resident Singaporeans (excluding significant numbers of visitors and migrant workers) practice Buddhism and Taoism. About 15 percent, mostly Chinese, Eurasians, and Indians, practice Christianity - a broad classification including Catholicism, Protestantism and other denominations. Muslims constitute 14 percent, of whom Malays account for the majority with a substantial number of Indian Muslims and Chinese Muslims. Smaller minorities practice Sikhism, Hinduism, the Bahá'í Faith and others, according to the 2000 census.

Some religious materials and practices are banned in Singapore. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, are prohibited from distributing religious materials and are sometimes jailed for their conscientious refusals to serve in the Singaporean military.

About 15 percent of the population declared no religious affiliation.

## Education

Religion in Singapore	
religion	percent
Buddhism	42.5%
No religion	14.8%
Christianity	14.6%
Islam	13.9%
Taoism	8.5%
Hinduism	4%
Others	1.6%

English is the first language learned by half the children by the time they reach preschool age and is the primary medium of instruction in primary school; however mother tongues are taught in the respective languages.

Many children attend private kindergartens until they start at primary school at the age of six. Singapore's ruling political party, the PAP, is a big provider of preschool education through its community arm.

English is the language of instruction for mathematics and the natural sciences. For the Chinese community, there are Special Assistance Plan schools which receive extra funding to teach in Mandarin. Some schools also integrate language subjects with mathematics and the sciences, using both English and a second language.

Curricular standards are set by the Ministry of Education with a mix of private schools and public schools. There is no strict public-private dichotomy: the degree of autonomy, regarding curriculum and student admission, government funding received, and tuition burden on the students is further classified into "government-run", "government-aided", "autonomous", "independent", and "privately-funded". In addition, international schools cater to expatriate students, and to a few local students given permission by the education ministry.

There are four state universities in Singapore; the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University and SIM University. A further public university is under consideration as the government looks to provide higher education for 30 percent of each cohort. There are also five polytechnics ( Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Nanyang Polytechnic and Republic Polytechnic). Unlike similarly named institutions in many other countries, Singapore polytechnics do not teach to degree level.

The educational system features non-compulsory kindergarten for three years, followed by six years of primary education concluding with the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Four to five years of secondary education follow, leading to N level or Singaporean GCE 'O' Level examinations that assess their individual subject mastery and determine which kind of tertiary education they can pursue.

Junior colleges like Tampines Junior College and Millennia Institute provide a two or three-year pre-university education route to university. An alternative, the Integrated Programme, lets the more academically-inclined skip 'O' levels to proceed straight to 'A' levels. Polytechnics offer courses leading to a diploma for students as a substitute for 'A' levels while tertiary institutions offer various bachelor's, master's, doctoral degrees, other higher diplomas, and associate degree courses.

Other institutes include the National Institute of Education (NIE), a teaching college to train teachers, various management institutes, and vocational education institutes such as the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

The Economic Development Board (EDB) has been actively recruiting foreign schools to set up campuses in Singapore under the "Global Schoolhouse" programme which aims to attract 150000 foreign students by 2015. INSEAD, a leading business school, opened its first overseas campus here in 2001, while ESSEC Business School, a century-old Parisian business school, provide courses specific to Asia. University of Chicago Graduate School of Business has a



Students having assembly in the hall of a Singapore secondary school.

campus here as well. Tisch School of the Arts was the latest to set up a branch campus here in 2007.

However, the EDB failed to attract and retain Warwick University and University of New South Wales, respectively, citing lack of academic freedom and financial concerns .

In 1999, the Ministry of Education started the Programme for Rebuilding and Improving Existing schools (PRIME) to upgrade school buildings, many of which were built over 20 to 30 years ago, in phases at a cost of S\$4.5 billion. This programme achieves to provide a better school environment for the students by upgrading school buildings to latest standards. In 2005, the Flexible School Infrastructure (FlexSI) framework was implemented through the building of modular classrooms which can be opened up for larger lectures, and allowing a school's staff members to mould their school's designs to suit the school's unique identity and culture. At the same time, an indoor sports hall will be provided to every school so that schools can carry out physical education lessons in inclement weather.

## Foreign relations

Singapore maintains diplomatic relations with 175 countries although it does not maintain a high commission or embassy in many of those countries. It is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, ASEAN and the Non-Aligned Movement. Due to obvious geographical reasons, relations with Malaysia and Indonesia are most important but the domestic politics of the three countries often threatens their relations. On the other hand, Singapore enjoys good relations with many European nations, including France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the latter sharing ties via the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) along with Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand. Good relations are also maintained with the United States, a country perceived as a stabilizing force in the region to counterbalance the regional powers.

Singapore supports the concept of Southeast Asian regionalism and plays an active role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Singapore is a founding member. Singapore is also a member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, which has its Secretariat in Singapore. Singapore also has close relations with fellow ASEAN nation Brunei and maintains Army training facilities in the Sultanate.

## Disputes

Singapore has several long-standing disputes with Malaysia over a number of issues:

- Water deliveries to Singapore
- Mutual maritime boundaries
- Air routes between Singapore Changi Airport and Kuala Lumpur International Airport

- The Singapore island known as Pedra Branca in Singapore and as Pulau Batu Puteh in Malaysia (names mean "White Rock" in Portuguese and "White Rock Island" in Malay respectively), located 24 nautical miles (44 km) off the east coast of Singapore with a land area of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> (2,392 sq yd) (the island also comprises Middle Rocks owned by Malaysia which are two clusters of rocks situated 0.6 nmi (1.1 km) south of Pedra Branca. Whereas South Ledge, a rock formation which can be seen only at low tide will be decided by June 2008). Both countries have staked a claim on the island and have been unable to settle the dispute between themselves. The case was heard at the International Court of Justice in 2007, with both parties presenting their case. The court had delivered its judgment on 23 May 2008 with Singapore having ownership of Pedra Branca and Malaysia owning Middle Rocks. The final verdict on South Ledge is still disputed and being negotiated by a committee formed by both countries.
- Relocating the Singapore station of Malaysia's Keretapi Tanah Melayu from Tanjong Pagar to Bukit Timah (see Malaysia-Singapore Points of Agreement of 1990) and moving Malaysia's immigration checkpoint from the railway station to the Causeway.
- Not allowing laid off workers, employed in Singapore shipyards in 1998, to receive their Central Provident Funds (CPF) contributions, which are estimated to be RM2.4 billion.



The dispute over the ownership of Pedra Branca, an outcrop of rocks, was resolved on the 24th of May 2008 (Singapore time) by the International Court of Justice between Singapore and Malaysia (see text).

## Languages

The national language of Singapore is Malay for historical reasons, and it is used in the national anthem, "Majulah Singapura". The official languages are English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. English has been promoted as the country's language of administration since its independence. The English used is primarily based on British English, with some American English influences. The use of English became widespread in Singapore after it was implemented as a first language medium in the education system, and English is the most common language in Singaporean literature. In school, children are required to learn English and one of the three other official languages. Public signs and official publications are in English, although there are usually translated versions in other official languages. However, most Singaporeans speak a localised hybrid form of English known as Singlish ("Singapore English"), which has many creole-like characteristics, incorporating vocabulary and grammar from Standard English, various Chinese dialects, Malay, and Indian languages. The second-most common language in Singapore is Mandarin with over seventy percent of the population having it as a second language.



Construction site sign showing Singapore's four official languages: English, Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay.

## Culture

Singapore is a mixture of an indigenous Malay population with a third generation Chinese majority, as well as Indian and Arab immigrants with some intermarriages. There also exist significant Eurasian and *Peranakan* (known also as 'Straits Chinese') communities.

## Cuisine





Enjoying Singaporean cuisine. Hawker centres and kopi tiams are evenly distributed.

Singaporean cuisine is an example of diversity and cultural diffusion in Singapore, with a fusion of Chinese, Indian, Malay and Tamil influences. In Singapore's hawker centres, traditionally Malay hawker stalls selling halal food may serve halal versions of traditionally Tamil food. Chinese food stalls may introduce indigenous Malay ingredients or cooking techniques. This continues to make the cuisine of Singapore a significant cultural attraction.

Local foods are diverse, ranging from Hainanese chicken rice to satay. Singaporeans also enjoy a wide variety of seafood including crabs, clams, squid, and oysters. One such dish is stingray barbecued and served on banana leaf and with *sambal* or chili.

Amongst locals, popular dishes include bak chor mee, mee poh, sambal stingray, laksa, nasi lemak, chili crab and satay. All of which, can be found at local hawker centres around Singapore.

## Performing arts

Since the 1990s, the government has been striving to promote Singapore as a centre for arts and culture, and to transform the country into a cosmopolitan 'gateway between the East and West'. The highlight of these efforts was the construction of Esplanade, a centre for performing arts that opened on October 12, 2002.

An annual arts festival is also organised by the National Arts Council that incorporates theatre arts, dance, music and visual arts, among other possibilities.

A first Singapore Biennale took place in 2006 to showcase contemporary art from around the world. The next one will be in 2008 which will feature Southeast Asian works.



Esplanade, Theatres on the Bay

## Sport and recreation

Singaporeans participate in a wide variety of sports and recreational activities. Favorite sports include football, cricket, swimming, badminton, basketball, rugby union, volleyball and table tennis. Most people live in public residential areas that often provide amenities such as swimming pools, outdoor basketball courts and indoor sport complexes. As might be expected on an island, water sports are popular, including sailing, kayaking and water skiing. Scuba diving is another recreation, particularly around the southern island of Pulau Hantu which is known for its rich coral reefs.

The 55,000 seat National Stadium, Singapore, located in Kallang was opened in July 1973 and was used for sporting, cultural, entertainment and national events until its official closure on 30 June 2007 to make way for the Singapore Sports Hub on the same site. This sports complex is expected to be ready by 2011 and will comprise a new 55,000-capacity National Stadium with a retractable roof, a 6,000-capacity indoor aquatic centre, a 400-metre warm-up athletic track and a 3,000-seater multi-purpose arena. 36,000 square metres of space have also been reserved for commercial development.



Closing ceremony for the use of the National Stadium

Golf is gaining popularity among Singaporeans. There are 15 golf clubs in Singapore. Some golfers prefer travelling to regional golf courses especially in Johor, Malaysia, due to relatively cheaper club membership.

Singaporean sportsmen have performed in regional as well as international competitions in sports such as table tennis, badminton, bowling, sailing, silat, swimming and water polo. Athletes such as Fandi Ahmad, Ang Peng Siong, Li Jiawei and Ronald Susilo have become household names in the country.

The Singapore Slings joined the Australian National Basketball League in 2006 and have three Singaporeans in their squad. Despite being the team with the largest support pool in the NBL, they generally get the smallest crowds in the NBL.

Beginning in 2008, Singapore will be hosting a round of the Formula One World Championship. The race will be staged at the Singapore Street Circuit in the Marina Bay area and will become the first night race on the F1 circuit and the first street circuit in Asia.

On 21 February 2008, the International Olympic Committee announced that Singapore won the bid to host the inaugural 2010 Summer Youth Olympics. Singapore beat Moscow in the final by 53 votes to 44.

## Architecture



The three tallest buildings in Singapore are located at Raffles Place, namely, from left to right, Republic Plaza, UOB Plaza One and OUB Centre. All three buildings are 280 metres in height.

metres in height.

## Transport

### International



The Port of Singapore with Sentosa island in the background.

Singapore is a major Asian transportation hub, positioned on many sea and air trade routes.

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 411 of 537

The Port of Singapore, managed by port operators PSA International and Jurong Port, was the world's busiest port in 2005 in terms of shipping tonnage handled, at 1.15 billion gross tons, and in terms of containerised traffic, at 23.2 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs). It was also the world's second busiest in terms of cargo tonnage, coming behind Shanghai with 423 million tons handled. In addition, the Port is the world's busiest for transshipment traffic and the world's biggest ship refuelling centre.



PSA Keppel

Singapore is an aviation hub for the Southeast Asian region and a stopover on the Kangaroo route between Australasia and Europe. Singapore Changi Airport has a network of 81 airlines connecting Singapore to 185 cities in 58 countries. It has been rated as one of the best international airports by international travel magazines, including being rated as the world's best airport for the first time in 2006 by Skytrax.. The airport currently has three passenger terminals. There is also a budget terminal, which serves budget carrier Tiger Airways and Cebu Pacific. The national carrier is Singapore Airlines (SIA). The government is moving towards privatising Changi airport.

Singapore is linked to Johor, Malaysia via the Johor-Singapore Causeway and the Tuas Second Link, as well as a railway operated by Keretapi Tanah Melayu of Malaysia, with its southern terminus at Tanjong Pagar railway station. Frequent ferry service to several nearby Indonesian ports also exists.

## Domestic



A C751B train at Eunos MRT Station on the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system, one of three heavy rail passenger transport lines in Singapore.

The domestic transport infrastructure has a well-connected island-wide road transport system which includes a network of expressways. The public road system is served by the nation's bus service and a number of licensed taxi-operating companies. The public bus transport has been the subject of criticism by Singaporeans, the majority of whom are dependent on it for their daily commuting. Since 1987, the heavy rail passenger Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) metro system has been in operation. The MRT has been further augmented by the Light Rail Transit (LRT) light rail system, adds accessibility to housing estates. Established in 2001, EZ-Link system allows contactless smartcards to serve as stored value tickets for use in the public transport systems in Singapore.

More than 2.85 million people use the bus network daily, while more than 1.5 million people use either the LRT or MRT as part of their daily routine. Approximately 945,000 people use the taxi services daily. Private vehicle use in the Central Area is discouraged by tolls implemented during hours of heavy road traffic, through an Electronic Road Pricing system. Private vehicle ownership is discouraged by high vehicle taxes and imposing quotas on vehicle purchase.

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# South Korea

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**South Korea**, officially known as the **Republic of Korea (ROK**; Korean: 대한민국, IPA: [tɛː.han.min.guk̚]), listen ) is an East Asian country occupying the southern half of the Korean Peninsula. To the north, it is bordered by North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), with which it was united until 1945. To the west, across the Yellow Sea, lies China and to the southeast, across the Korea Strait, lies Japan.

The Korean people trace their nation's founding back to 2333 BCE by the legendary Dangun Wanggeom. Archaeological research shows that the first Korean settlers have occupied the peninsula since the Lower Paleolithic period with territories expanding as far as mainland China and eastern Russia during the Gojosun period, the first nation established by Koreans. Korea's history has been turbulent at times with the last emperor of Korea dating back to the age of the Korean Empire. Since the establishment of the modern republic in 1948, South Korea has struggled with the aftermath of the Japanese control (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and decades of authoritarian governments, undergoing five major constitutional changes. While the government officially embraced Western-style democracy from its founding, it was not until the December of 1987 that direct and fair elections were held and true democracy began to solidify.

South Korea has had one of the fastest growing economies in the world since the 1960s and is now the 3rd largest economy in Asia and the 11th largest economy in the world. In the late 20th century, many people referred to South Korea as a newly industrialized country and an Asian Tiger due to its exponential economic growth. Today, South Korea forms the G20 industrial nations and is a Next Eleven nation with many developing countries referring to its economic success as the "Miracle on the Han River," using South Korea's success story as a role model. South Korea has a "High" HDI of 0.912 and is part of both the CIA and IMF lists of advanced economies, being defined as a High Income Nation by the World Bank. International recognition of the country and its goods & services was boosted by the hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul and further enhanced by the co-hosting of the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

South Korea is one of the world's most technologically and scientifically advanced countries; it is the

<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>대한민국 大韓民國 <i>Daehan Minguk</i> <b>Republic of Korea</b></p> </div>	
 <p>Flag</p>	<p>Image:South korea COA.svg</p> <p>Coat of arms</p>
<p><b>Motto:</b> 홍익인간(弘益人間) 널리 인간을 이롭게 하라 ("Benefit all mankind")</p>	
<p><b>Anthem:</b> <i>Aegukga</i> (애국가; 愛國歌) <i>Patriotic Hymn</i></p>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Seoul
<b>Official languages</b>	Korean
<b>Demonym</b>	South Korean, Korean

only country in the world with nationwide 100Mbit/s broadband internet access, full HDTV broadcasting, DMB, WiBro and 3G HSDPA. It is currently the most wired nation in the world, with more than 90 per cent of all homes connected to high speed broadband internet. South Korea is a global leader in electronics, computers, digital displays, semiconductor devices, mobile phones and hightech gadgets, headed by the two chaebols, Samsung and LG. South Korea also boasts the world's 3rd largest steel producer, POSCO and is the 5th largest automobile manufacturing nation, headed by Hyundai Kia Automotive Group. South Korea is the world's largest shipbuilder, lead by several multinational corporations such as Hyundai Heavy Industries and Samsung Heavy Industries. Other important industries of South Korea include robotics and biotechnology, with the world's second humanoid robot, EveR-1 and the world's first cloned dog, Snuppy.

## Government

<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic
- President	Roh Moo-hyun
- President-elect	Lee Myung-bak [Assuming office on February 25, 2008]
- Prime Minister	Han Duck-soo
<b>Establishment</b>	
- Liberation declared	March 1, 1919 ( <i>de jure</i> )
- Liberation	August 15, 1945
- First Republic	August 15, 1948
- United Nations Recognition	December 12, 1948
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	99,646 km <sup>2</sup> ( 108th) 38,492 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.3
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	49,024,737 ( 24th)
- Density	480/km <sup>2</sup> ( 19th) 1,274/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$1.206 trillion ( 12th)
- Per capita	\$25 000+ (2007) ( 31st)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.921 ( <b>high</b> ) ( 26th)
<b>Currency</b>	Won ( ₩)
<b>Time zone</b>	Korea Standard Time ( UTC+9)
- Summer ( DST)	<i>not observed</i> ( UTC+9)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.kr

The government of South Korea is divided into three branches: executive, judicial, and legislative. The executive and legislative branches operate primarily at the national level, although various ministries in the executive branch also carry out local functions. Local governments are semi-autonomous, and contain executive and legislative bodies of their own. The judicial branch operates at both the national and local levels.

The South Korean government's structure is determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea. This document has been revised several times since its first promulgation in 1948 (see History of South Korea). However, it has retained many broad characteristics; with the exception of the short-lived Second Republic of South Korea, the country has always had a presidential system with a relatively independent chief executive.

As with most stable three-branch systems, a careful system of checks and balances is in place.

## History

### Before division



Tomb mural of Goguryeo, one of the three kingdoms of Korea.

Archeological findings indicate that the Korean peninsula was occupied by humans as early in the Lower Paleolithic period.

Korea began with the legendary founding of Gojoseon in 2333 BCE by Dangun. Gojoseon expanded until it controlled much of the northern Korean peninsula and parts of Manchuria. After numerous wars with the Chinese Han Dynasty, Gojoseon disintegrated, leading to the Proto-Three Kingdoms of Korea period.

In the early centuries of the Common Era, Buyeo, Okjeo, Dongye, and the Samhan confederacy occupied the peninsula and southern Manchuria. Of the various small states, Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla grew to control the peninsula as rival kingdoms.

The Buddhism and other influences from China had profound effects on Korea, which later passed on these, as well as their own advances, to Japan.

<b>Calling code</b>	+82
1	Mobile phone system CDMA, HSPDA & WiBro
2	Domestic power supply 220V/60 Hz, CEE 7/7 sockets



The *Gukhoe* or National Assembly Building in Yeouido, Seoul

The unification of the Three Kingdoms by Silla in 676 CE led to the North-South States period, in which the much of the Korean peninsula was controlled by Unified Silla, while Balhae succeeded northern parts of Goguryeo. In Unified Silla, poetry and art was encouraged, and Buddhist culture flowered. Relationships between Korea and China remained good during this time. Unified Silla weakened under internal strife, and surrendered to Goryeo in 935. Balhae, Silla's neighbour to the north, was formed as a successor state to Goguryeo. During its height, Balhae controlled most of Manchuria and parts of Russia. It fell to the Khitan in 926 CE.

After the North-South Period, successor states fought for control during the Later Three Kingdoms period. The peninsula was soon united by Wang Geon of Goryeo. Like Silla, Goryeo was a highly cultural state and it created the Jikji in 1377, using the world's oldest movable metal printing press.

The Mongol invasions in the 13th century greatly weakened Goryeo. However, Goryeo continued to rule the Korean peninsula as a tributary ally to the Mongols. After the fall of the Mognolian Empire (by this time the Yuan Dynasty), Goryeo continued its rule. After severe political strife and continued invasions, Goryeo was soon replaced by the Joseon Dynasty in 1388 CE following a rebellion by General Yi Seong-gye.

General Yi named his country Joseon (reference to Gojoseon) and moved the capital to Seoul. The first 200 years of the Joseon Dynasty were very peaceful and saw the creation of hangul by King Sejong the Great in the 14 century CE and the rise and influence of Confucianism.

In the latter of the 16th century CE, Joseon was invaded by a newly unified Japan. During the Japanese invasions of Korea (1592-1598), centuries of peace had left the dynasty unprepared, and the lack of technology and poor leadership from the government and generals led to the destruction of much of the Korean peninsula. However, continued Korean dominance at sea led by Admiral Yi, the rise of local militias, and intervention of Ming China put Japan under great pressure, which soon retreated in 1598 CE.

Today, Admiral Yi is celebrated as one of Korea's foremost heroes and his turtle ships, used with great success against the Japanese, are considered the world's first ironclad warships, although lack of hard evidence of iron plating sparks much debate.

During the last years of the Joseon Dynasty, Korea's isolationist policy earned it the name the " Hermit Kingdom," primarily for protection against Western imperialism. In 1910 CE, Korea was annexed by Japan and despite widespread resistance, remained under occupation until the end of World War II in 1945 CE.

## After division



Bulguksa Temple built during the Silla period is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Royal march of the Joseon Dynasty at Gyeongbokgung





A sculpture at the Incheon Landing Operation Memorial Hall.

In the aftermath of World War II, Soviet Union and United States troops controlled the northern and southern halves of the country respectively. The two Cold War rivals established governments sympathetic to their own ideologies, leading to Korea's division into two political entities: North Korea and South Korea.

Despite the initial plan of a unified Korea in the 1943 Cairo Declaration, escalating Cold War antagonism eventually led to the establishment of two separate governments: the communist North and the capitalist South. In the North, a former anti-Japanese guerilla and communist activist, Kim Il Sung and in the South, freshly shipped from America, Syngman Rhee were installed as presidents. While North Koreans and South Koreans wanted a fully national election to choose a leader for the whole country, the division along Cold War faultlines prevented such an election.

On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded the South leading to the Korean War. The Soviet boycott of the United Nations at the time, and therefore, no veto, allowed the UN to intervene when it became apparent that the superior communist forces would easily take over the entire country. The Soviet Union and China backed North Korea, with the participation of millions of Chinese troops. After huge advances on both sides, the war eventually reached a stalemate. The 1953 armistice, never signed by South Korea, split the peninsula along the demilitarized zone near the original demarcation line. No peace treaty was ever signed and the two countries are still technically at war.

In 1960, a student uprising led to the resignation of the autocratic and corrupt President Syngman Rhee. A period of profound civil unrest and general political instability followed, broken by General Park Chung-hee's military coup (the "5.16 coup d'etat") against the weak and ineffectual government the next year. Park took over as president until his assassination in 1979, overseeing rapid export-led economic growth as well as severe political repression. Park is heavily criticized as a ruthless military dictator, although the Korean economy developed significantly during his tenure.

The years after Park's assassination were marked by, again, considerable political turmoil as the previously repressed opposition leaders all campaigned to run for president in the sudden political void. In 1980, there was a coup d'etat, by General Chun Doo-hwan against the transitional government of Choi Gyu Ha, the interim president and a former prime minister under Park. Chun assumed the presidency. His seizure of power triggered nationwide protest demanding democracy, in particular the city of Gwangju, in South Cholla province where Chun sent in special forces to violently suppress the city, in what is now known as the Gwangju Massacre. Until 1987, he and his government held Korea under despotic rule when Park Jong Chul - a student attending Seoul National University - was tortured to death. The Catholic Priests' Association for Justice revealed that Park was tortured, igniting huge demonstrations around the country. The demonstrations snowballed when another student from Yonsei University, Lee Han Yeol, was killed by a police-fired tear gas bomb while he was demonstrating against the military government. The period of resistance is called the Resistance of June when all joined the national movement. Eventually, Chun's party, the Democratic Justice Party, and its leader, Roh Tae Woo announced the 6.29 Declaration, which included the direct election of the president.

In 1988, Seoul hosted the 1988 Summer Olympics, cause of national celebrations in contrast to great turmoil of the past. In 1996, South Korea became a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and in 1997, suffered the Asian financial crisis but after swift recovery , the country was able to re-emerge and continue its growth towards a major economic power.

In June 2000, as part of South Korean president Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy of engagement, a North-South summit took place in North Korea's capital Pyongyang. That year, Kim received the Nobel Peace Prize "for his work for democracy and human rights in South Korea and in East Asia in general, and for peace and reconciliation with North Korea in particular"

In 2004, South Korea joined the "trillion dollar club" of world economies.



A part view of Southern Seoul.

## Foreign relations

In its foreign relations, South Korea is primarily concerned with North Korea and the neighboring countries of China, Japan, and Russia, as well as its main ally, the United States.



U.S. President George W. Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun in 2005 at the 17th APEC meeting.

### United States

The United States of America was the primary driver in the establishment and initial sustainment of the South Korean government before and after the Korean War. Since the 1990s, the two nations have often been at odds with regard to their policies towards North Korea, and over the rise of anti-American sentiment often expressed toward members of the U.S. military, sometimes violently. Nevertheless, most South Koreans are friendly towards the United States. Korea concluded a Free Trade Agreement agreement with the United States in April 2007.

### China

Korea usually had close relations with the Chinese since historic times. Korean independence fighters also worked with Chinese soldiers during the period of Japanese occupation. However, after World War II, the Chinese embraced communism while South Korea became a republic with the help of the United Nations. The Korean War and its

aftermath made the relationship between South Korea and China almost nonexistent. However, South Korea and China established formal diplomatic relations on August 24, 1992. The two countries sought to improve the economy and lifted the trade embargo. Korean and Chinese relations have expanded steadily since 1992.

### Japan

South Korea and Japan signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965. However South Korea has heavy Anti-Japanese sentiment due to a number of unsettled Korean-Japanese disputes, many of which stemmed from the period of Japanese occupation. During World War II, more than 100,000 Koreans were forced to serve in the Imperial Japanese Army. Longstanding issues such as Korea under Japanese rule against Korean civilians, the visits by Japanese politicians to the Yasukuni Shrine honoring Japanese soldiers killed at war, including class A war criminals like Hideki Tojo, the re-writing of Japanese textbooks to overlook Japanese aggression during World War II, and the territorial disputes over Liancourt Rocks continue to trouble Korean-Japanese relations. In response to then- Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni shrine, the President of South Korea Roh Moo-hyun suspended all summit talks between South Korea and Japan. At present, South Korea and Japan's political relations are unstable but thawing progressively.

## North Korea

Both North and South Korea continue to officially claim sovereignty over the entire peninsula. With longstanding animosity following the Korean War from 1950-1953, North Korea and South Korea signed an agreement to pursue peace on October 4, 2007.

On October 4th, 2007, Roh Moo-Hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il signed an 8-point peace agreement on issues of permanent peace, high-level talks, economic cooperation, renewal of train, highway and air travel, and a joint Olympic cheering squad.

Despite the Sunshine Policy and efforts at reconciliation, the progress was complicated by North Korean missile tests in 1993, 1998, and another in 2006.

## Other nations

South Korea maintains diplomatic relations with approximately 170 countries. The country has also been a member of the United Nations since 1991, when it joined at the same time as North Korea. On January 1, 2007, South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon assumed the post of UN Secretary-General. It has also developed links with Association of Southeast Asian Nations as both a member of "ASEAN Plus three" and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

South Korea started negotiations with the European Union about Free Trade Agreement, which is the second largest importer of Korean goods. The negotiations are ongoing.

## Military

The South Korean military is composed of the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA), Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN), Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF), and Republic of Korea Marine Corps (ROKMC) together with reserve forces . Many of these forces are concentrated near the border with North Korea, near and around the demilitarized zone. All South Korean males are constitutionally required to serve in the military, typically for a period of two years. However, there has been debates about shortening the length of the military services, and even dismissing the requirement itself. The government recently allowed some male students who earned university bachelor's degree to dismiss the military requirements to let them to further study and research on their fields.

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From time to time, South Korea has sent its troops overseas to assist American forces. It has participated in every major conflict the United States has been involved in the past 50 years. South Korea dispatched 320,000 troops to fight alongside American and South Vietnamese soldiers in the Vietnam War, with a peak strength of 50,000. Most recently, South Korea sent 3,300 troops in the form of the Zaytun Division to help re-building in northern Iraq, and is the largest contributor after the U.S. and Britain.

The United States has stationed a substantial contingent of troops in the ROK since the Korean War to defend South Korea in case of an attack from North Korea. There are also approximately 29,000 US soldiers stationed in Korea, most of them serving one year unaccompanied tours. The American Troops are stationed in bases, of which most are camps. They are considered camps not for their lack of buildings or support structure but in order to represent a lack of permanence for the ROK Government.

A still functioning UN Command controls all forces in South Korea, including the US forces and the entire Korean military.

(See List of United States Army installations in South Korea and USFK for more information on these military bases.)

Currently, its navy is working towards a blue-water navy. It has recently equipped its King Sejong the Great class destroyer with the Aegis Combat System. South Korea is the fifth country operating the Aegis Combat System .

## **Administrative divisions**

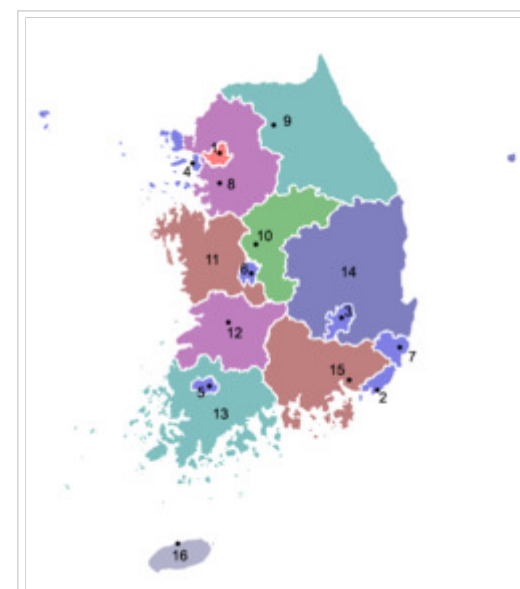
	Name <sup>a</sup>	Hangul	Hanja
<b>Special cities (<i>Teukbyeolsi</i><sup>a</sup>)</b>			
1	Seoul (National Capital)	서울특별시	서울特別市
<b>Metropolitan cities (<i>Gwangyeoksi</i><sup>a</sup>)</b>			
2	Busan	부산광역시	釜山廣域市
3	Daegu	대구광역시	大邱廣域市
4	Incheon	인천광역시	仁川廣域市
5	Gwangju	광주광역시	光州廣域市
6	Daejeon	대전광역시	大田廣域市
7	Ulsan	울산광역시	蔚山廣域市
<b>Provinces</b>			
8	Gyeonggi-do	경기도	京畿道
9	Gangwon-do	강원도	江原道
10	Chungcheongbuk-do	충청북도	忠清北道
11	Chungcheongnam-do	충청남도	忠清南道
12	Jeollabuk-do	전라북도	全羅北道
13	Jeollanam-do	전라남도	全羅南道
14	Gyeongsangbuk-do	경상북도	慶尙北道
15	Gyeongsangnam-do	경상남도	慶尙南道
<b>Special self-governing province (<i>Teukbyeoljachi-do</i><sup>a</sup>)</b>			
16	Jeju	제주특별자치도	濟州特別自治道

<sup>a</sup> Revised Romanization.

<sup>b</sup> .

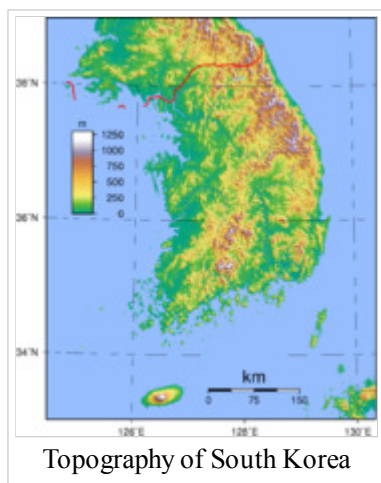


General map of South Korea.



Principal divisions of South Korea.

## Geography and climate



Topography of South Korea

South Korea occupies the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula, which extends some 680 miles (1,100 km) from the Asian mainland. This mountainous peninsula is flanked by the Yellow Sea to the west, and the Sea of Japan (East Sea) to the east. Its southern tip lies on the Korea Strait and the East China Sea. The country's total area is 38,462.49 square miles (99,617.39 km<sup>2</sup>).

South Korea can be divided into four general regions: an eastern region of high mountain ranges and narrow coastal plains; a western region of broad coastal plains, river basins, and rolling hills; a southwestern region of mountains and valleys; and a southeastern region dominated by the broad basin of the Nakdong River.

South Korea's land is mountainous, and most of it is not arable. Lowlands, located primarily in the west and southeast, constitute only 30% of the total land area.

About three thousand islands, mostly small and uninhabited, lie off the western and southern coasts of South Korea. Jeju Island is located about 100 kilometers (about 60 mi) off the southern coast of South Korea. It is the country's largest island, with an area of 1,845 square kilometers (712 sq mi). Jeju is also the site of South Korea's highest point: Halla-san, an extinct volcano, reaches 1,950 meters (6,398 ft) above sea level. Other islands of South Korea include Ulleungdo and Dokdo, which is South Korea's farthest claimed territory to the east and Marado, which is the ROK's southernmost point. However, Dokdo is one of many disputes with Japan. Ulleungdo is inhabited.

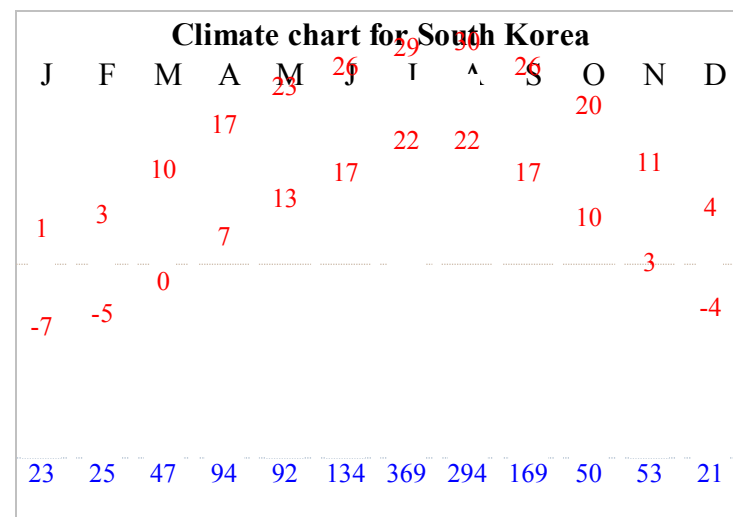
## Climate

The local climate is relatively temperate, with precipitation heavier in summer during a short rainy season called *jangma*, and winters that can be bitterly cold. In Seoul, the average January temperature range is  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $1^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $19^{\circ}\text{F}$  to  $33^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), and the average July temperature range is  $22^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $29^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $71^{\circ}\text{F}$  to  $83^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Winter temperatures are higher along the southern coast and considerably lower in the mountainous interior. Rainfall is concentrated in the summer months of June through September. The southern coast is subject to late summer typhoons that bring strong winds and heavy rains. The average annual precipitation varies from 1,370 millimeters (54 inches) in Seoul to 1,470 millimeters (58 inches) in Busan. There are occasional typhoons that bring high winds and floods. The government is concerned of the impact of global warming on the natural disasters.

## Environment

In urban areas there are problems associated with air pollution as well as water pollution from the

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discharge of sewage and industrial effluents. Cheonggyecheon is one of the examples of restoring the flow of the clean water in South Korea.

South Korean joined numerous environmental organizations: Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution ( MARPOL 73/78), Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, and Whaling.

## Economy



Yeouido, an important financial centre located in Seoul.

South Korea is a major international economic power; it has the eleventh largest economy in the world and the third largest in Asia, behind Japan and China. Its largest trading partner and export market today is China. South Korea has achieved rapid economic growth through exports of manufactured goods, and is one of the Four Asian Tigers. Major industries in South Korea today are automobiles, semiconductor, electronics, shipbuilding, and steel.

In the 1950s, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in Asia. This was partly due to the destruction of much of the country's infrastructure during the Korean War.

Following the military coup led by General Park Chung-hee in 1962, South Korea embarked on a series of ambitious five-year plans for economic development similar to the macro-economic schemes of the Soviet Union. Emphasis shifted to foreign trade with the normalization of relations with Japan in 1965, which

resulted in a boom in trade and investment. Rapid expansion, first into light and then heavy industries, so in 1973 Korea became the 34th wealthiest country in the world. Park's government plans for economic development greatly boosted the Korean economy.

This growth is often called the " Miracle on the Han River", the Han River being the main river that runs through the nation's capital and largest city, Seoul. In the 1980s and 1990s, growth continued as South Korea transformed itself from an exporter of mostly textiles and shoes into a major global producer of automobiles, electronics, shipbuilding, steel and, later, high-technology products such as digital monitors, mobile phones, and semiconductors.

The South Korean model of encouraging the growth of large, internationally competitive companies through easy financing and tax incentives led to the dominance of the family-controlled conglomerates. These companies, known as chaebol, flourished under the support of the Park regime. Some such as Hyundai, Samsung, LG and SK Company became global corporations. In 2004, South Korea joined in the trillion dollar club of world economies.

temperatures in °C • precipitation totals in mm

source: <http://www.climate-charts.com/Locations/k/KO47108.html>

**Imperial conversion**

[ Hide ]



Kia and Hyundai are two major automobile companies in South Korea.



World Trade Centre in Seoul.

Since the Asian financial crisis of 1997 the corporate landscape has changed considerably as a result of massive bankruptcies and government reforms. The crisis exposed longstanding weaknesses in South Korea's economy, including high debt-to-equity ratios, massive foreign borrowing, and an undisciplined financial sector. This led to two rounds of financial and industrial restructuring; once in 1997 and again following the collapse of Daewoo in 1999. Daewoo's collapse has been recorded as one of the largest bankruptcies in world history. By 2003, just over one-half of the 30 largest chaebol from 1995 remained.

Between 2003 and 2005, economic growth had slowed to about 4% per year. A downturn in consumer spending, attributed to massive personal credit card debt, was offset by rapid export growth, primarily to China. In 2005, the government proposed labor reform legislation and a corporate pension scheme to help make the labor market more flexible, and new real estate policies to cool property speculation. In 2006, South Korean economy has recovered its growth rate to 5.1%.

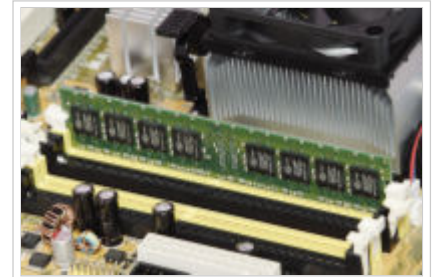
The South Korean economy is characterized by moderate inflation, low unemployment, an export surplus, and fairly equal distribution of income.

Today, there are several strong South Korean industries. South Korea's largest automaker, Hyundai Motor Company and its subsidiary Kia Motors are the 5th largest car group in the world. Korean carmakers are planning to increase their exports even more when Korea finishes its FTA with the European Union.

South Korea's shipbuilding industry is also the largest in the world. It became the largest after overtaking Japan in 2004. South Korean shipbuilding is efficient enough that a new \$80 million vessel is produced every four working days. In 2006, approximately one in every three new vessels was constructed in Korea. Hyundai Heavy Industries built ships totaling 10.6 million compensated gross tons (CGTs), or 34.6 percent, becoming the first nation to breach the 10 million CGT mark. Other Korean shipbuilding companies are Samsung Heavy Industries and Daewoo Marine Engineering & Construction.

Although South Korean shipmakers are leading in terms of ship orders and production, they are wary of Chinese shipmakers. China is planning to become the world's leader in shipbuilding by 2015. However, South Korean shipbuilders have advantage over Chinese counterparts in terms of advanced value-added shipbuilding technology.

## Transportation



South Korea is a world leader in the semiconductor industry.





Incheon International Airport

Transportation in South Korea is provided by an extensive network of railways, highways, bus routes, ferry services, and air routes. Buses, taxis, subways, and trains provide comfortable and cheap methods of travel around South Korea. Major cities have subway systems, including the popular Seoul Subway. Korail commuter lines are already linked with Seoul's subway system and several commuter lines connected with Busan and Daegu subway systems are under construction. They have intercity and intracity bus systems. Metropolitan Cities have express bus terminals.

Highways in South Korea are classified into highways (expressways/motorways), national highways, and various classifications below the national level. Korea Highway Corporation operates the toll highways and service amenities en route. South Korea has about 3,000 kilometers of national highways.

Korail provides frequent train service to all major South Korean cities. Two rail lines, Gyeongui and Donghae Bukbu Line, to North Korea are now being reconnected. The Korean high-speed railway system, KTX, provides high-speed service along Gyeongbu and Honam Line. KTX had been built with France's technological cooperation, but government intentionally had made it non-public.

The main international airport is Incheon International Airport. South Korea has eight international airports and seven domestic airports. South Korea's major international air carriers are Korean Air and Asiana Airlines. About 71 international passenger and cargo airlines operate frequent flight services between Korea and all over the world.

## Science and technology

South Korea is among the world's most technologically advanced and digitally-connected countries; it has the third most broadband Internet users among the OECD countries and is a global leader in electronics, digital displays, semiconductor devices, and mobile phones.

## Modern Industries



A KTX train stationed at Songjeong-ri station.



Posteel tower, the headquarter of POSCO.

South Korea also leads the world in the shipbuilding industry, headed by chaebols such as the Hyundai Heavy Industries, Samsung Heavy Industry and POSCO. South Korea also exports radioactive isotope production equipment for medical and industrial use to countries such as Russia, Japan, Turkey and others.

### Space programs

Korea has a full-fledged space partnership with Russia and has launched the Arirang-1 and Arirang-2 which both have surveillance cameras equipped. Naro Space Centre, the first spaceport of the Republic of Korea, is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2007 or early 2008 at Goheung County, South Jeolla. Korea Space Centre is expected to send a Korea Space Launch Vehicle into space in 2008. The spaceport will be controlled by the state-run Korea Aerospace Research Institute and will contain features necessary for spaceflight operation having a launch tower, a control tower, rocket assembly, test facilities and space simulators.

### Robotics

In robotics, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) competes with the Japanese company Honda with its humanoid robot HUBO. Honda's ASIMO and KAIST's HUBO lines are the two of very few humanoid robots that can walk. The first HUBO was developed within a span of 3 years and cost 1 million USD.

### Energy

In renewable energy, South Korean scientists at the Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology in cooperation with the University of California, Santa Barbara successfully developed an organic photovoltaic power cell with energy efficiency of 6.5 percent.

### Education



KAIST's robot, HUBO

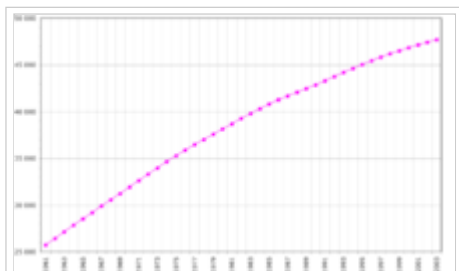


Science Complex square in Korea University.

Education in South Korea is regarded essential to success and competition is consequently very tense. A centralized administration in South Korea oversees the process for the education of children from kindergarten to third grade high school. Mathematics, science, Korean, social studies, and English are generally considered to be the most important subjects and are considered compulsory. South Korea was the first country in the world to provide high-speed internet access from every primary, junior, and high school. The Programme for International Student Assessment, coordinated by the OECD, currently ranks South Korea's education as the 11th best in the world, being significantly higher than the OECD average.

The school year is divided into two semesters. The first begins in the beginning of March and ends in mid-July; the second begins in late August and ends in mid-February. The schedules are not rigidly standardized, however, and can vary from school to school.

## Demographics



Population growth trend in South Korea

Most South Koreans live in urban areas, due to rapid migration from the countryside during the country's rapid economic expansion in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The capital city of Seoul is also the country's largest city and chief industrial centre. It had 10.3 million inhabitants in 2006, making Seoul one of the most populated single cities in the world. Other major cities include Busan (3.65 million), Incheon (2.63 million), Daegu (2.53 million), Daejeon (1.46 million), Gwangju (1.41 million) and Ulsan (1.10 million).

The population has also been shaped by international migration. Following the division of the Korean peninsula after World War II, about four million people from North Korea crossed the border to South Korea. This trend of net entry reversed over the next forty years due to emigration, especially to the United States and Canada. However, South Korea's burgeoning economy and democracy in the early and mid-1990s slowed the high emigration rates typical of the previous decades. The current population of South Korea is roughly 48,850,000.

Although small, the percentage of non-Koreans has been increasing. Officially, as of the summer of 2007, there are just over 1 million foreigners living in Korea. That number includes foreign residents, students, tourists and illegal aliens. Among them, 104,749 people were married to Koreans, 404,051 were working here and 225,273 were illegal aliens.

Korean farmers have a hard time finding a wife because of their location and occupation, few young women want this life style. Farmers are forced to look abroad to find their wife, most from the much poorer Southeast Asia. For the year 2006, 41% of the marriages amongst the farmers were to foreign nationals.

There are 31,000 U.S. military personnel.

As of 2005, approximately 22 million or 46.5% of the South Korean population express no religious preference. Of the



Yoido Full Gospel Church

remainder, 13.7 million are Christian (of which 8.6 million profess to be Protestants and 5.1 million to be Catholics), 10.7 million are Buddhist, and less than half a million belong to various minor religions including Jeungsando and Wonbuddhism. The largest Christian church in South Korea, Yoido Full Gospel Church, is located in Seoul and has approximately 780,000 members (2003 estimate). Including Yoido Full Gospel, 11 of the world's 12 largest churches are located in Seoul (see Korean Christianity). South Korea is also the second largest missionary sending nation on earth, after the U.S. Islam in Korea is estimated to be at 45,000 in addition to some 100,000 foreign workers from Muslim countries. Islam is also the fastest growing religion in country.

## Culture

South Korea shares its traditional culture with North Korea, but the two Koreas have developed distinct contemporary forms of culture since the peninsula was divided in 1945. The South Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism actively encourages the traditional arts, as well as modern forms, through funding and education programs.

Korean forms of metalwork, sculpture, painting, and ceramics flourished throughout the Korean peninsula. In modern times, Western and particularly the US influences have been strongest. In the aftermath of Japanese occupation all Japanese cultural exports were banned from Korea until 1999. However, trading between the two countries has grown, although there is still strong anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea.

Recently, Korean pop culture has become popular in Asia and beyond, earning the name *Hallyu* or "Korean Wave." In Japan, Korean singers like BoA and television drama like Winter Sonata have found success. Recent Korean films such as *Old boy* and *Oasis* have also received international acclaim.



A parade of Hi Seoul Festival



SBS headquarter in Mokdong,  
Seoul

The contemporary culture of South Korea is heavily dominated by technology, including feature-rich cell phones and pervasive online games. South Korea today has the highest penetration of high-speed internet access to households in the world. In South Korea, computer games take on a sport-like presentation. The professional leagues are televised with announcers, professional players and major corporate sponsors.

South Korea retains centuries-old customs and traditions, such as its cuisine, ancestor worship, blood line and some Confucianism ideals. Foods like Steamed Rice(밥), Bulgogi (불고기, Korean style beef BBQ), Gimbap (김밥, rice roll wrapped in seaweed), Mandu (만두, dumplings), Doenjang jjigae (된장찌개, fermented soybean paste), Japchae (잡채, Boiled sweet potato starch noodles mixed with fried vegetables), Tteokbokki (떡볶이, a broiled dish made with sliced rice cake, seasoned beef, fish cakes and vegetables), Bibimbap (비빔밥, mixed rice with vegetables, beef, egg and chili pepper paste) and Kimchi (김치, fermented vegetables) are staples of the Korean diet.

## Sports



Taekwondo sparring match.

Taekwondo, a popular martial art, originated in Korea. In the 1950's and 60's, modern rules were standardized, and Taekwondo became an official Olympic sport in 2000. Taekwondo in the military is an integral part in the Korean land forces. Other Korean martial arts include subak and taekkyeon.

Baseball was first introduced to Korea in 1905 and has since become the most popular spectator sport in South Korea. The first South Korean professional sports league was the Korea Baseball Association, established in 1982. During the 2006 World Baseball Classic, South Korea reached the semi-finals.

Other known sports in South Korea include basketball, football, golf, tennis and ice hockey. Women's golf is especially strong, with 45 South Koreans playing in the U.S. LPGA Tour, including Hall of Famer Se Ri Pak.

Starcraft is also a popular online game in South Korea. Its fanbase exceeds five million, and has two Korean-based channels dedicated to its broadcast. Professional Starcraft player Lim Yo-Hwan ( SlayerS\_`BoxeR` ) earned over USD \$300,000 during the peak of his career and owns the record for the most DVD's sold in Korea, beating out the entire Matrix trilogy.

In 1988, South Korea hosted the Summer Olympics in Seoul for the first time. South Korea's Olympic teams have performed strongly in archery, shooting, table tennis, short track speed skating, handball, freestyle wrestling, judo, taekwondo, and football. South Korea has also hosted the Asian Games in 1986 and 2002. Recently, Pyeongchang County was a finalist for the 2014 Winter Olympics, but lost to Sochi, Russia.

The 2002 FIFA World Cup was jointly hosted by South Korea and Japan, and South Korea became the first Asian team to reach the semi-finals. The Korea Republic national football team, also known as the " Taeguk Warriors", played in the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany for their sixth consecutive World Cup.

In 2007, South Korea hosted a cycling competition called Tour de Korea. It was the first international cycling competition in South Korea in 10 years. In 2010 South Korea will host their first Formula 1 race to be staged at Korean International Circuit in Yeongam County about 240 miles (390 km) south of Seoul.



Various kimchi and banchan



Korean Pork BBQ, called Pork Galbi

## International rankings

Organization	Title	Ranking
OECD	Annual work hours	1 out of 27
Economist Intelligence Unit	IT Industry Competitiveness Index (2007)	3 out of 64
OICA	Automobile Production	5 out of 53
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs	UN E-Government Survey 2008	6 out of 192
CIA World Factbook	Gross Domestic Product (PPP)	11 out of 227
World Economic Forum	Global Competitiveness	11 out of 131
International Monetary Fund/ World Bank	Gross Domestic Product (nominal)	12 out of 183
World Bank	Ease of Doing Business	15 out of 177
United Nations Development Program	Human Development Index	26 out of 177
The Economist	Global Peace Rating	29 out of 121
Economist Intelligence Unit	Quality of Life	30 out of 155
Heritage Foundation/ <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	Index of Economic Freedom	36 out of 157
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide press freedom index	39 out of 169
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index	42 out of 180
Freedom House	Civil Liberties and Political Rights	Top tier country†

†Complete Civil and Political freedom

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# Sri Lanka

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries  
SOS Children works in Sri Lanka. For more information see SOS Children in Sri Lanka

**Sri Lanka**, officially the **Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka** ( Sinhalese: ශ්‍රී ලංකා, Tamil: இலங்கை; known as **Ceylon** before 1972) is an island nation in South Asia, located about 31 kilometres (19.3 mi) off the southern coast of India. Popularly referred to as the *Pearl of the Indian Ocean*, it is home to around twenty million people.

Because of its location in the path of major sea routes, Sri Lanka is a strategic naval link between West Asia and South East Asia, and has been a centre of Buddhist religion and culture from ancient times. Today, the country is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation, with nearly a third of the population following faiths other than Buddhism, notably Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The Sinhalese community forms the majority of the population, with Tamils, who are concentrated in the north and east of the island, forming the largest ethnic minority. Other communities include the Muslim Moors and Malays and the Burghers.

Famous for the production and export of tea, coffee, rubber and coconuts, Sri Lanka boasts a progressive and modern industrial economy and the highest per capita income in South Asia. The natural beauty of Sri Lanka's tropical forests, beaches and landscape, as well as its rich cultural heritage, make it a world famous tourist destination.

After over two thousand years of rule by local kingdoms, parts of Sri Lanka were colonized by Portugal and the Netherlands beginning in the 16th century, before the control of the entire country was ceded to the British Empire in 1815. During World War II, Sri Lanka served as an important base for Allied forces in the fight against the Japanese Empire. A nationalist political movement arose in the country in the early 20th century with the aim of obtaining political independence, which was eventually granted by the British after peaceful negotiations in 1948.

## Name

In ancient times, Sri Lanka was known by a variety of names: ancient Greek geographers called it

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**This article contains Indic text.**

Without rendering support, you may see question marks, boxes or other symbols instead of Indic characters; or irregular vowel positioning and a lack of conjuncts.

ශ්‍රී ලංකා ප්‍රජාතාන්ත්‍රික සමාජවාදී ජනරජය  
இலங்கை ஜனநாயக சமத்துவ குடியரசு

**Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**



Flag

Image:COA of Sri Lanka.svg

Coat of arms

**Anthem:** " Sri Lanka Matha"  
Music , Singing

*Taprobane* and Arabs referred to it as *Serendib* (the origin of the word "serendipity"). *Ceilão* was the name given to Sri Lanka by the Portuguese when they arrived on the island in 1505, which was transliterated into English as *Ceylon*. In 1972, the official name of the country was changed to "Free, Sovereign and Independent Republic of Sri Lanka" (in Sinhala ශ්‍රී ලංකා *śrī laṃkā*, IPA: [ˈʃriːˈlaŋkaː]); whereas the island itself is referred to as ලංකාව *laṃkāva*, IPA: [laŋˈkaːva], in Tamil இலங்கை *ilāṅkai*, iˈlaŋgai). In 1978 it was changed to "Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka".

The current name is derived from Sanskrit word *laṃkā*, meaning "resplendent land", which was also the name of the island as described in the ancient Indian epics Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

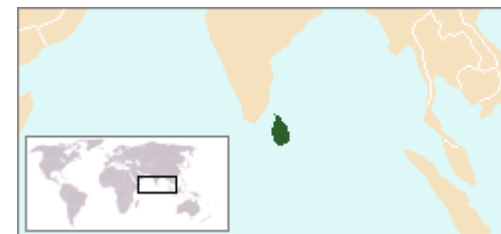
## History

Paleolithic human settlements have been discovered at excavations in several cave sites in the Western Plains region and the South-western face of the Central Hills region. Anthropologists believe that some discovered burial rites and certain decorative artifacts exhibit similarities between the first inhabitants of the island and the early inhabitants of Southern India. Recent bioanthropological studies have however dismissed these links, and have placed the origin of the people to the northern parts of India. One of the first written references to the island is found in the Indian epic Ramayana, which described the emperor Ravana as monarch of the powerful kingdom of *Lanka*, which was created by the divine sculptor Vishwakarma for Kubera, the treasurer of the Gods. English historian James Emerson Tennent also theorized Galle, a southern city in Sri Lanka, was the ancient seaport of Tarshish from which King Solomon is said to have drawn ivory, peacocks and other valuables. The main written accounts of the country's history are the Buddhist chronicles of Mahavamsa and Dipavamsa.

The earliest-known inhabitants of the island now known as Sri Lanka were probably the ancestors of the Wanniyala-Aetto people, also known as *Veddahs* and numbering roughly 3,000. Linguistic analysis has found a correlation of the Sinhalese language with the languages of the Sindh and Gujarat, although most historians believe that the Sinhala community emerged well after the assimilation of various ethnic groups. From the ancient period date some remarkable archaeological sites including the ruins of Sigiriya, the so-called "Fortress in the Sky", and huge public works. Among the latter are large "tanks" or reservoirs, important for conserving water in a climate that alternates rainy seasons with dry times, and

### History of Sri Lanka series

Prehistory of Sri Lanka  
 Early Sri Lankan History  
 Kings of Sri Lanka  
 Colonial era  
 Sri Lankan independence movement  
 Independence of Sri Lanka  
 Sri Lankan Civil War



<b>Capital</b>	Sri Jayawardenapura-Kotte
<b>Largest city</b>	Colombo
<b>Official languages</b>	Sinhala, Tamil
<b>Government</b>	Democratic Socialist Republic
<span> </span> - President	Mahinda Rajapaksa
<span> </span> - Prime Minister	Ratnasiri Wickremanayake
<b>Independence</b>	from the United Kingdom
<span> </span> - Declared	February 4, 1948
<span> </span> - Republic	May 22, 1972
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	65,610 km <sup>2</sup> ( 122nd) 25,332 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	4.4
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - 2005 estimate	19,668,000 ( 52nd)
<span> </span> - 2001 census	18,732,255
<span> </span> - Density	310/km <sup>2</sup> ( 35th) 818/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$86.72 billion ( 61st)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$4,600 ( 111th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2006 estimate



elaborate aqueducts, some with a slope as finely calibrated as one inch to the mile. Ancient Sri Lanka was also the first in the world to have established a dedicated hospital in Mihintale in the 4th century BCE. Ancient Sri Lanka was also the world's leading exporter of cinnamon, which was exported to Egypt as early as 1400 BCE. Sri Lanka was also the first Asian nation to have a female ruler in Queen Anula (47–42 BC)

Since ancient times Sri Lanka was ruled by monarchs, most notably of the Sinha royal dynasty that lasted over 2000 years. The island was also infrequently invaded by South Indian kingdoms and parts of the island were ruled intermittently by the Chola dynasty, the Pandya dynasty, the Chera dynasty and the Pallava dynasty. The island was also invaded by the kingdoms of Kalinga (modern Orissa) and those from the Malay Peninsula. Buddhism arrived from India in the 3rd century BCE, brought by Bhikkhu Mahinda, who is believed to have been the son of Mauryan emperor Ashoka. Mahinda's mission won over the Sinhalese monarch Devanampiyatissa of Mihintale, who embraced the faith and propagated it throughout the Sinhalese population. The Buddhist kingdoms of Sri Lanka would maintain a large number of Buddhist schools and monasteries, and support the propagation of Buddhism into Southeast Asia.

Sri Lanka had always been an important port and trading post in the ancient world, and was increasingly frequented by merchant ships from the Middle East, Persia, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia. The islands were known to the first European explorers of South Asia and settled by many groups of Arab and Malay merchants. A Portuguese colonial mission arrived on the island in 1505 headed by the Lourenço de Almeida the son of Francisco de Almeida. At that point the island consisted of three kingdoms, namely Kandy in the central hills, Kotte at the Western coast, and Yarlpanam (Anglicised Jaffna) in the north. The Dutch arrived in the 17th century. Although much of the island came under the domain of European powers, the interior, hilly region of the island remained independent, with its capital in Kandy. The British East India Company established control of the island in 1796, declaring it a crown colony in 1802, although the island would not be officially connected with British India. The fall of the kingdom of Kandy in 1815 unified the island under British rule.

European colonists established a series of tea, cinnamon, rubber, sugar, coffee and indigo plantations. The British also brought a large number of indentured workers from Tamil Nadu to work in the plantation economy. The city of Colombo was established as the administrative centre, and the British established modern schools, colleges, roads and churches that brought Western-style education and culture to the native people. Increasing grievances over the denial of civil rights, mistreatment and abuse of natives by colonial authorities gave rise to a struggle for independence in the 1930s, when the Youth Leagues opposed the "Ministers' Memorandum," which asked the colonial authority to increase the powers of the board of ministers without granting popular representation or civil freedoms. Buddhist scholars and the Teetotalist Movement also played a vital role in this time. During World War II, the island served as an important Allied military base. A large segment of the British and American fleet were deployed on the island, as were tens of thousands of soldiers committed to the war against Japan in

- Total	\$26.794 billion ( 78th)
- Per capita	\$1,355 ( 117th)
<b>Gini</b> (1999–00)	33.2 (medium)
<b>HDI</b> (2007)	▼ 0.743 (medium) ( 99th)
<b>Currency</b>	Sri Lankan rupee ( LKR)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+5:30)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.lk
<b>Calling code</b>	+94



Sri Lankan coin, 1st century CE.



Sigiriya Rock Fortress.

Southeast Asia.

Following the war, popular pressure for independence intensified. On February 4, 1948 the country won its independence as the Commonwealth of Ceylon. Don Stephen Senanayake became the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. On July 21, 1960 Sirimavo Bandaranaike took office as prime minister, and became the first female head of government in post-colonial Asia and the first female prime minister in the world. In 1972, the country became a republic within the Commonwealth, and the name was changed to Sri Lanka. The island enjoyed good relations with the United Kingdom and had the British Royal Navy stationed at Trincomalee.

Since 1983, there has been on-and-off civil war, predominantly between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers), a separatist militant organization who fight to create an independent state named Tamil Eelam in the North and East of the island.

## Geography and climate



Main cities in Sri Lanka.

The island of Sri Lanka lies in the Indian Ocean, to the southwest of the Bay of Bengal and to the southeast of the Arabian Sea. It is separated from the Indian subcontinent by the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait. According to Hindu mythology, a land bridge to the Indian mainland, known as Rama's Bridge, was constructed during the time of Rama by the vanara architect Nala. Often referred to as Adam's Bridge, it now amounts to only a chain of limestone shoals remaining above sea level. According to colonial British reports, this is a natural causeway which was formerly complete, but was breached by a violent storm in 1480. The width of the Palk Strait is small enough for the coast of Sri Lanka to be visible from the furthest point near the Indian town of Rameswaram. The tear drop shaped island consists mostly of flat-to-rolling coastal plains, with mountains rising only in the south-central part. Amongst these are Sri Pada (Adams Peak) and the highest point Pidurutalagala, at 2,524 meters (8,281 ft). The Mahaweli ganga (Mahaweli river) and other major rivers provide fresh water to the population.

Sri Lanka's climate can be described as tropical, and quite hot. Its position between 5 and 10 north latitude endows the country with a warm climate, moderated by ocean winds and considerable moisture. The mean temperature ranges from a low of 16 °C (61 °F) in Nuwara Eliya in the Central Highlands (where frost may occur for several days in the winter) to a high of 32 °C (90 °F) in Trincomalee on the northeast coast (where temperatures may reach 38 °C (100 °F)). The average yearly temperature for the country as a whole ranges from 28° to 30 °C (82–86 °F). Day and night temperatures may vary by 4 to 7 °C (7–13 °F). In January, the coolest month, many people wear coats and sweaters in the highlands and elsewhere. May, the hottest period, precedes the summer monsoon rains. The rainfall pattern is influenced by the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal, which encounter the slopes of the Central Highlands, they unload heavy rains on the mountain slopes and the southwestern sector of the island. Some of the windward slopes receive up to 2,500 millimetres (98 in) of rain per month, but the leeward slopes in the east and northeast receive little rain. Periodic squalls occur and sometimes tropical cyclones bring overcast skies and rains to the southwest, northeast, and eastern parts of the island. Between December to March, monsoon winds come from the northeast, bringing moisture from the Bay of Bengal. Humidity is typically higher in the southwest and mountainous areas and depends on the seasonal patterns of rainfall. At Colombo, for example, daytime humidity stays above 70% all year, rising to almost 90 percent during the monsoon season in June. Anuradhapura experiences a daytime low of 60% during the monsoon month of March, but a high of 79% during the November and December rains. In the highlands, Kandy's daytime humidity usually ranges between 70 and 79%.

## Flora and fauna

The mountains and the southwestern part of the country, known as the "wet zone," receive ample rainfall (an annual average of 2500 millimetres). Most of the southeast, east, and northern parts of the country comprise the "dry zone," which receives between 1200 and 1900 mm (47–75 in) of rain annually. Much of the rain in these areas falls from October to January; during the rest of the year there is very little precipitation, and all living creatures must conserve precious moisture. The arid northwest and southeast coasts receive the least amount of rain — 600 to 1200 mm (24–47 in) per year — However, though many say that there are no really dry areas in Sri Lanka, there are many pockets of very dry and abandoned areas where there is little to no rainwater. Varieties of flowering acacias are well adapted to the arid conditions and flourish on the Jaffna Peninsula. Among the trees of the dry-land forests are some valuable species, such as satinwood, ebony, ironwood, and mahogany and teak. In the wet zone, the dominant vegetation of the lowlands is a tropical evergreen forest, with tall trees, broad foliage, and a dense undergrowth of vines and creepers.

Subtropical evergreen forests resembling those of temperate climates flourish in the higher altitudes. Forests at one time covered nearly the entire island, but by the late 20th century lands classified as forests and forest reserves covered around one-third of the land. As the area covered by forests declined, thereby threatening various species of wildlife, Sri Lanka became the first country in the world to establish a wildlife sanctuary. Among them, the Ruhunu National Park in the southeast protects herds of elephant, deer, and peacocks, and the Wilpattu National Park in the northwest preserves the habitats of many water birds, such as storks, pelicans, ibis, and spoonbills. During the Mahaweli Ganga Program of the 1970s and 1980s in northern Sri Lanka, the government set aside four



Topographical map of Sri Lanka.



Mountain forests in Sri Lanka.

areas of land totaling 1,900 km<sup>2</sup> (730 sq mi) as national parks. The island has three biosphere reserves, Hurulu, Sinharaja, and the Kanneliya-Dediyagala-Nakiyadeniya.

The national flower of Sri Lanka is Nil Manel (*Nymphaea stellularia*), the national tree is Na (*Mesua nagassarium*) and the national bird is the Sri Lanka Junglefowl, which is endemic to the country.

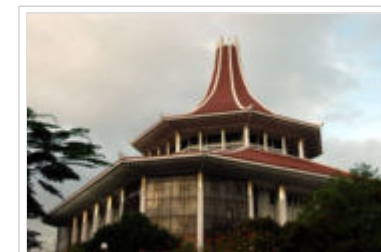
## Government and politics

The Constitution of Sri Lanka establishes a democratic, socialist republic in Sri Lanka, which is also a unitary state. The government is a mixture of the presidential system and the parliamentary system. The President of Sri Lanka is the head of state, the commander in chief of the armed forces, as well as head of government, and is popularly elected for a six-year term. In the exercise of duties, the President is responsible to the Parliament of Sri Lanka, which is a unicameral 225-member legislature. The President appoints and heads a cabinet of ministers composed of elected members of parliament. The President's deputy is the Prime Minister, who leads the ruling party in parliament and shares many executive responsibilities, mainly in domestic affairs.

Members of parliament are elected by universal (adult) suffrage based on a modified proportional representation system by district to a six-year term. The primary modification is that, the party that receives the largest number of valid votes in each constituency gains a unique "bonus seat." The president may summon, suspend, or end a legislative session and dissolve Parliament any time after it has served for one year. The parliament reserves the power to make all laws. On July 1, 1960 the people of Sri Lanka elected the first-ever female head of government in Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Her daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga served multiple terms as prime minister and as president from 1999 to 2005. The current president and prime minister, both of whom took office on November 21, 2005, are Mahinda Rajapaksa and Ratnasiri Wickremanayake respectively.

Sri Lanka has enjoyed the longest period of continuous multi-party democracy with universal suffrage in a non-western country (since 1931). Politics in Sri Lanka are controlled by rival coalitions led by the left-wing Sri Lanka Freedom Party, headed by President Rajapaksa, the comparatively right-wing United National Party led by former prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Marxist-Nationalist JVP. There are also many smaller Buddhist, socialist and Tamil nationalist political parties that oppose the separatism of the LTTE but demand regional autonomy and increased civil rights. Since 1948, Sri Lanka has been a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations. It is also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Colombo Plan, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Through the Cold War-era, Sri Lanka followed a foreign policy of non-alignment but has remained closer to the United States and Western Europe. The military of Sri Lanka comprises the Sri Lankan Army, the Sri Lankan Navy and the Sri Lankan Air Force. These are administered by the Ministry of Defence. Since the 1980s, the army has led the government response against the Marxist militants of the JVP and now the LTTE militant forces. Sri Lanka receives considerable military assistance from Pakistan and China .

Sri Lanka is considered one of the "world's most politically unstable countries" by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank . The Economist labels Sri Lanka a "flawed democracy" in its 2006 rankings and Foreign Policy ranks Sri Lanka 25th (Alert Category) in its Failed States Index for 2007. However, Sri Lanka, according to the US State Department in 2005, was classified a "stable democracy" amidst a ceasefire period of the the long running civil war .

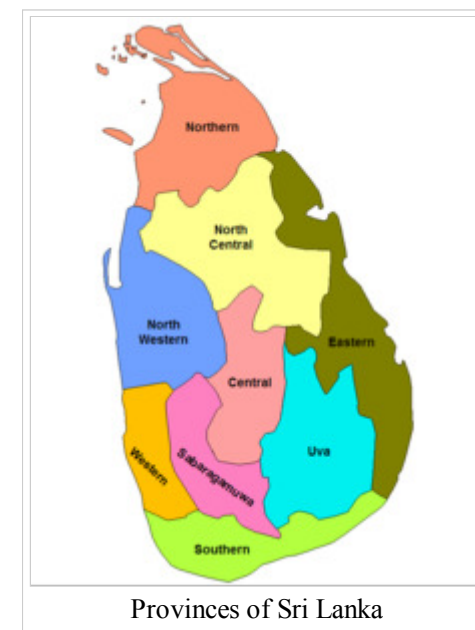


The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, Colombo.

## Provinces and districts

Sri Lanka is divided into 9 provinces and 25 districts. Each province is administered by a directly-elected provincial council:

	Province	Capital	Districts
1	Central	Kandy	Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya
2	North Central	Anuradhapura	Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa
3	Northern	Jaffna	Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullativu, Alambil
4	Eastern	Trincomalee	Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee
5	North Western	Kurunegala	Kurunagala, Puttalam
6	Southern	Galle	Galle, Hambanthota, Mathara
7	Uva	Badulla	Badulla, Monaragala
8	Sabaragamuwa	Ratnapura	Kegalle, Rathnapura
9	Western	Colombo	Colombo, Gampaha, Kaluthara



The districts are further subdivided into divisional secretariats, and these in turn to *Grama Sevaka* divisions.

## Economy

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sri Lanka became a plantation economy, famous for its production and export of cinnamon, rubber and Ceylon tea, which remains a trademark national export. The development of modern ports under British rule raised the strategic importance of the island as a centre of trade. During World War II, the island hosted important military installations and Allied forces. However, the plantation economy aggravated poverty and economic inequality. From 1948 to 1977 socialism strongly influenced the government's economic policies. Colonial plantations were dismantled, industries were nationalised and a welfare state established. While the standard of living and literacy improved significantly, the nation's economy suffered from inefficiency, slow growth and lack of foreign investment.

From 1977 the UNP government began incorporating privatisation, deregulation and promotion of private enterprise. While the production and export of tea, rubber, coffee, sugar and other agricultural commodities remains important, the nation has moved steadily towards an industrialised economy with the development of food processing, textiles, telecommunications and finance. By 1996 plantation crops made up only 20% of export, and further declined to 16.8% in 2005 (compared with 93% in 1970), while textiles and garments have reached 63%. The GDP grew at an average annual rate of 5.5% during the early 1990s, until a drought and a deteriorating security situation lowered growth to 3.8% in 1996. The economy rebounded in 1997-2000, with average growth of 5.3%. The year of 2001 saw the first recession in the country's history, as a result of power shortages, budgetary problems, the global slowdown, and continuing civil strife. Signs of recovery appeared after the 2002 ceasefire. The Colombo Stock Exchange reported the highest growth in the world for 2003, and today Sri Lanka has the highest per capita income in South Asia.

In April 2004, there was a sharp reversal in economic policy after the government headed by Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party was defeated by a coalition made up of Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the leftist-nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna called the United People's Freedom Alliance. The new government stopped the privatization of state enterprises and reforms of state utilities such as power and petroleum, and embarked on a subsidy program called the Rata Perata economic program. Its main theme to support the rural and suburban SMEs and protect the domestic economy from external influences, such as oil prices, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

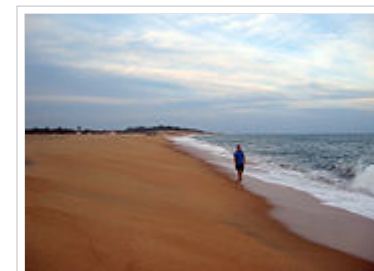
Sri Lanka, with an income per head of \$1,350, still lags behind some of its neighbors including Maldives and Mauritius but is ahead of its giant neighbour India. Its economy grew by an average of 5% during the 1990s during the 'War for Peace' era. According to the Sri Lankan central bank statistics, the economy was estimated to have grown by 7% last year, although inflation had reached 20%. It should be noted that Sri Lanka's central bank statistics have been called into question over allegations of political interference and institutional decay. Parts of Sri Lanka, particularly the South and East coast were devastated by the 2004 Asian Tsunami. The economy was briefly buoyed by influx of foreign aid and tourists, but this was disrupted with the reemergence of the civil war resulting in increased lawlessness in the country and a sharp decline in tourism.



The World Trade Centre in Colombo.



Sri Lanka's most well-known export: Ceylon tea (black)



Arugam Point at the Arugam Bay beach a tourist attractive place.

## Transport

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Most Sri Lankan cities and towns are connected by the Sri Lanka Railways, the state-run national railway operator. The first railway line was inaugurated on April 26, 1867, linking Colombo with Kandy. The total length of Sri Lankan roads exceeds 11,000 kilometres (6,840 mi), with a vast majority of them being paved. The government has launched several highway projects to bolster the economy and national transport system, including the Colombo-Katunayake Expressway, the Colombo-Kandy (Kadugannawa) Expressway, the Colombo-Padeniya Expressway and the Outer Circular Highway to ease Colombo's traffic congestion. There are also plans to build a major bridge connecting Jaffna to the Indian city of Chennai.

The Ceylon Transport Board is the state-run agency responsible for operating public bus services across the island. Sri Lanka also maintains 430 kilometres (270 mi) of inland waterways. It has three deep-water ports at Colombo, Trincomalee and Galle. There is also a smaller, shallower harbour at Kankasanturai, north of Jaffna. There are twelve paved airports and two unpaved airstrips in the country. SriLankan Airlines is the official national carrier, partly owned and operated by Emirates Airline. It was voted the best airline in South Asia by Skytrax. SriLankan Air Taxi is the smaller, domestic arm of the national carrier, while Expo Aviation and Lankair are private airline companies. The Bandaranaike International Airport is the country's only international airport, located in Katunayaka, 22 kilometres (14 mi) north of Colombo.



Colombo-Galle Face Green

## Military

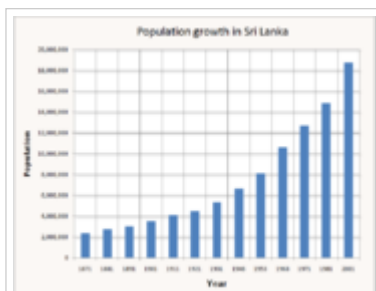
Sri Lankan soldiers have taken part in many wars throughout its history, including the Boer War and both World Wars (under the command of the British at the time). In the course of the civil war, the military has been transformed from a ceremonial force to a modern army. Since 2004, Sri Lankan troops have been a part of the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti, which is the country's first major overseas mission.

The military of Sri Lanka is organized into three branches: Army, Navy, and Air Force. Since independence, its primary mission has been the targeting of armed groups within the country, most notably engaging in a 25 year long war with the LTTE. The LTTE is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by 32 countries ( see list).

## Human rights

Human Rights situation in Sri Lanka has come under criticism by human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as the United States Department of State and the European Union, have expressed concern about the state of **human rights in Sri Lanka**. Both the government of **Sri Lanka** and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are accused of violating human rights. In its 2007 report, however, they stated that "escalating political killings, child recruitment, abductions and armed clashes created a climate of fear in the east, spreading to the north by the end of the year", whilst also outlining concerns with violence against women, the death penalty and "numerous reports of torture in police custody". However, the report also stated that the ceasefire between government and LTTE remained in place despite numerous violations.

## Demographics



Population growth in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is the 53rd most populated nation in the world, with an annual population growth rate of 0.79%. Sri Lanka has a birth rate of 15.63 births per 1,000 people and a death rate of 6.49 deaths per 1,000 people. Population density is the greatest in western Sri Lanka, especially in and around Colombo. There is a small population on the island of the Wanniyala-Aetto people, also known as *Veddahs*. These are believed to be the oldest and indigenous ethnic group to inhabit the island. The Sinhalese people form the largest ethnic group in the nation, composing approximately 81.9% of the total population. Tamils are concentrated in the North, East, Central and Western provinces of the country. Tamils who were brought as indentured labourers from India by British colonists to work on estate plantations, nearly 50% of whom were repatriated following independence in 1948, are called "Indian Origin" Tamils. They are distinguished from the native Tamil population that has resided in Sri Lanka since ancient times. According to 2001 census data Indian Tamils makeup 5.1% of the Sri Lankan population and, Sri Lankan Tamils 4.3%. Though this figure only accounted for Sri Lankan Tamils in government-controlled areas, not accounting for those in rebel-held territories. There is a significant population (8.0%) of Moors, who trace their

lineage to Arab traders and immigrants from the Middle East. Their presence is concentrated in the cities and the central and eastern provinces. There are also small ethnic groups such as the Burghers (of mixed European descent) and Malays from Southeast Asia.

Sinhalese and Tamil are the two official languages of Sri Lanka. English is spoken by approximately 10% of the population, and is widely used for education, scientific and commercial purposes. Members of the Burgher community speak variant forms of Portuguese Creole and Dutch with varying proficiency, while members of the Malay community speak a form of creole Malay that is unique to the island. Sri Lanka also enjoys significant religious diversity. Approximately 69% of Sri Lankans are adherents of Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism is the predominant school, with distinctive sects such as Ramanna Nikaya, Amarapura Nikaya and Siam Nikaya being widely followed. Buddhism in Sri Lanka has been deeply influenced by indigenous faiths and traditions, as well as the influences of prevailing Buddhist schools in South East Asia. The ancient and famous Sri Dalada Maligawa or "Temple of the Tooth" is the principal Buddhist Temple in Sri Lanka, and by tradition houses the Tooth of Buddha. It is visited every year by millions of pilgrims. There are many other famous religious institutions in Sri Lanka that attract many visitors daily. Hinduism is practiced by 7.9% of the population, mainly from the Tamil community. Christianity is practiced by 7% of the population, especially by Burgher people though most Christians are Sinhalese or Tamils. While most Sri Lankan Christians are Catholics, there are also significant numbers who adhere to Dutch Reformed Church and the Anglican Communion. Islam in Sri Lanka is practiced by 8.5% of the population and its adherents are almost entirely Moors and Malays.



The Buddha statue at Mihintale.

## Culture and arts





Hoppers, a Sri Lankan delicacy.

The island is the home of two main traditional cultures: the Sinhalese (centered in the ancient cities of Kandy and Anuradhapura) and the Tamil (centered in the city of Jaffna). In more recent times a British colonial culture was added, and lately Sri Lanka, particularly in the urban areas, has experienced a dramatic makeover in the western mold. Until recently, for example, most Sri Lankans, certainly those in the villages, have eaten traditional food, engaged in traditional crafts and expressed themselves through traditional arts. But economic growth and intense economic competition in developed countries has spilled over to most of Sri Lanka, producing changes that might variously be identified as progress, westernisation or a loss of identity and assimilation.

## Traditional food

Sri Lankans have added western influences to the customary diet such as rice and curry, pittu (mixture of fresh rice meal, very lightly roasted and mixed with fresh grated coconut, then steamed in a bamboo mould). Kiribath (cooked in thick coconut cream for this unsweetened rice-pudding which is accompanied by a sharp chili relish called "lunumiris"), wattalapam (rich pudding of Malay origin made of coconut milk, jaggery, cashew nuts, eggs, and various spices including cinnamon cloves and nutmeg), kottu, and hoppers ("appa"), batter cooked rapidly in a hot curved pan, accompanied by eggs, milk or savouries. Sri Lankan food also has Dutch and Portuguese influences, with the island's Burgher community preserving this culture through traditional favourites such as Lamprais (rice cooked in stock and baked in a banana leaf), Breudher (Dutch Christmas cake) and Bolo Fiado (Portuguese-style layer cake).

## Festivals

*Main article* Sri Lankan festivals

Every year on or about April 13th Sinhala and Tamil people celebrate **Sinhala and Tamil New Year** Festival, and Muslims celebrate **Ramasan**. Esala Perahera (A-suh-luh peh-ruh-ha-ruh) is the grand festival of Esala held in Sri Lanka. It is very grand with elegant costumes. Happening in July or August in Kandy, it has become a unique symbol of Sri Lanka. It is a Buddhist festival consisting of dances and richly-decorated elephants. There are fire-dances, whip-dances, Kandian dances and various other cultural dances. The elephants are usually adorned with lavish garments. The festival ends with the traditional 'diya-kepeema'. The elephant is paraded around the city bearing the tooth of Buddha. However the new year for tamils have been established as being on January 14th from this year.

## Cinema

Sri Lankan cinema in past years has featured subjects such as family relationships, love stories and the years of conflict between the military and Tamil Tiger rebels. Many films are in the Sinhalese language and the Sri Lankan cinematic style is similar to Indian cinema.

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kavadi by Hindu Devotess at Vavuniya



Elephants at the Esala Perahera.

The first film to be produced and shown in Sri Lanka was Kadawunu Poronduwa (The Broken Promise) which was released in 1947. The first colour film of Sri Lanka was Ran Muthu Doova.

Afterwards there were many Sinhalese movies produced in Sri Lanka and some of them, such as Nidhanaya, received several international film awards. The most influential filmmaker in the history of Sri Lankan cinema is Lester James Peiris who has directed many movies of excellent quality which led to global acclaim. His latest film, 'Wekanda Walawwa' (Mansion by the Lake) became the first movie to be submitted from Sri Lanka for the Best Foreign Language film award at the Academy Awards. In 2005 the director Vimukthi Jayasundara became the first Sri Lankan to win the prestigious Camera d'Or award for Best First Film, or any award for that matter, at the Cannes Film Festival for his Sinhalese language film *Sulanga Enu Pinisa* (The Forsaken Land). Controversial filmmaker Asoka Handagama's films are considered by many in the Sri Lankan film world to be the best films of honest response to the ethnic conflict currently raging in the country. Prasanna Vithanage is one of Sri Lanka's most notable filmmakers. His films have won many awards, both local and international. Recent releases like 'Sooriya Arana', 'Samanala thatu', and 'Hiripoda wessa' have attracted Sri Lankans to cinemas. Sri Lankan films are usually in the Sinhalese language. Tamil language movies are also filmed in Sri Lanka but they are not part of Kollywood which is Indian Tamil cinema. However some Kollywood films are based in Sri Lanka as well.

## Music

The earliest music came from the theatre at a time when the traditional open-air drama (referred to in Sinhala as *Kolam*, *Sokari* and *Nadagam*). In 1903 the first music album, **Nurthi**, was released through Radio Ceylon. Also Vernon Corea introduced Sri Lankan music in the English Service of Radio Ceylon.

In the early 1960s, Indian music in films greatly influenced Sri Lankan music and later Sri Lankan stars like Sunil Shantha found greater popularity among Indian people. By 1963, Radio Ceylon had more Indian listeners than Sri Lankan ones. The notable songwriters Mahagama Sekara and Ananda Samarakoon made a Sri Lankan music revolution. At the peak of this revolution, musicians such as W. D. Amaradeva, H.R. Jothipala, Milton Mallawarachchi, M.S. Fernando, Annesley Malewana and Clarence Wijewardene did great work.

## Religions



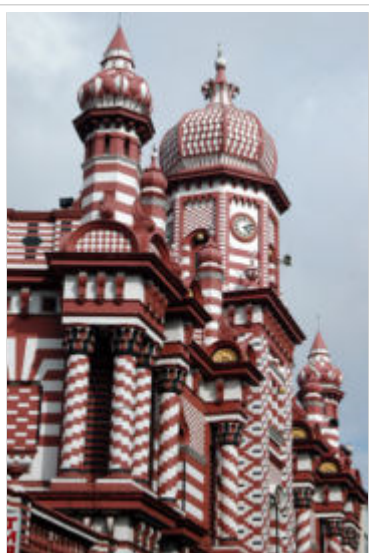
The Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil, Jaffna is an important place for Hindus in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a multi ethnic and multi religious population. Buddhism constitutes the religious faith of about 70% of the population of the island, most of whom follow the Theravada school of Buddhism. According to traditional Sri Lankan chronicles, Buddhism was introduced into Sri Lanka in the 2nd century BCE by Venerable Mahinda, the son of the Emperor Ashoka, during the reign of Sri Lanka's King Devanampiyatissa. During this time, a sapling of the Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment was brought to Sri Lanka and the first monasteries were established under the sponsorship of the Sri Lankan king. The Pali Canon (*Thripitakaya*), having previously been preserved as an oral tradition, was first committed to writing in Sri Lanka around 30 BC.

Sri Lanka has the longest continuous history of Buddhism of any Buddhist nation, with the Sangha having existed in a largely unbroken lineage since its introduction in the 2nd century BCE. During periods of decline, the Sri Lankan monastic lineage was revived through contact with Thailand and Burma. Periods of Mahayana influence, as well as official neglect under colonial rule, created great challenges for Theravada Buddhist institutions in Sri Lanka, but repeated revivals and resurgences — most recently in the 19th century — have kept the Theravada tradition alive for over 2000 years.



Buddhism is followed by over 70% of the population



The Jami Ul Alfar mosque in Colombo. Islam was brought to Sri Lanka by Arab Merchants

Followers of Islam comprise approximately eight percent of the population, having been brought to the island by Arab traders over the course of many centuries. Hinduism was primarily established in Sri Lanka by migrants and often invaders from southern India, and Hindus now constitute seven percent of the population, mostly of the Shaivite school. European colonists introduced Christianity to the country in the 16th century, and the religion has been adopted by around six percent of the population. There also was a small population of Zoroastrian immigrants from India ( Parsis) who settled in Ceylon during the period of British rule. As a result of emigration, few remain, yet they have played a significant role in the growth of the country. The former finance minister of Sri Lanka, Nariman Choksy, was a Parsi. Other famous Parsi families in Sri Lanka include the Captain family and the Pestongee family.

Religion plays an important part in the life and culture of Sri Lankans. The Buddhist majority observe Poya Days, once per month according to the Lunar calendar. The Hindus and Muslims also observe their own holidays. There are many Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka and many mosques, Hindu temples and churches across the island, especially in areas where respective communities are concentrated. Buddhists are distributed across most parts of the island except in the north. Hindus are concentrated in north, east, and central high lands. Christians, particularly Roman Catholics are mainly concentrated along the western coastal belt. Muslims are concentrated in several pockets along the coast and in interior. All religious communities are represented in western province and in other urban centers in sizable numbers.

## Education



University of Kelaniya Sri Lanka.

With a literacy rate of 92%, and 83% of the total population having had Secondary Education, Sri Lanka has one of the most literate populations amongst developing nations. An education system which dictates 9 years of Compulsory Schooling for every child is in place, with 99% of the children entering the first grade. A free education system initiated in 1945 by Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara, a former minister of education, has greatly contributed to this. Mr. Kannangara led the establishment of the Madhya Maha Vidyalayas (Great Central Schools) in different parts of the country in order to provide education to Sri Lanka's rural population. In 1942 a special education committee proposed extensive reforms to establish an efficient and quality education system for the people. In recent decades, a large number of private and international schools have been established across the nation. The International Baccalaureate and General Certificate of Secondary Education are popular education programmes.



University of Colombo Sri Lanka.

Most secondary schools in Sri Lanka provide education from grades 1 to 13 in the same institution. Students sit for the GCE Ordinary Level Examination (O/Levels) in grade 11 and the GCE Advanced Level Examination (A/levels) in grade 13. These schools are modelled on British colleges and universities. A majority of them are public, but a number of elite private schools do exist. While most reputed schools centered around large cities are usually single-sex institutions, rural schools tend to be coeducational.

Sri Lanka has a number of large public universities. They include the University of Colombo, the University of Kelaniya, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, the University of Moratuwa, the University of Peradeniya, the University of Jaffna, the University of Ruhuna, the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka and the Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka. However the lack of space in these institutions and the unwillingness to establish private universities has led to a large number of students been denied entry into formal universities. As a result, a number of private institutions have emerged, which provide specialised education in a variety of fields, such as computer science, business administration and arts. These include the government owned Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology and the Institute of Technological Studies.

## Sports

While the national sport in Sri Lanka is volleyball, by far the most popular sport in the country is cricket. Rugby also enjoys extensive popularity, as do aquatic sports, athletics, Football (soccer) and tennis. Sri Lanka's schools and colleges regularly organize sports and athletics teams, competing on provincial and national levels. The Sri Lankan cricket team achieved considerable success beginning in the 1990s, rising from underdog status to winning the 1996 World Cup, as well as the Asia Cup in 1996 and 2004. Sri Lanka remains one of the leading cricketing nations in the world, with the national team reaching the finals of Cricket World Cup 2007, where they lost to Australia.

Sri Lanka has a large number of sports stadiums, including the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground, the R. Premadasa Stadium and the Rangiri Dumbulla Stadium in Dambulla as well as the Galle International Stadium. The country co-hosted the 1996 Cricket World Cup with India and Pakistan, and has hosted the Asia Cup tournament on numerous occasions. It will also co-host the



A Test match between Sri Lanka and England at the SCC Ground, Colombo, March 2001.

2011 Cricket World Cup. Aquatic sports such as boating, surfing, swimming and scuba diving on the coast, the beaches and backwaters attract a large number of Sri Lankans and foreign tourists.

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# Taiwan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**Taiwan** ( traditional Chinese: 臺灣 or 台灣; simplified Chinese: 台湾; Hanyu Pinyin: Táiwān; Tongyong Pinyin: Táiwān; Wade-Giles: T'ai<sup>2</sup>-wan<sup>1</sup>; Taiwanese: 大圓, Tâi-oân) is an island in East Asia. "Taiwan" is also commonly used to refer to the territories governed by the Republic of China (ROC) and to ROC itself, which governs the island of Taiwan, Orchid Island and Green Island in the Pacific off the Taiwan coast, the Pescadores in the Taiwan Strait, and Kinmen and the Matsu Islands off the coast of mainland Fujian. The island groups of Taiwan and Penghu (except the municipalities of Taipei and Kaohsiung) are officially administered as Taiwan Province of the ROC. However, in practice, almost all government power is exercised at the national and local (city/county) levels.

Taiwan is also currently claimed by the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a PRC province, though the government of the PRC has never controlled Taiwan island or any of the current ROC territory commonly referred to as "Taiwan".

The main island of Taiwan, also known as **Formosa** (from Portuguese (*Ilha Formosa*, meaning "beautiful (island)"), is located in East Asia off the coast of mainland China, southwest of the main islands of Japan but directly west of the end of Japan's Ryukyu Islands, and north-northwest of the Philippines. It is bound to the east by the Pacific Ocean, to the south by the South China Sea and the Luzon Strait, to the west by the Taiwan Strait and to the north by the East China Sea. The island is 394 kilometers (245 miles) long and 144 kilometers (89 miles) wide and consists of steep mountains covered by tropical and subtropical vegetation.

## History

### Prehistory

Evidence of human settlement in Taiwan dates back thirty thousand years, although the first inhabitants of Taiwan may have been genetically distinct from any groups currently on the island. About four thousand years ago, ancestors of current Taiwanese aborigines settled in Taiwan. These aborigines are genetically related to Malay and Polynesians, and linguists classify their languages as Austronesian. Polynesians are suspected to have ancestry traceable back to Taiwan.

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## Taiwan 臺灣 台灣



Taiwan is mostly mountainous in the east and gently sloping plains in the west. The Penghu Islands (the Pescadores) are west of Taiwan (Satellite photo by NASA).

### Geography

## Early settlement

Han Chinese began settling in the Pescadores in the 1200s, but Taiwan's hostile tribes and its lack of the trade resources valued in that era rendered it unattractive to all but "occasional adventurers or fishermen engaging in barter" until the sixteenth century.

Records from ancient China indicate that Han Chinese might have known of the existence of the main island of Taiwan since the Three Kingdoms period (third century, 230 A.D.), having assigned offshore islands in the vicinity names like Greater Liuqiu and Lesser Liuqiu ( etymologically, but perhaps not semantically, identical to Ryūkyū in Japanese), though none of these names has been definitively matched to the main island of Taiwan. It has been claimed but not verified that the Ming Dynasty admiral Cheng Ho (Zheng He) visited Taiwan between 1403 and 1424.

## European settlement



In 1544, a Portuguese ship sighted the main island of Taiwan and dubbed it "Ilha Formosa", which means "Beautiful Island." The Portuguese made no attempt to colonize Taiwan.

In 1624, the Dutch established a commercial base on Taiwan and began to import workers from Fujian and Penghu as laborers, many of whom settled. The Dutch made Taiwan a colony with its colonial capital at Tayoan City (present day Anping, Tainan). Both *Tayoan* and the island name *Taiwan* derive from a word in Sirayan, one of the Formosan languages.

The Dutch military presence was concentrated at a stronghold called Castle Zeelandia. The Dutch colonists also started to hunt the native Formosan Sika deer (*Cervus nippon taiouanus*) that inhabited Taiwan, contributing to the eventual extinction of the subspecies on the island.

## Koxinga and Imperial Chinese rule

Naval and troop forces of Southern Fujian defeated the Dutch in 1662, subsequently expelling the Dutch government and military from the island. They were led by Koxinga ( traditional Chinese: 鄭成功; simplified Chinese: 郑成功; pinyin: Zhèng Chénggōng). Following the fall of the Ming Dynasty, Koxinga retreated to Taiwan as a self-styled Ming loyalist and established the Kingdom of Tungning (1662–83). Koxinga established his capital at Tainan and he and his heirs, Zheng Jing ( traditional Chinese: 鄭經; simplified Chinese: 郑经; pinyin: Zhèng Jīng), who ruled from 1662–82, and Zheng Keshuang ( traditional Chinese: 鄭克塽; simplified Chinese: 郑克塽; pinyin: Zhèng Kèshuàng), who served less than a year, continued to launch raids on the south-east coast of mainland China

	
<b>Location</b>	Pacific Ocean, 120 km (74.6 mi) off the coast of mainland China
<b>Coordinates</b>	
<b>Area</b>	35,801 km <sup>2</sup> (13,822.8 sq mi)
<b>Rank</b>	39th
<b>Highest point</b>	Yu Shan — 3,952 m (2.5 mi) ()
<b>Administration</b>	
 <b>Republic of China</b>	
<b>Demographics</b>	
<b>Population</b>	approx. 23 million (as of 2005)
<b>Density</b>	{{{density}}}/km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Ethnic groups</b>	Taiwanese people <b>98% Han Chinese</b> 70% <i>Hoklo</i> 14% <i>Hakka</i> 14% <i>Mainlander</i> <b>2% Aboriginal Taiwanese</b>
Please note that all population percentages are those of the total population of the island	

well into the Qing Dynasty, attempting to recover the mainland.

In 1683, following the defeat of Koxinga's grandson by an armada led by Admiral Shi Lang of Southern Fujian, the Qing Dynasty formally annexed Taiwan, placing it under the jurisdiction of Fujian province. The Qing Dynasty government tried to reduce piracy and vagrancy in the area, issuing a series of edicts to manage immigration and respect aboriginal land rights. Immigrants mostly from Southern Fujian continued to enter Taiwan. The border between taxpaying lands and "savage" lands shifted eastward, with some aborigines 'Sinicizing' while others retreated into the mountains. During this time, there were a number of conflicts between Chinese from different regions of Southern Fujian, and between Southern Fujian Chinese and aborigines.

In 1887, the Qing government upgraded Taiwan's status from prefecture of Fujian to full province, the twentieth in the country, with its capital at Taipei. This was accompanied by a modernization drive that included building Taiwan's first railroad and starting a postal service.

## Japanese rule

Imperial Japan had sought to control Taiwan since 1592, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi began extending Japanese influence overseas. In 1609, the Tokugawa Shogunate sent Arima Harunobu on an exploratory mission. In 1616, Murayama Toan led an unsuccessful invasion of the island.

In 1871, an Okinawan vessel shipwrecked on the southern tip of Taiwan and the crew of fifty-four were beheaded by the Paiwan aborigines. When Japan sought compensation from Qing China, the court rejected the demand on the grounds that the "wild"/"unsubjugated" aborigines ( traditional Chinese: 台灣生番; simplified Chinese: 台湾生番; pinyin: Táiwān shēngfān) were outside its jurisdiction. This open renunciation of sovereignty led to a Japanese invasion of Taiwan. In 1874, an expeditionary force of three thousand troops was sent to the island. There were about thirty Taiwanese and 543 Japanese casualties (twelve in battle and 531 by endemic diseases).

Qing China was defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), and ceded Taiwan and the Pescadores to Japan in perpetuity in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Inhabitants wishing to remain Chinese subjects were given a two-year grace period to sell their property and remove to mainland China. Very few Taiwanese saw this as feasible.

On May 25, 1895, a group of pro-Qing high officials proclaimed the Republic of Formosa to resist impending Japanese rule. Japanese forces entered the capital at Tainan and quelled this resistance on October 21, 1895.

The Japanese were instrumental in the industrialization of the island; they extended the railroads and other transportation networks, built an extensive sanitation system and revised the public school system. During this period, both rice and sugarcane production greatly increased. At one point, Taiwan was the seventh greatest sugar producer in the world. Still, the ethnic Chinese and Taiwanese aborigines were classified as second- and third-class citizens. Large-scale violence continued in the first decade of rule. Japan launched over 160 battles to destroy Taiwan's aboriginal tribes during its 51-year rule of the island ... ' Around 1935, the Japanese began an island-wide assimilation project to bind the island more firmly to the Japanese Empire. The plan worked very well, to the point that tens of thousands of Taiwanese joined the Japanese army ranks, and fought loyally for them. For example, former ROC President Lee Teng-hui's elder brother served



The building currently known as the ROC Presidential Office was originally built as the Office of the Governor-General by the Japanese government.



in the Japanese navy and died while on duty in February 1945 in the Philippines.

Taiwan played a significant part in the system of Japanese prisoner of war camps that extended across South-East Asia between 1942 and 1945.' Allied POW's, as well as 'women and children as young as seven or eight years old,' were brutally enslaved at various locations like at the copper mine northwest of Keelung, sadistically supervised by Taiwanese and Japanese. '... it was found that, while the Japanese were invariably proud to give their name and rank, Taiwanese soldiers and 'hanchos' invariably concealed their names ... some Taiwanese citizens ... were willing participants in war crimes of various degrees of infamy ... young males were to an extent highly nipponized; in fact a proportion in the 1930s are reported to have been actively hoping for a Japanese victory in China ... One of the most tragic events of the whole Pacific war took place in Kaohsiung. This was the bombing of the prison ship Enoura Maru in Kaohsiung harbour on January 9th 1945.'

The Imperial Japanese Navy operated heavily out of Taiwan. The " South Strike Group" was based out of the Taihoku Imperial University in Taiwan. Many of the Japanese forces participating in the Aerial Battle of Taiwan-Okinawa were based in Taiwan. Important Japanese military bases and industrial centers throughout Taiwan, like Kaohsiung, were targets of heavy American bombing.

By 1945, just before Japan lost World War II, desperate plans were put in place to incorporate popular representation of Taiwan into the Japanese Diet to make Taiwan an integral part of Japan proper.

Japan's rule of Taiwan ended when it lost World War II and signed the Instrument of Surrender of Japan on August 15, 1945. But the Japanese occupation had long lasting effects on Taiwan and Taiwanese culture. Taiwanese tend to have a more positive view of Japan than other Asians. Significant parts of Taiwanese infrastructure were started under the Japanese rule. The current Presidential Building was also built during that time.

## **Kuomintang martial law period**

On October 25, 1945, ROC troops representing the Allied Command accepted the formal surrender of Japanese military forces in Taihoku. The ROC Government, led by Chiang Kai-shek, announced that date as "Taiwan Restoration Day" ( traditional Chinese: 臺灣光復節; simplified Chinese: 台湾光复节; Hanyu Pinyin: Táiwān Guāngfùjié; Tongyong Pinyin: Táiwan Guangfùjié). They were greeted as liberators by some Taiwanese. Many other Taiwanese, however, who fought against China and the allies for the Japanese war machine greeted them reluctantly, this new generation of Chinese arrivals. The ROC under Chen Yi was generally unstable and corrupt; it seized the people's property and set up government monopolies of many industries. Many problems like this, compounded with hyperinflation, unrest due to the Chinese Civil War, and distrust due to political, cultural and linguistic differences between the Taiwanese and the Mainland Chinese, quickly led to the loss of popular support for the new government. This culminated in a series of severe clashes between the ROC government and Taiwanese, in turn leading to the bloody 228 incident and the reign of White Terror.

In 1949, during the Chinese Civil War, the Kuomintang (KMT), led by Chiang Kai-shek, retreated from Mainland China and moved the ROC government from Nanjing to Taipei, Taiwan's largest city, while continuing to claim

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Li Wu River

sovereignty over all of China, Outer Mongolia as well as other areas. On the mainland, the victorious Communists established the PRC, claiming to be the sole representative of China including Taiwan and portraying the ROC government on Taiwan as an illegitimate entity.

Some 2 million refugees from Mainland China, consisting mainly of soldiers, KMT party members and most importantly the intellectual and business elites fled the mainland and arrived in Taiwan around that time. In addition, as part of its escape from Communists on the mainland, the ROC government relocated to Taiwan with many national treasures including gold reserves and foreign currency reserves. This was often used by the PRC government to explain its economic difficulties and Taiwan's comparative prosperity. From this period through the 1980s, Taiwan was governed by a party-state dictatorship, with the KMT as the ruling party. Military rule continued and little to no distinction was made between the government and the party, with public property, government property, and party property being interchangeable. Government workers and party members were indistinguishable, with government workers, such as teachers, required to become KMT members, and party workers paid salaries and promised retirement benefits along the lines of government employees. In addition all other parties were outlawed, and political opponents were persecuted, incarcerated, and executed.

Taiwan remained under martial law and one-party rule, under the name of the " Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion" ( traditional Chinese: 動員戡亂時期臨時條款; simplified Chinese: 动员戡乱时期临时条款; Hanyu Pinyin: dòngyuán kānlùn shíqí línshí tiáokuǎn; Tongyong Pinyin: dòngyuán kanluàn shíhí línshí tiáokuǎn), from 1948 to 1987, when the ROC Presidents Chiang Ching-kuo and Lee Teng-hui gradually liberalized and democratized the system. With the advent of democratization, the issue of the political status of Taiwan has resurfaced as a controversial issue (previously, discussion of anything other than unification under the ROC was taboo).

As the Chinese Civil War continued without truce, the ROC built up military fortification works throughout Taiwan. Within this effort, former KMT soldiers built the now famous Central Cross-Island Highway through the Taroko Gorge in the 1950s. The two sides would remain in a heightened military state well into the 1960's on the islands on the border with unknown number of night raids and clashes with details that are rarely made public. During the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in September 1958, Taiwan's landscape added Nike-Hercules Missile batteries with the formation of the 1st Missile Battalion Chinese Army and would not be deactivated until 1997. Newer generations of missile batteries have since replaced the Nike Hercules systems throughout the island.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the ROC began to develop into a prosperous, industrialized developed country with a strong and dynamic economy, becoming one of the Four Asian Tigers while maintaining the authoritarian, single-party government. Because of the Cold War, most Western nations and the United Nations regarded the ROC as the sole legitimate government of China (while being merely the de-facto government of Taiwan) until the 1970s, when most nations began switching recognition to the PRC.

## Modern democratic era

Chiang Kai-shek's eventual successor, his son Chiang Ching-kuo, began to liberalize Taiwan's political system. In 1984, the younger Chiang selected Lee Teng-hui, a native Taiwanese technocrat, to be his vice president. In 1986, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was formed illegally and inaugurated as the first opposition party in Taiwan to counter the KMT. A year later Chiang Ching-kuo lifted martial law.

After the 1988 death of Chiang Ching-Kuo, his successor as President Lee Teng-hui continued to hand more government authority over to the native Taiwanese and democratize the government. Under Lee, Taiwan underwent a process of localization in which local culture and history was promoted over a pan-China

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viewpoint. Lee's reforms included printing banknotes from the Central Bank rather than the Provincial Bank of Taiwan, and disbanding the Taiwan Provincial Government. Under Lee, the original members of the Legislative Yuan and National Assembly, elected in 1947 to represent mainland constituencies and having taken the seats without re-election for more than four decades, were forced to resign in 1991. Restrictions on the use of Taiwanese in the broadcast media and in schools were lifted as well.

In the 1990s, the ROC transformed into a true democratic country, as President Lee Teng-hui was elected by the first popular vote held in Taiwan during the 1996 Presidential election. In 2000, Chen Shui-bian of the DPP, was elected as the first non- KMT President and was re-elected to serve his second and last term since 2004. Polarized politics has emerged in Taiwan with the formation of the Pan-Blue Coalition of parties led by the KMT, favoring eventual Chinese reunification, and the Pan-Green Coalition of parties led by the DPP, favoring an eventual and official declaration of Taiwan independence.

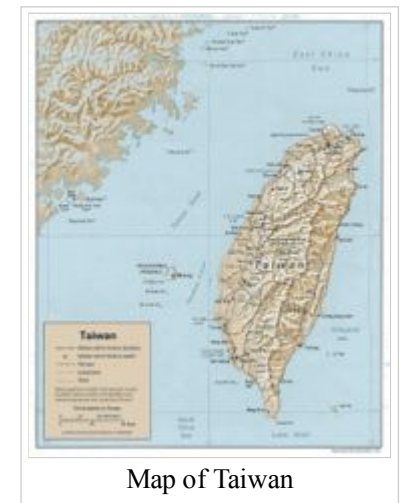
On September 30, 2007, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party approved a resolution asserting separate identity from China and called for the enactment of a new constitution for a "*normal country*". It also called for general use of "*Taiwan*" as the island's name, without abolishing its formal name, the Republic of China. The Chen administration also pushed for referendums on national defense and UN entry in the 2004 and 2008 elections, which failed due to voter turnout below the required legal threshold of 50% of all registered voters. The Chen administration was also dogged by public concern over reduced economic growth, legislative gridlock due to a pan-blue controlled Legislative Yuan, and alleged corruption scandals involving the First Family.

The KMT increased its majority in the Legislative Yuan in the January 2008 legislative elections, while its nominee Ma Ying-jeou went on to win the presidency in March of the same year, campaigning on a platform of increased economic growth, and better ties with the Mainland China under a policy of "mutual nondenial". Ma took office on May 20, 2008.

## Geography

The island of Taiwan lies some 120 kilometers off the southeastern coast of mainland China, across the Taiwan Strait, and has an area of 35,801 km<sup>2</sup> (13,822.8 sq mi). The East China Sea lies to the north, the Philippine Sea to the east, the Luzon Strait directly to the south and the South China Sea to the southwest. The island is characterized by the contrast between the eastern two-thirds, consisting mostly of rugged mountains running in five ranges from the northern to the southern tip of the island, and the flat to gently rolling plains in the west that are also home to most of Taiwan's population. Taiwan's highest point is the Yu Shan at 3,952 meters, and there are five other peaks over 3,500 meters. This makes it the world's seventh-highest island. Taroko National Park, located on the mountainous eastern side of the island, has good examples of mountainous terrain, gorges and erosion caused by a swiftly flowing river.

The shape of the main island of Taiwan is similar to a sweet potato seen in a south-to-north direction, and therefore, Taiwanese people, especially the Min-nan division, often call themselves "children of the Sweet Potato." There are also other interpretations of the island shape, one of which is a whale in the ocean (the Pacific Ocean) if viewed in a west-to-east direction, which is a common orientation in ancient maps, plotted either by Western explorers or the Qing Dynasty.



## Geology

The island of Taiwan lies in a complex tectonic area between the Eurasian Plate and the Philippine Plate. The upper part of the crust on the island is primarily made up of a series of terranes, mostly old island arcs which have been forced together by the collision of the Eurasian and Philippine plates. These have been further uplifted as a result of the detachment of a portion of the Eurasian Plate as it subducted beneath the Philippine Plate, a process which left the crust under Taiwan more buoyant.

The major seismic faults in Taiwan correspond to the various suture zones between the various terranes. These have produced major quakes throughout the history of the island. On September 21, 1999, a 7.3 quake known as the " Chi-Chi earthquake" occurred.

## Climate



Siouguluan River

Taiwan's climate is marine tropical. The Northern part of the island has a rainy season that lasts from January to late March during the southwest monsoon, and also experiences *meiyu* in May. The entire island succumbs to hot humid weather from June until September, while October to December are arguably the most pleasant times of year. The middle and southern parts of the island do not have an extended monsoon season during the winter months, but can experience several weeks of rain, especially during and after Lunar New Year. Natural hazards such as typhoons and earthquakes are common in the region.

Taiwan is a centre of bird endemism; see Endemic birds of Taiwan for further information.

### Environment and pollution

With its high population density and many factories, some areas in Taiwan suffer from heavy pollution. Most notable are the southern suburbs of Taipei and the western stretch from Tainan to Lin Yuan, south of Kaohsiung. In the past, Taipei suffered from extensive vehicle and factory air pollution, but with mandatory use of unleaded gasoline and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, the air quality of Taiwan has improved dramatically. Motor scooters, especially older or cheaper two-stroke versions, which are ubiquitous in Taiwan, also contribute disproportionately to air pollution in Taiwan.

### Society

### Ethnic groups

The ROC's population was estimated in 2005 at 22.9 million, most of whom are on the island of Taiwan. About 98% of the population is of Han Chinese ethnicity. Of these, 86% are descendants of early Han immigrants known as "*native Taiwanese*" (Chinese: 本省人; pinyin: Běnsǎng rén; literally "home-province person"). This group contains two subgroups: the Southern Fujianese or "Hokkien" or "Min-nan" (70% of the total population), who migrated from the coastal Southern Fujian (Min-nan) region in the southeast of mainland China; and the Hakka (15% of the total population), who originally migrated south to Guangdong, its surrounding areas and Taiwan, intermarrying extensively with Taiwanese aborigines. The remaining 12% of Han Chinese are known as "mainlanders" (Chinese: 外省人; pinyin: Wàishǎng rén; literally "out-of-province person") and are composed of and descend from immigrants who arrived after the Second World War. This group also includes those who fled mainland China in 1949 following the Nationalist defeat in the Chinese Civil War. For political reasons, more and more young people started to call the mainlanders *xin zhùmín* (traditional Chinese: 新住民), or "new residents". A survey in November 2006 conducted by the Taiwanese National Chengchi University, the Japanese University of the Ryukyus and the Chinese University of Hong Kong showed that more than 60% of Taiwan's population consider themselves Taiwanese, compared to only 18% in 1992.

*Dalu ren* (traditional Chinese: 大陸人; simplified Chinese: 大陆人; pinyin: dàlù rén) refers to residents of mainland China. Most Taiwanese, including the "mainlanders" discussed above, fall outside this group. It includes only the most recent immigrants from mainland China, such as (predominantly) women made ROC citizens through marriage. It also excludes foreign spouses from other countries, of which women come predominantly from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, while a greater proportion of men come from Western countries. One in seven marriages now involves a partner from another country. As Taiwan's birthrate is among the lowest in the world, this contingent is playing an increasingly important role in changing Taiwan's demographic makeup. Transnational marriages now account for one out of six births.

The other 2% of Taiwan's population, numbering about 458,000, are listed as the Taiwanese aborigines (traditional Chinese: 原住民; Hanyu Pinyin: yuánzhùmín; Tongyong Pinyin: yuánjhùmín), divided into 13 major groups: Ami, Atayal, Paiwan, Bunun, Rukai, Puyuma, Tsou, Saisiyat, Tao (Yami), Thao, Kavalan, Truku and Sakizaya.

## Languages

About 80% of the people in Taiwan belong to the Hoklo (Chinese: 福佬; pinyin: fúlǎo; Peh-ōe-jī: Hok-ló) ethnic group and speak both Standard Mandarin (officially recognized by the ROC as the National Dialect) and Taiwanese (a variant of the Min Nan dialect spoken in Fujian province). Mandarin Chinese is the primary language of instruction in schools; however, most spoken media is split between Mandarin and Taiwanese. The Hakka (Chinese: 客家; pinyin: Kèjiā), about 15% of the population, have a distinct Hakka dialect. Aboriginal minority groups still speak their native languages, although most also speak Mandarin. English is a common second language, with many large private schools providing English instruction. English is also featured on several of Taiwan's education exams.

Although Mandarin is still the language of instruction in schools and dominates television and radio, non-Mandarin dialects have undergone a revival in public



Bunun dancer in traditional aboriginal dress.

life in Taiwan. A large fraction of the populace speak the Taiwanese dialect, a variant of Min Nan spoken in southern Fujian, China, and a majority understand it. Many also speak Hakka. People educated during the Japanese period of 1900 to 1945 used Japanese as the medium of instruction. Some in the older generations only speak the Japanese they learned at school and the Taiwanese they spoke at home and are unable to communicate with many in the modern generations who only speak Mandarin.

Most aboriginal groups in Taiwan have their own languages which, unlike Taiwanese or Hakka, do not belong to the Chinese language family, but rather to the Austronesian language family.

## Religion

Over 93% of Taiwanese are adherents of a combination of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism; 4.5% are adherents of Christianity, which includes Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and other non-denominational Christian groups; and 2.5% are adherents of other religions, such as Islam. Taiwanese aborigines comprise a notable subgroup among professing Christians: "...over 64 percent identify as Christian... Church buildings are the most obvious markers of Aboriginal villages, distinguishing them from Taiwanese or Hakka villages."

Confucianism is a philosophy that deals with secular moral ethics, and serves as the foundation of both Chinese and Taiwanese culture. The majority of Taiwanese and Chinese usually combine the secular moral teachings of Confucianism with whatever religions they are affiliated with.

One especially important goddess for Taiwanese people is Matsu, who symbolizes the seafaring spirit of Taiwan's ancestors from Fujian and Guangdong.

## Culture



Tainan Confucius Temple. Four characters on the inscribed board mean "First School in All of Taiwan"

The cultures of Taiwan are a hybrid blend of Confucianist Han Chinese cultures, Japanese, European, American, global, local and indigenous influences which are both interlocked and divided between perceptions of tradition and modernity (Harrell/Huang 1994:1-5).

After the retreat to Taiwan, the Nationalists promoted an official interpretation of traditional Chinese culture over the local Taiwanese cultures. The government launched a program promoting Chinese calligraphy, traditional Chinese painting, folk art, and Chinese opera.

Since the Taiwan localization movement of the 1990s, Taiwan's cultural identity has been allowed greater expression. Identity politics, along with the over one hundred years of political separation from mainland China has led to distinct traditions in many areas, including cuisine, opera, and music.

The status of Taiwanese culture is debated. It is disputed whether Taiwanese culture is part of Chinese culture or a distinct culture. Speaking Taiwanese as a symbol of the localization movement has become an emblem of Taiwanese identity.

One of Taiwan's greatest attractions is the National Palace Museum, which houses more than 650,000 pieces of Chinese bronze, jade, calligraphy, painting and porcelain. The KMT moved this collection from the Forbidden City in Beijing in 1949 when it fled to Taiwan. The collection, estimated to be one-tenth of China's cultural treasures, is so extensive that only 1% is on display at any time.

Popular sports in Taiwan include basketball and baseball. Cheerleading performances and billiards are quite fashionable. Badminton is also common.

Karaoke, drawn from contemporary Japanese culture, is extremely popular in Taiwan, where it is known as KTV.

Taiwan has a high density of 24-hour convenience stores, which in addition to the usual services, provide services on behalf of financial institutions or government agencies such as collection of parking fees, utility bills, traffic violation fines, and credit card payments.

Taiwanese culture has also influenced other cultures. Bubble tea and milk tea are available in Australia, Europe and North America. Ang Lee has directed critically acclaimed films such as *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Brokeback Mountain*.

## Leading technologies

- Semiconductor device fabrication
- Biotechnology

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National Palace Museum, in Taipei City



Apo Hsu and the NTNU Symphony Orchestra on stage in the National Concert Hall



Taipei 101 set a new height record in 2004

- Bicycle manufacturing

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# Tajikistan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**Tajikistan** (pronounced /təˈdʒɪkɪstæn/ or /təˈdʒiːkɪstæn/; Tajik: Тоҷикистон, pronounced [tədʒikɪsˈtɒn] or [tɒːdʒikɪsˈtɒn], Persian: تاجیکی, *tojiki*), officially the **Republic of Tajikistan** (Tajik: Ҷумҳурии Тоҷикистон) is a mountainous landlocked country in Central Asia. Afghanistan borders to the south, Uzbekistan to the west, Kyrgyzstan to the north, and China to the east. Most of Tajikistan's population belongs to the Tajik ethnic group, who share culture and history with the Persian peoples and speak the Tajik language, a modern variety of Persian. Once part of the Samanid Empire, Tajikistan became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union in the 20th century, known as the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (Tajik SSR).

After independence, Tajikistan suffered from a devastating civil war which lasted from 1992 to 1997. Since the end of the war, newly-established political stability and foreign aid have allowed the country's economy to grow. Its natural resources such as cotton and aluminium have contributed greatly to this steady improvement, although observers have characterized the country as having few natural resources besides hydroelectric power and its strategic location.

## Etymology

*Tajikistan* means the "Land of the Tajiks" in Persian. Some believe the name Tajik is a geographic reference to the crown (*Taj*) of the Pamir Knot, but this is a folk etymology. The word "Tajik" was used to differentiate Iranians from Turks in Central Asia, starting as early as the 10th century. The addition of 'k' might have been for the purpose of euphony in the set phrase "Turk-o Tajik" ("Turks and Tajiks") which in Persian-language histories is found as an idiomatic expression meaning "everyone." According to some other sources, the name Tajik (also spelled Tadjik, Tadjik) refers to a group of people who are believed to be one of the pure and close descendents of the ancient Aryans. Their country was called Aryana Vajeh and the name "Taa-jyaan" from which came the word Tajik is mentioned in The Avesta. The Zoroaster's Gathas were also directed to an Aryan audience and there are several references to this community as being situated in the "home" of the Aryans.

Tajikistan frequently appeared as *Tadjikistan* or *Tadzhikistan* in English. This former transliteration of

<b>Ҷумҳурии Тоҷикистон</b> <i>Jumhurii Tojikiston</i> <b>Republic of Tajikistan</b>	
	
Flag <span style="margin-left: 150px;">Coat of Arms</span>	
<b>Motto:</b> none	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Surudi Milli</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Dushanbe
<b>Official languages</b>	Tajik
<b>Demonym</b>	Tajik
<b>Government</b>	Unitary presidential

*Tadjikistan* or *Tadzhikistan* is from the Russian *Таджикистан*. (In Russian there is no single letter *j* to represent the phoneme /dʒ/ and *дж*, or *dzh*, is used.) *Tadzhikistan* is the most common alternate spelling and is widely used in English literature derived from Russian sources. *Tadjikistan* is the spelling in French and can occasionally be found in English language texts. In the Perso-Arabic script, "Tajikistan" is written تاجیکستان.

Controversy surrounds the correct term used to identify people from Tajikistan. The word *Tajik* has been the traditional term used to describe people from Tajikistan and appears widely in literature. But the ethnic politics of Central Asia have made the word *Tajik* a controversial word, as it implies that Tajikistan is only a nation for ethnic Tajiks and not ethnic Uzbeks, Russians, etc. Likewise, ethnic Tajiks live in other countries, such as China, making the term ambiguous. In addition, the Pamiri population in Gorno-Badakhshan also have sought to create an ethnic identity separate from that of the Tajiks.

## History

### Early history

	republic
- President	Emomalii Rahmon
- Prime Minister	Oqil Oqilov
<b>Independence</b>	
- Establishment of the Samanid Empire	875 AD
- Declared	September 9, 1991
- Completed	December 25, 1991
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	143,100 km <sup>2</sup> ( 95th) 55,251 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.3
<b>Population</b>	
- January 2006 estimate	6,920,300 <sup>1</sup> ( 100th <sup>1</sup> )
- 2000 census	6,127,000
- Density	45/km <sup>2</sup> ( 151st) 117/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2005 estimate
- Total	\$8.802 billion ( 139th)
- Per capita	\$1,388 ( 159th)
<b>Gini (2003)</b>	32.6 (medium)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.673 (medium) ( 122nd)
<b>Currency</b>	Somoni ( <span>TJS</span> )
<b>Time zone</b>	TJT ( UTC+5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.tj
<b>Calling code</b>	+992



Modern Tajiks regard the Samanid Empire as the first Tajik state. This monument in Dushanbe honours Saman Khuda, ancestor of the Samanids and a source of Tajik nationalism.

The territory of what is now Tajikistan has been inhabited continuously since 4000 BCE. It has been under the rule of various empires throughout history, for the longest period under the Persian Empire.

<sup>1</sup> Estimate from State Statistical Committee of Tajikistan, 2006; rank based on UN figures for 2005.

Most of modern Tajikistan had formed parts of ancient Kamboja and Parama Kamboja kingdoms, which find references in the ancient Indian epics like the Mahabharata. Linguistic evidence, combined with ancient literary and inscriptional evidence has led many eminent Indologists to conclude that ancient Kambojas (*an Avestan speaking Iranian tribe*) originally belonged to the *Ghalcha-speaking area* of Central Asia. Achariya Yasaka's Nirukta (*7th century BCE*) attests that verb *Śavati* in the sense "to go" was used by only the Kambojas. It has been shown that the modern Ghalcha dialects, *Valkhi, Shigali, Srigoli, Jebaka (also called Sanglich or Ishkashim), Munjani, Yidga and Yagnobi*, mainly spoken in Pamirs and countries on the headwaters of the Oxus, still use terms derived from ancient Kamboja *Śavati* in the sense "to go". The Yagnobi dialect spoken in Yagnobi province around the headwaters of Zeravshan valley in Sogdiana, also still contains a relic *Šu* from ancient Kamboja *Śavati* in the sense "to go". Further, Sir G Grierson says that the speech of Badakshan was a Ghalcha till about three centuries ago when it was supplanted by a form of Persian. Thus, the ancient Kamboja, probably included the Badakshan, Pamirs and northern territories including Yagnobi province in the doab of the Oxus and Jaxartes. On the east it was bounded roughly by Yarkand and/or Kashgar, on the west by Bahlika (Uttaramadra), on the northwest by Sogdiana, on the north by Uttarakuru, on the southeast by Darada, and on the south by Gandhara. Numerous Indologists locate original Kamboja in Pamirs and Badakshan and *the Parama Kamboja further north, in the Trans-Pamirian territories comprising Zeravshan valley, north up parts of Soghdiana/Fargana — in the Sakadvipa or Scythia of the classical writers*. Thus, in the pre-Buddhist times (*7th–6th century BCE*), the parts of modern Tajikistan including territories as far as Zeravshan valley in Sogdiana formed parts of ancient Kamboja and the Parama

Kamboja kingdoms when it was ruled by Iranian Kambojas till it became part of Achaemenid Empire.

From the last quarter of fourth century BCE till the first quarter of the second century BCE, it was part of the Bactrian Empire, from whom it was passed on to Scythian Tukharas and hence became part of Tukharistan. Contact with the Chinese Han Dynasty was made in the second century BCE, when envoys were sent to the area of Bactria to explore regions west of China.

Arabs brought Islam in the 7th century CE. The Samanid Empire Persians supplanted the Arabs and built the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, which became the cultural centers of Tajiks (both of which are now in Uzbekistan). The Mongols would later take partial control of Central Asia, and later the land that today comprises Tajikistan became a part of the emirate of Bukhara. A small community of Jews, displaced from the Middle East after the Babylonian captivity, migrated to the region and settled there after 600 BCE, though the majority of the recent Jewish population did not migrate to Tajikistan until the 20th century.



The capital of Dushanbe

## Russian presence

In the 19th century, the Russian Empire began to spread into Central Asia during the Great Game, and it took control of Tajikistan. After the overthrow of Imperial Russia in 1917, guerrillas throughout Central Asia, known as *basmachi* waged a war against Bolshevik armies in a futile attempt to maintain independence. The Bolsheviks prevailed after a four-year war, in which mosques and villages were burned down and the population heavily suppressed. Soviet authorities started a campaign of secularization, practicing Muslims, Jews, and Christians were persecuted, and mosques, churches, and synagogues were closed. The Jews of Tajikistan are known as Bukharian Jews. In the 1970s to 1990s there was a huge emigration of Bukharians to the United States of America. Today, there are flourishing Bukharian communities in New York City, United States and in many other east coast cities of the U.S.

## Soviet Tajikistan

In 1924, the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created as a part of Uzbekistan, but in 1929 the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic ( Tajik SSR) was made a separate constituent republic. The predominantly ethnic Tajik cities of Samarkand and Bukhara remained in the Uzbek SSR. In terms of living conditions, education and industry Tajikistan was somewhat behind the other Soviet Republics. By the late 1980s Tajik nationalists were calling for increased rights. Real disturbances did not occur within the republic until 1990. The following year, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Tajikistan declared its independence.

## Post-Independence

The nation almost immediately fell into a civil war that involved various factions fighting one another; these factions were often distinguished by clan loyalties. The non-Muslim population, particularly Russians and Jews, fled the country during this time because of persecution, increased poverty and better economic opportunities in the West or in other former Soviet republics. Emomali Rahmonov came to power in 1992, and continues to rule to this day. However, he has been accused of ethnic cleansing against other ethnicities and groups during the Civil war in Tajikistan. In 1997, a ceasefire was reached between Rahmonov and opposition parties ( United Tajik Opposition). Peaceful elections were held in 1999, but they were reported by the opposition as unfair, and Rahmonov was re-elected by almost unanimous vote. Russian troops were stationed in southern Tajikistan, in order to guard the border with Afghanistan, until summer 2005. Since the September 11, 2001, attacks, American, Indian and French troops have also been stationed in the country.

In 2008, the harshest winter in a quarter century caused financial losses of \$850 million. Russia pledged \$1 billion in aid. Saudi Arabia sent about 10 planes carrying 80 tons of relief and emergency supplies in February and another 11 tons in March.

## Politics

Almost immediately after independence, Tajikistan was plunged into a civil war that saw various factions, allegedly backed by Russia and Iran, fighting one another. All but 25,000 of the more than 400,000 ethnic Russians, who were mostly employed in industry, fled to Russia. By 1997, the war had cooled down, and a central government began to take form, with peaceful elections in 1999.



Emomali Rahmon

"Longtime observers of Tajikistan often characterize the country as profoundly averse to risk and skeptical of promises of reform, a political passivity they trace to the country's ruinous civil war," Ilan Greenberg wrote in a news article in *The New York Times* just before the country's November 2006 presidential election.

Tajikistan is officially a republic, and holds elections for the President and Parliament. The latest elections occurred in 2005, and as all previous elections, international observers believe them to have been corrupt, arousing many accusations from opposition parties that President Emomali Rahmon manipulates the election process.

The November 6, 2006, election was boycotted by "mainline" opposition parties, including the 23,000-member Islamist Islamic Renaissance Party. Four remaining opponents "all but endorsed the incumbent", Rahmon. After November 2006 presidential elections, it is widely speculated that Rahmon has secured his seat for at least another two terms, which will allow him rule till 2020.

Tajikistan to this date is one of the few countries in Central Asia to have included an active opposition in its government. In the Parliament, opposition groups have often clashed with the ruling party, but this has not led to great instability.

On October 11, 2007, the Assembly of the Council Commission of the Ministry of Culture issued a decision to ban Jehovah's Witnesses in the Republic of Tajikistan. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses was legally recognized by many post-Soviet republics. Since that time, however, this is the first Soviet republic to ban the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Recently Tajikistan also gave Iran its support in the membership bid to join the SCO, after a meeting with Tajik President and Iranian foreign minister.

## Administrative divisions

Tajikistan consists of 4 administrative divisions. These are the provinces ( viloyat) of Sughd and Khatlon, the autonomous province of Gorno-Badakhshan (abbreviated as GBAO), and the Region of Republican Subordination (RRP – Raiony Respublikanskogo Podchineniya in Russian; formerly known as Karotegin Province). Each region is divided into several districts ( Tajik: Ноҳия, *nohiya* or *raion*), which in turn are subdivided into *jamoats* (village-level self-governing units). As of 2006, there were 58 districts and 367 jamoats in Tajikistan.

Division	ISO 3166-2	Capital	Area (km²)	Pop (2006)
<b>Sughd</b>	TJ-SU	Khujand	25,400	2,060,900
<b>Region of Republican Subordination</b>	TJ-RR	Dushanbe	28,600	1,531,300
<b>Khatlon</b>	TJ-KT	Qurghonteppa	24,800	2,463,300

<b>Gorno-Badakhshan</b>	TJ-BG	Khorugh	64,200	218,400
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Source: Population and area from State Statistical Committee of Tajikistan

## Geography

Tajikistan is landlocked, and is the smallest nation in Central Asia by area. It is covered by mountains of the Pamir range, and more than fifty percent of the country is over 3,000 meters (approx. 10,000 ft) above sea level. The only major areas of lower land are in the north which is part of the Fergana Valley, and in the southern Kafirnigan and Vakhsh valleys which form the Amu Darya and have much higher rainfall. Dushanbe is located on the southern slopes above the Kafirnigan valley.

The Amu Darya and Panj rivers mark the border with Afghanistan, and Tajikistan's mountains are the major source of runoff for the Aral Sea

About 1 % of the country's area is covered by lakes:

- Kuli-Kalon ( Fann Mountains)
- Iskanderkul ( Gissar Range)
- Nurek Reservoir ( Khatlon Province)
- Kara-Kul ( Tajik: Qarokul; located in eastern Pamir)
- Sarez ( Pamir)
- Shorkul ( Pamir)
- Yashilkul ( Pamir)
- Zorkul ( Pamir)

Mountain	Height	Location
Ismoil Somoni Peak (highest)	7,495 m 24,590 ft	North-western edge of Gorno-Badakhshan ( GBAO), south of the Kyrgyz border
Ibn Sina Peak ( Lenin Peak)	7,174 m 23,537 ft	Northern border in the Trans-Alay Range, north-east of Ismoil Somoni Peak
Peak Korzhenevskaya	7,105 m 23,310 ft	North of Ismoil Somoni Peak, on the south bank of Muksu River
Independence Peak ( Revolution Peak)	6,974 m 22,881 ft	Central Gorno-Badakhshan, south-east of Ismoil Somoni Peak
Akademiya Nauk Range	6,785 m 22,260 ft	North-western Gorno-Badakhshan, stretches in the north-south direction
Karl Marx Peak	6,726 m 22,067 ft	GBAO, near the border to Afghanistan in the northern ridge of the Karakoram Range
Mayakovskiy Peak	6,096 m 20,000 ft	Extreme south-west of GBAO, near the border to Afghanistan.
Concord Peak	5,469 m 17,943 ft	Southern border in the northern ridge of the Karakoram Range



Satellite photograph of Tajikistan



Mountains of Tajikistan

Kyzylart Pass

4,280 m 14,042 ft

Northern border in the Trans-Alay Range

## Economy

Tajikistan was the poorest country in Central Asia as well in the former Soviet Union following a civil war after it became independent in 1991. With foreign revenue precariously dependent upon exports of cotton and aluminium, the economy is highly vulnerable to external shocks. In FY 2000, international assistance remained an essential source of support for rehabilitation programs that reintegrated former civil war combatants into the civilian economy, thus helping keep the peace. International assistance also was necessary to address the second year of severe drought that resulted in a continued shortfall of food production. On August 21, 2001, the Red Cross announced that a famine was striking Tajikistan, and called for international aid for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan's economy grew substantially after the war. The GDP of Tajikistan expanded at an average rate of 9.6 % over the period of 2000–2004 according to the World Bank data. This improved Tajikistan's position among other Central Asian countries (namely Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), which seem to have degraded economically ever since. Tajikistan is an active member of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).



A boy selling dried fruit at a local market

The recently completed Anzab tunnel which connects the previously hard to access Northern part of the country to the capital Dushanbe has been labeled as part of the new Silk Road. It is part of a road under construction that will connect Tajikistan to Iran and the Persian Gulf through Afghanistan.

A new bridge between Afghanistan and Tajikistan has been built which will help the country have access to trade lines with South Asia. The bridge was built by the United States.

The primary sources of income in Tajikistan are aluminium production, cotton growing and remittances from migrant workers.

Aluminium industry is represented by the state-owned Talco - the biggest aluminium plant in Central Asia and one of the biggest in the world.

Tajikistan has great hydropower potential, and has focused on attracting investment for projects for internal use and electricity exports. Tajikistan is home to the hydroelectric power station Nurek with the highest dam in the world. The latest development is the Russia's RAO UES energy giant working on Sangtuda-1 hydroelectric power station (670 MW capacity) commenced operations on 18 January 2008. Other projects at the development stage include Sangduta-2 by Iran, Zerafshan by Chinese SinoHydro and Rogun power plant with a projected dam height of 335 metres (1,099 ft) to be built by Russia's UES. Other energy resources include sizable coal deposits and smaller reserves of natural gas and petroleum.

Foreign remittance flows from Tajik migrant workers abroad, mainly in Russia, has become by far the main source of income for millions of Tajikistan's people and represents additional 36.2 % of country's GDP directly reaching the poverty-stricken population. Migration from Tajikistan and the consequent remittances have been unprecedented in their magnitude and economic impact. Tajikistan has achieved transition from a planned to a market economy without substantial and protracted recourse to aid (of which it by now receives only negligible amounts), and by purely market-based means, simply by exporting its main commodity of comparative advantage — cheap labor. The World Bank Tajikistan Policy Note 2006 concludes that remittances have played an important role as one of the drivers of Tajikistan's robust economic growth during the past several years, have increased incomes, and as a result helped significantly reduce poverty. Drug trafficking is the major illegal source of income in Tajikistan as it is an important transit country for Afghan narcotics bound for Russian and, to a lesser extent, Western European markets; some opium poppy is also raised locally for the domestic market. However with the increasing assistance from international organizations, such as UNODC, and cooperation with the US, Russian, EU and Afghan authorities a level of progress on fight against illegal drug-trafficking is being achieved. Tajikistan holds the third place in the world for heroin and raw opium confiscations (1216.3 kg of heroin and 267.8 kg of raw opium in the first half of 2006). Drug money corrupts the country's government; according to some experts the well-known personalities that fought on both sides of the civil war and have held the positions in the government after the armistice was signed are now involved in the drug trade. UNODC is working with Tajikistan to strengthen border crossings, provide training, and set up joint interdiction teams. It also helped to establish Tajikistani Drug Control Agency.



A bazaar in Panjakent

## Demographics

Tajikistan has a population of 7,320,716 (July 2006 est.). Tajiks who speak the Tajik language (a variety of Persian) are the main ethnic group, although there is a sizable minority of Uzbeks and a small population of Russians, whose numbers are declining due to emigration. Pamiris of Badakhshan are considered to belong to larger group of Tajiks. Likewise, the official language of Tajikistan is the Tajik language, while Russian is largely spoken in business and for government purposes. Despite its poverty, Tajikistan has a high rate of literacy with an estimated 98 % of the population having the ability to read and write. Most of the population follows Sunni Islam, although a sizable number of Shi'a are present as well. Bukharian Jews had lived in Tajikistan since the 2nd century BC, but today almost none are left. There is also a small population of Yaghnobi people who have lived in the mountainous district of Sughd Viloyat for many centuries.

The Tajik Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare reported that 104,272 disabled people are registered in Tajikistan (2000). This group of people suffers most from poverty in Tajikistan. The Tajik government and the World Bank considered activities to support this part of the population described in the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.



Tajik children

## Culture

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Historically, Tajiks and Persians come from very similar stock, speaking variants of the same language and are related as part of the larger group of Iranian peoples. The Tajik language is the mother tongue of around two-thirds of the citizens of Tajikistan. Ancient towns such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Herat, Balkh and Khiva are no longer part of the country. The main urban centers in today's Tajikistan include Dushanbe (the capital), Khujand, Kulob, Panjakent and Istaravshan.

The Pamiri people of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province in the southeast, bordering Afghanistan and China, though considered part of the Tajik ethnicity, nevertheless are distinct linguistically and culturally from most Tajiks. In contrast to the mostly Sunni Muslim residents of the rest of Tajikistan, the Pamiris overwhelmingly follow the Ismaili sect of Islam, and speak a number of Eastern Iranian languages, including Shughni, Rushani, Khufi and Wakhi. Isolated in the highest parts of the Pamir Mountains, they have preserved many ancient cultural traditions and folk arts that have been largely lost elsewhere in the country.

The Yaghnobi people live in mountainous areas of northern Tajikistan. The estimated number of Yaghnobis is now about 25,000. Forced migrations in the 20th century decimated their numbers. They speak the Yaghnobi language, which is the only direct modern descendant of the ancient Sogdian language.

## Transport

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Statue of Persian-Tajik poet Rudaki in Panjakent, Tajikistan. Poetry is an important element in the culture of Tajikistan

# Thailand

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The **Kingdom of Thailand** (IPA: /ˈtaɪlənd/, Thai: **ราชอาณาจักรไทย**, IPA: [râːʔa-ʔaːnaːtɕàk-tʰāj]) is a country in Southeast Asia. To its east lie Laos and Cambodia; to its south, the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia; and to its west, the Andaman Sea and Myanmar. Its capital and largest city is Bangkok.

## Etymology




The country's official name was **Siam** ( Thai: **สยาม**; IPA: [saˈjaːm], RTGS: Sayam origin unknown) until 24 June 1939, and between 1945 and 11 May 1949, when it was changed to Thailand. The word *Thai* (**ไทย**) is not, as commonly believed to be, derived from the word *Thai* (**ไท**) meaning "freedom" in the Thai language; it is, however, the name of an ethnic group from the central plains (the Thai people). With that in mind the locals seemed to have also accepted the alternative meaning and will verbally state that it means "Land of the free". This might be due to language barriers and the avoidance of long difficult explanations.

*Ratcha Anachak Thai* means "Kingdom of Thailand" or "Kingdom of Thai". Etymologically, its components are: *-Ratcha-* (from Sanskrit *raja*, meaning "king, royal, realm", from Sanskrit) ; *-ana-* (from Pāli *āṇā*, "authority, command, power", itself from Sanskrit *ājñā*, same meaning) *-chak* (from Sanskrit *chakra*, meaning "wheel", a symbol of power and rule).

## History

The region known today as Thailand has been inhabited by humans since the paleolithic period (about 500,000 - 10,000 years ago). Prior to the fall of the Khmer Empire in the 13th century, various states thrived there, such as the various Tai, Mon, Khmer and Malay kingdoms, as seen through the numerous archaeological sites and artifacts that are scattered throughout the Siamese landscape. Prior to the 12th century however, the first Thai or Siamese state is traditionally considered to be the Buddhist kingdom of Sukhothai, which was founded in 1238, following the decline and fall of the Khmer empire in the 13th - 15th century AD.

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<b>ราชอาณาจักรไทย</b> <i>Ratcha Anachak Thai</i> <b>Kingdom of Thailand</b>	
 Flag	 Emblem
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>Phleng Chat</i> <b>Royal anthem:</b> <i>Phleng Sansoen Phra Barami</i>	
	
<b>Largest city</b>	Bangkok
<b>Official languages</b>	Thai
<b>Demonym</b>	Thai
<b>Government</b>	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional Monarchy

A century later, Sukhothai's power was overshadowed by the larger Siamese kingdom of Ayutthaya, established in the mid-14th century.

After Ayutthaya fell in 1767 to the Burmese, Thonburi was the capital of Thailand for a brief period under King Taksin the Great. The current (Rattanakosin) era of Thai history began in 1782 following the establishment of Bangkok as capital of the Chakri dynasty under King Rama I the Great.

European powers began traveling to Thailand in the 16th century. Despite European pressure, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian nation never to have been colonised by a European country. Two main reasons for this were that Thailand had a long succession of very able rulers in the 1800s and that it was able to exploit the rivalry and tension between the French and the British. As a result, the country remained as a buffer state between parts of Southeast Asia that were colonised by the two colonial powers. Despite this, Western influence led to many reforms in the 19th century and major concessions, most notably being the loss of large territory on the east side of the Mekong to the French and the step by step absorption by Britain of the Shan ( Thai Yai) States (now in Myanmar) and the Malay Peninsula. The loss initially included Penang and Tumasik and eventually culminated in the loss of three predominantly ethnic-Malay southern provinces, which later became Malaysia's three northern states, under the ( Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909).

In 1932, a bloodless revolution resulted in a new constitutional monarchy. During World War II, Thailand was an ally with Japan while at the same time maintaining an active anti-Japanese resistance movement known as the Seri Thai. After the war, Thailand emerged as an ally of the United States. As with many of the developing nations during the Cold War, Thailand then went through decades of political transgression characterised by coups d'états as one military regime replaced another, but eventually progressed towards a stable prosperity and democracy in the 1980s.

In 1997, Thailand was hit with the Asian financial crisis and the Thai baht for a short time peaked at 56 baht to the U.S. dollar compared to about 25 baht to the dollar before 1997. Since then, the baht has regained most of its strength and as of 23 May 2007, is valued at 33 baht to the US dollar.

The official calendar in Thailand is based on Eastern version of the Buddhist Era, which is 543 years ahead of the Gregorian (western) calendar. For example, the year AD 2008 is called 2551 BE in Thailand.

## Politics and government

- King	Rama IX
- Prime Minister	Samak Sundaravej
<b>Formation</b>	
- Sukhothai Kingdom	1238–1368
- Ayutthaya Kingdom	1350
- Thonburi Kingdom	1767
- Rattanakosin Kingdom	6 April 1782
- Constitutional Monarchy	24 June 1932
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	513,115 km <sup>2</sup> ( 49th) 198,115 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.4
<b>Population</b>	
- December 2006 estimate	62,828,706 ( 20th)
- 2000 census	60,606,947
- Density	122/km <sup>2</sup> ( 80th) 317/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$596.5 billion ( 21st)
- Per capita	\$9,200 ( 69th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$206.338 billion ( 34th)
- Per capita	\$3,400 ( 92th)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	42 (medium)
<b>HDI (2005)</b>	<span style="color: red;">▼</span> 0.781 (medium) ( 78th)
<b>Currency</b>	Baht (฿) ( THB)

## History

Since the political reform of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand has had 17 constitutions and charters. Throughout this time, the form of government has ranged from military dictatorship to electoral democracy, but all governments have acknowledged a hereditary monarch as the head of state.

### 1997 to 2006

The 1997 Constitution was the first constitution to be drafted by popularly-elected Constitutional Drafting Assembly, and was popularly called the "People's Constitution".

The 1997 Constitution created a bicameral legislature consisting of a 500-seat House of Representatives (สภาผู้แทนราษฎร, sapha phutan ratsadon) and a 200-seat Senate (วุฒิสภา, wuthisapha). For the first time in Thai history, both houses were directly elected. Many human rights are explicitly acknowledged, and measures were established to increase the stability of elected governments. The House was elected by the first-past-the-post system, where only one candidate with a simple majority could be elected in one constituency. The Senate was elected based on the province system, where one province can return more than one Senator depending on its population size. Members of the House of Representatives served four-year terms, while Senators served six-year terms.

The court system (ศาล, saan) included a constitutional court with jurisdiction over the constitutionality of parliamentary acts, royal decrees, and political matters.

The January 2001 general election, the first elections under the 1997 Constitution, were called the most open, corruption-free election in Thai history. The subsequent government was the first in Thai history to complete a 4-year term. The 2005 election had the highest voter turnout in Thai history and was noted for a marked reduction in vote-buying compared to previous elections.

In early 2006, significant pressure from corruption allegations led Thaksin Shinawatra to call for a snap election. The opposition boycotted the elections and Thaksin was re-elected. Pressure continued to build, leading to a military coup on 19 September 2006.

### After the 2006 coup

Without meeting much resistance, a military junta overthrew the elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra on 19 September 2006. The junta abrogated the constitution, dissolved Parliament and the Constitutional Court, detained and later removed several members of the government, declared martial law, and appointed one of the King's Privy Councillors, General Surayud Chulanont, as Prime Minister. The junta later wrote a highly abbreviated interim constitution and appointed a panel to draft a permanent constitution. The junta also appointed a 250-member legislature, called by some critics a "chamber of generals" and others claimed that it lacks representatives from the poor majority. In this interim constitution draft, the head of the junta was allowed to remove the Prime Minister at any time. The legislature was not allowed to hold a vote of confidence against the Cabinet and the public was not allowed to file comments on bills. This interim constitution was later surpassed by the permanent constitution on 24 August 2007.

<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+7)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.th
<b>Calling code</b>	+66
1 ^ Thai name: <i>Krung Thep Maha Nakhon</i> or <i>Krung Thep</i>	
2 ^ According to the Department of Provincial Administration's official register, not taking into account unregistered citizens and immigrants.	

Martial law was partially revoked in January 2007. The junta continues to censor the media and was accused of several other human rights violations.

The ban on political activities was lifted in July 2007, following the 30 May dissolution of the Thai Rak Thai party. The new constitution has been approved by a referendum on 19 August, which led to a return to democratic elections on 23 December 2007.

Thailand remains an active member of the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

## Administrative divisions

Thailand is divided into 75 provinces (จังหวัด, changwat) , which are gathered into 5 groups of provinces by location. There are also 2 special governed districts: the capital Bangkok (Krung Thep Maha Nakhon) and Pattaya, of which Bangkok is at provincial level and thus often counted as a 76th province.

Each province is divided into smaller districts. As of 2006 there are 877 districts (อำเภอ, amphoe) and the 50 districts of Bangkok (เขต, khet). Some parts of the provinces bordering Bangkok are also referred to as Greater Bangkok (ปริมณฑล, pari monthon). These provinces include Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, Nakhon Pathom and Samut Sakhon. The name of each province's capital city (เมือง, mueang) is the same as that of the province: for example, the capital of Chiang Mai province (*changwat Chiang Mai*) is *Mueang Chiang Mai* or *Chiang Mai*. The 75 provinces are as follows:

### Central

1. Ang Thong
2. Bangkok (Krung Thep Maha Nakhon), Special Governed District of
3. Chai Nat
4. Kanchanaburi
5. Lop Buri
6. Nakhon Nayok
7. Nakhon Pathom
8. Nonthaburi
9. Pathum Thani
10. Phetchaburi
11. Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya
12. Prachuap Khiri Khan
13. Ratchaburi
14. Samut Prakan
15. Samut Sakhon



Map of Thailand

16. Samut Songkhram
17. Saraburi
18. Sing Buri
19. Suphan Buri

### East

1. Chachoengsao
2. Chanthaburi
3. Chonburi
4. Prachinburi
5. Rayong
6. Sa Kaeo
7. Trat

### North

1. Chiang Mai
2. Chiang Rai
3. Kamphaeng Phet
4. Lampang
5. Lamphun
6. Mae Hong Son
7. Nakhon Sawan
8. Nan
9. Phayao
10. Phetchabun
11. Phichit
12. Phitsanulok
13. Phrae
14. Sukhothai
15. Tak
16. Uthai Thani
17. Uttaradit



Phra That Chae Haeng, Nan  
Province

## Northeast

1. Amnat Charoen
2. Buri Ram
3. Chaiyaphum
4. Kalasin
5. Khon Kaen
6. Loei
7. Maha Sarakham
8. Mukdahan
9. Nakhon Phanom
10. Nakhon Ratchasima
11. Nong Bua Lamphu
12. Nong Khai
13. Roi Et
14. Sakon Nakhon
15. Si Sa Ket
16. Surin
17. Ubon Ratchathani
18. Udon Thani
19. Yasothon



Phra That Phanom, Nakhon  
Phanom Province

## South

1. Chumphon
2. Krabi
3. Nakhon Si Thammarat
4. Narathiwat
5. Pattani
6. Phang Nga
7. Phatthalung
8. Phuket
9. Ranong
10. Satun
11. Songkhla
12. Surat Thani
13. Trang
14. Yala



Phra Boromathat Chedi or Phra That Nakhon, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

**NOTE:** In *italics* , that province represents the **Greater Bangkok** sub-region; in *italics* , that province represents the **West** sub-region.

*See also:* List of cities in Thailand, List of cities in Thailand by population

## Geography



At 514,000 km<sup>2</sup> (198,000 sq mi) , Thailand is the world's 49th-largest country. It is comparable in size to France, and somewhat larger than the US state of California.

Thailand is home to several distinct geographic regions, partly corresponding to the provincial groups. The north of the country is mountainous, with the highest point being Doi Inthanon at 2,565 metres (8,415 ft). The northeast consists of the Khorat Plateau, bordered to the east by the Mekong river. The centre of the country is dominated by the predominantly flat Chao Phraya river valley, which runs into the Gulf of Thailand. The south consists of the narrow Kra Isthmus that widens into the Malay Peninsula.

The local climate is tropical and characterised by monsoons. There is a rainy, warm, and cloudy southwest monsoon from mid-May to September, as well as a dry, cool northeast monsoon from November to mid-March. The southern isthmus is always hot and humid. Major cities beside the capital Bangkok include Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Sawan, Chiang Mai, Phitsanulok, Surat Thani, Phuket and Hat Yai.

For maps, see: Atlas of Thailand

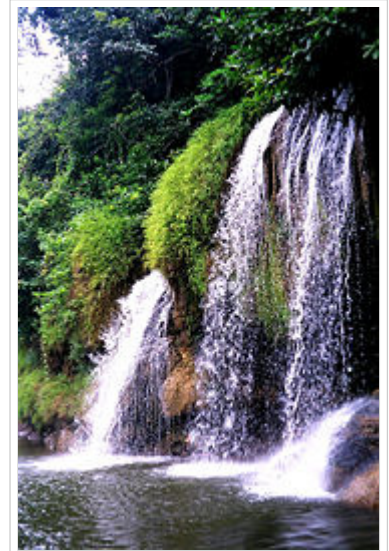
## Economy

Thailand is a newly industrialised country. After enjoying the world's highest growth rate from 1985 to 1996 - averaging almost 9% annually - increased pressure on Thailand's currency, the baht, in 1997, the year in which the economy contracted by 1.9% led to a crisis that uncovered financial sector weaknesses and forced the government to float the currency. Pegged at 25 to the US dollar from 1978 to 1997, the baht reached its lowest point of 56 to the US dollar in January 1998 and the economy contracted by 10.8% that same year. The collapse prompted a wider Asian financial crisis.

Thailand entered a recovery stage in 1998, expanding 4.2% and 4.4% in 2000, largely due to strong exports - which increased about 20% in 2000. Growth (2.2%) was dampened by a softening of the global economy in 2001, but picked up in the subsequent years due to strong growth in the People's Republic of China, a relatively weak baht encouraging exports and increasing domestic spending as a result of several mega projects and incentives of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, known as Thaksinomics. Growth in 2002/03 and 2004 was 5-7% annually.

Thailand exports over \$105 billion worth of products annually. Major exports include rice, textiles and footwear, fishery products, rubber, jewelry, automobiles, computers and electrical appliances. Thailand is the world's no.1 exporter of rice, exporting 6.5 million tons of milled rice annually. Rice is the most important crop in the country. Thailand has the highest percent of arable land, 27.25%, of any nation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. About 55% of the available land area is used for rice production.

Substantial industries include electric appliances, components, computer parts and automobiles, while tourism contributes about 5% of the Thai economy's



A waterfall in Sai Yok National Park.

Image:100bahtfr.jpg  
King Bhumibol on a 100 Thai baht banknote



A BTS skytrain passing the Sathon area of Bangkok.

GDP.

Thailand uses the metric system but traditional units of measurement are still much in use. Years are numbered as B.E. (Buddhist Era) on contracts and newspaper datelines; in banking, however, standard Western year counting prevails.

## Demographics

### Language

Thailand's population can be generally categorized into the Central Thai, the Northeastern Thai or Isan, the Northern Thai, and the Southern Thai. The Central Thai have long dominated the nation politically, economically, and culturally, even though they make up only about one-third of Thailand's population and are slightly outnumbered by the Northeastern Thai. Due to the education system and the forging of a national identity, many people are now able to speak Central Thai as well as their own local dialects.

The largest group of non-Thai people are the Chinese who have historically played a disproportionately significant role in the economy. Many have assimilated into mainstream Thai society, and do not live in Bangkok's Chinatown on Yaowarat Road. Other dominant ethnic groups include Malays in the south, Mon, Khmer and various hill tribes. After the end of the Vietnam War, many Vietnamese refugees settled in Thailand, mainly in the northeastern region.

The Thai language is Thailand's national language, written in its own alphabet, but many ethnic and regional dialects exist as well as areas where people speak predominantly Isan or Mon-Khmer languages. Although English is widely taught in schools, its use is not widespread throughout the country.

### Religion

According to the last census (2000) 95% of Thais are Buddhists of the Theravada tradition. Muslims are the second largest religious group in Thailand at 4.6%. Thailand's southernmost provinces - Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and part of Songkhla Chumphon have dominant Muslim populations, consisting of both ethnic Thai and Malay. Most often Muslims live in separate communities from non-Muslims. The southern tip of Thailand is mostly ethnic Malays. Christians, mainly Catholics, represent 0.75% of the population. A tiny but influential community of Sikhs in Thailand and some Hindus also live in the country's cities, and are heavily engaged in retail commerce. There is also a small Jewish community in Thailand, dating back to the 17th century. Since 2001, Muslim activists, generally described by the Thai government as terrorists or separatists, have rallied against the central government because of alleged corruption and ethnic bias on the part of officials.

### Culture



A market (Phahurat; พาหุรัด) in Bangkok.

The culture of Thailand incorporates a great deal of influence from India, China, and the rest of southeast Asia. Thailand's main theology Theravada Buddhism is central to modern Thai identity and belief. In practice, Thai Buddhism has evolved over time to include many regional beliefs originating from animism as well as ancestor worship. In areas in the southernmost parts of Thailand, Islam is prevalent. Several different ethnic groups, many of which are marginalized, populate Thailand. Some of these groups overlap into Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia and have maintained a distinctly traditional way of life despite strong Thai cultural influence. Overseas Chinese also form a significant part of Thai society, particularly in and around Bangkok. Their successful integration into Thai society has allowed for this group to hold positions of economic and political power, the most noteworthy of these being the Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, who held power from 2001 until 19 September 2006 when he was ousted by a military coup d'état.

Like most Asian cultures, respect towards ancestors is an essential part of Thai spiritual practice. Thais have a strong sense of hospitality and generosity, but also a strong sense of social hierarchy. Seniority is an important concept in Thai culture. Elders have by tradition ruled in family decisions or ceremonies.



Theravada Buddhism is highly respected in Thailand.

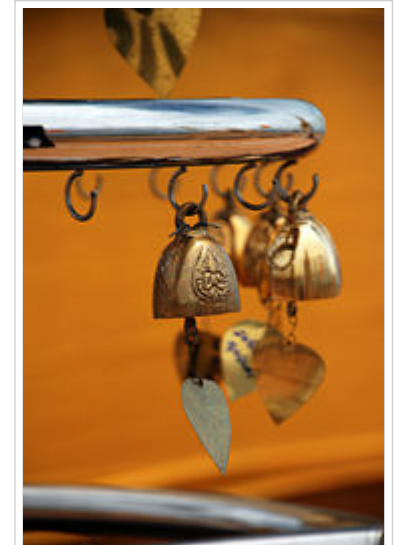
The traditional Thai greeting, the *wai*, is generally offered first by the youngest of the two people meeting, with their hands pressed together, fingertips pointing upwards as the head is bowed to touch their face to the hands, usually coinciding with the spoken word "Sawat-dii khrap" for male speakers, and "Sawat-dii ka" for females. The elder then is to respond afterwards in the same way. Social status and position, such as in government, will also have an influence on who performs the *wai* first. For example, although one may be considerably older than a provincial governor, when meeting it is usually the visitor who pays respect first. When children leave to go to school, they are taught to *wai* to their parents to represent their respect for them. They do the same when they come back. The *wai* is a sign of respect and reverence for another, similar to the namaste greeting of India.

Muay Thai, or Thai boxing, is the national sport in Thailand and its natives martial art call "Muay". In the past "Muay" was taught to Royal soldiers for combat on battlefield if unarmed. After they retired from the army, these soldiers often became Buddhist monks and stayed at the temples. Most of the Thai people's lives are closely tied to Buddhism and temples; they often send their sons to be educated with the monks. "Muay" is also one of the subjects taught in the temples..

Muay Thai achieved popularity all over the world in the 1990s. Although similar martial arts styles exist in other southeast Asian countries, few enjoy the recognition that Muay Thai has received with its full-contact rules allowing strikes including elbows, throws and knees. Football (soccer), however, has possibly overtaken Muay Thai's position as most widely viewed and liked sport in contemporary Thai society and it is not uncommon to see Thais cheering their favourite English Premier League teams on television and walking around in replica kits. Another widely enjoyed pastime, and once a competitive sport, is kite flying.

Taboos in Thailand include touching someone's head or pointing with the feet, as the head is considered the most sacred and the foot the dirtiest part of the body. Stepping over someone, or over food, is considered insulting. However, Thai culture as in many other Asian cultures, is succumbing to the influence of

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Thai bells at the Golden Mount in Bangkok.

globalization with some of the traditional taboos slowly fading away with time.

Books and other documents are the most revered of secular objects - therefore one should not slide a book across a table or place it on the floor.

Thai cuisine blends five fundamental tastes: sweet, spicy, sour, bitter and salty. Some common ingredients used in Thai cuisine include garlic, chillies, lime juice, lemon grass, and fish sauce. The staple food in Thailand is rice, particularly jasmine variety rice (also known as Hom Mali rice) which is included in almost every meal. Thailand is the world's largest exporter of rice, and Thais domestically consume over 100 kg of milled rice per person per year. Over 5000 varieties of rice from Thailand are preserved in the rice gene bank of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) , based in the Philippines. The King of Thailand is the official patron of IRRI.

Thai society has been influenced in recent years by its widely-available multi-language press and media. There are numerous English, Thai and Chinese newspapers in circulation; most Thai popular magazines use English headlines as a chic glamor factor. Most large businesses in Bangkok operate in English as well as other languages. English is also spoken among many Thais, sometimes as a way of demonstrating their educated, high-society status, but other times because of the lingua franca nature of English. Thailand is the largest newspaper market in South East Asia with an estimated circulation of at least 13 million copies daily in 2003. Even upcountry, out of Bangkok, media flourishes. For example, according to Thailand's Public Relations Department Media Directory 2003-2004, the nineteen provinces of northeast Thailand themselves hosted 116 newspapers in addition to radio, TV and cable.

## International rankings

Organization	Survey	Ranking
Heritage Foundation	Indices of Economic Freedom	50 out of 157
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index	134 out of 169
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index	84 out of 179
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	78 out of 177

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# Tibet

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

SOS Children cares for Tibetan orphans in India. For more information see SOS Children: India

**Tibet** (Tibetan: བོད་; Wylie: *bod*) is a plateau region in Central Asia and the home to the indigenous Tibetan people. With an average elevation of 4,900 metres (16,000 ft), it is the highest region on Earth and is commonly referred to as the "Roof of the World." Geographically, UNESCO and *Encyclopædia Britannica* consider Tibet to be part of Central Asia, while several academic organizations consider it part of South Asia. Since what constitutes Tibet is a matter of much debate (see map, right) neither its size nor population are simple matters of fact.

Tibet was once an independent kingdom but today is part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) with a small part, depending on definitions, controlled by India. The Republic of China (commonly known as Taiwan) also lays a claim to Tibet as part of its exclusive mandate which includes a claim to all the territories currently governed by the PRC. Currently, the PRC government and the Government of Tibet in Exile still disagree over when Tibet became a part of China, and whether the incorporation into China of Tibet is legitimate according to international law.

A unified Tibet first came into being under Songtsän Gampo in the seventh century. From the early 1600s until the 1959 uprising, the Dalai Lamas (Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leaders) were, at least nominally, heads of a centralised Tibetan administration, with political power to administer religious and administrative authority over large parts of Tibet from the traditional capital Lhasa. They are believed to be the emanations of Avalokiteśvara (or "Chenrezig" [*spyän ras gzigs*] in Tibetan), the bodhisattva of compassion.

## Definitions of Tibet



- Tibet Autonomous Region within the People's Republic of China
- Historic Tibet as claimed by Tibetan exile groups
- Tibetan areas as designated by the People's Republic of China
- Chinese-controlled areas claimed by India as part of Aksai Chin
- Indian-controlled areas claimed by China as part of Tibet
- Other areas historically within Tibetan cultural sphere

When the PRC government and some Tibetologists refer to Tibet, it means the areas covering Ü-Tsang and Western Kham, which became present-day the Tibet Autonomous Region, a provincial-level entity of the People's Republic. This definition, however, excludes the former domains of the Dalai Lamas in Amdo and eastern Kham which are part of Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan, and Sichuan.

When the Government of Tibet in Exile and the Tibetan refugee community abroad refer to Tibet, they mean the areas consisting of the traditional provinces of Amdo, Kham, and Ü-Tsang.

The difference in definition is a major source of dispute. The distribution of Amdo and eastern Kham into surrounding provinces was initiated by the Yongzheng Emperor during the 18th century and has been continuously maintained by successive Chinese governments.

Tibetologists further comments on Amdo and Kham's status:

"When the Dalai Lama speaks of Tibet, he speaks for an area more than three times the size of the TAR in which Tibetans live (Kham and Amdo). The historical reality is that the Dalai Lamas have not ruled these outer areas since the mid-eighteenth century, and during the Simla Conference of 1913, the thirteenth Dalai Lama was even willing to sign away rights to them"

"[Dalai Lama] claimed all of Kham and Amdo in the Simla Convention of 1913-14 – most of these areas in fact were not a part of its polity for the two centuries preceding the rise to power of the Communists in China in 1949....The term 'Tibet' refers to the political state ruled by the Dalai Lamas; it does not refer to the ethnic border areas such as Amdo and Kham which were not part of that state in modern times, let alone to Ladakh or Northern Nepal. Until recently, this convention was, as far as I can discern, universally accepted in the scholarly literature"

"The goal of a Greater Tibet was not at all politically realistic. Tibet had not ruled most of these areas for a century or more"

## Name

### In English

The English word *Tibet*, like the word for Tibet in most European languages, is derived from the Arabic word *Tubbat*. This word is derived via Persian from the Turkic word *Töbäd* (plural of *Töbän*), meaning "the heights". In Medieval Chinese, 吐蕃 (pronounced *tufan*), is derived from the same Turkic word. 吐蕃 was pronounced /t'o-bwən/ in Medieval times.

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Flag of Tibet is officially the same as the flag of the People's Republic of China.



Flag of Tibet used intermittently between 1912 and 1950. This version was introduced by the 13th Dalai Lama in 1912. The flag is outlawed in the People's Republic of China.

The exact derivation of the name is, however, still unclear. Some scholars believe that the name derived from that of a people who lived in the region of northeastern Tibet and were referred to as 'Tübüt'. This was the form adapted by the Muslim writers who rendered it Tübbett, Tibbat, etc., from as early as the 9th century, and it then entered European languages from the reports of the medieval European accounts of Piano-Carpini, Rubruck, Marco Polo and the Capuchin monk Francesco della Penna.

PRC scholars favour the theory that "Tibet" is derived from *tübō*.

## In Tibetan

Tibetans call their homeland *Bod* (བོད་), pronounced [pʰøʔ] in Lhasa dialect. It is first attested in the geography of Ptolemy as βᾱται (batai) (Beckwith, C. U. of Indiana Diss. 1977).

## In Chinese

The PRC's Chinese name for Tibet, 西藏 (Xīzàng), is a phonetic transliteration derived from the region called Tsang (western Ü-Tsang). The Chinese name originated during the Qing Dynasty of China, ca. 1700. It can be broken down into “xī” 西 (literally “west”), and “zàng” 藏 (from Ü-Tsang, but also literally “Buddhist scripture,” or “storage” or possibly “treasure”). The pre-1700s historic Chinese term for Tibet was 吐蕃. In modern Standard Mandarin, the first character is pronounced "tǔ". The second character is normally pronounced "fān"; in the context of references to Tibet, most authorities say that it should be pronounced "bō", while some authorities state that it should be pronounced as "fān". A reconstructed Medieval Chinese pronunciation would be /t'obwən/, which comes from the Turkic word for “heights” which is also the origin of the English term “Tibet”. When expressing themselves in Chinese, many exiled Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama's government in Daramsala, now use the term 吐博 Tǔbó.



Tibetan plateau



Pastoral nomads camping near Namtso in 2005

The PRC government equates Tibet with the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). As such, the name “Xīzàng” is equated with the TAR. Some English-speakers reserve “Xīzàng”, the Chinese word transliterated into English, for the TAR, to keep the concept distinct from that of historic Tibet. The character 藏 (zàng) has been used in transcriptions referring to Tsang as early as the Yuan Dynasty, if not earlier, though the modern term “Xizang” (western Tsang) was devised in the 18th century. The Chinese character 藏 (Zàng) has also been generalized to refer to all of Tibet, including other concepts related to Tibet such as the Tibetan language (藏文, Zàngwén) and the Tibetan people (藏族, Zàngzú).

## Language



A Tibetan woman in Lhasa

The Tibetan language is generally classified as a Tibeto-Burman language of the Sino-Tibetan language family although the boundaries between 'Tibetan' and certain other Himalayan languages can be unclear. According to Matthew Kapstein:

From the perspective of historical linguistics, Tibetan most closely resembles Burmese among the major languages of Asia. Grouping these two together with other apparently related languages spoken in the Himalayan lands, as well as in the highlands of Southeast Asia and the Sino-Tibetan frontier regions, linguists have generally concluded that there exists a Tibeto-Burman family of languages.... More controversial is the

theory that the Tibeto-Burman family is itself part of a larger language family, called Sino-Tibetan, and that through it Tibetan and Burmese are distant cousins of Chinese.

The language is spoken in numerous regional dialects which, although sometimes mutually intelligible, generally cannot be understood by the speakers of the different oral forms of Tibetan. It is employed throughout the Tibetan plateau and Bhutan and is also spoken in parts of Nepal and northern India, such as Sikkim. In general, the dialects of central Tibet (including Lhasa), Kham, Amdo and some smaller nearby areas are considered Tibetan dialects. Other forms, particularly Dzongkha, Sikkimese, Sherpa, and Ladakhi, are considered by their speakers, largely for political reasons, to be separate languages. However, if the latter group of Tibetan-type languages are included in the calculation then 'greater Tibetan' is spoken by approximately 6 million people across the Tibetan Plateau. Tibetan is also spoken by approximately 150,000 exile speakers who have fled from modern-day Tibet to India and other countries.

Although spoken Tibetan varies according to the region, the written language, based on Classical Tibetan, is consistent throughout. This is probably due to the long-standing influence of the Tibetan empire, whose rule embraced (and extended at times far beyond) the present Tibetan linguistic area, which runs from northern Pakistan in the west to Yunnan and Sichuan in the east, and from north of the Kokonor lake (Qinghai) south as far as Bhutan. The Tibetan language has its own script that it shares with Ladakhi and Dzongkha, which is derived from the ancient Indian Brahmi script.



## History



King Songtsen Gampo

The general history of Tibet begins with the rule of Songtsän Gampo (604–50 CE) who united parts of the Yarlung River Valley and ruled Tibet as a kingdom. He also brought in many reforms and Tibetan power spread rapidly creating a large and powerful empire. In 640 he married Princess Wencheng, the niece of the powerful Chinese emperor Emperor Taizong of Tang China.

Under the next few kings who followed Songsten Gampo, Buddhism became established as the state religion and Tibetan power increased even further over large areas of Central Asia while major inroads were made into Chinese territory, even reaching the Chinese capital Chang'an (modern Xian) in late 763. However, Tibetan troops occupied Chang'an for only fifteen days.

Nanzhao (in Yunnan and neighbouring regions) remained under Tibetan control from 750 to 794, when they turned on their Tibetan overlords and helped the Chinese inflict a serious defeat on the Tibetans.

The Tibetans were allied with the Arabs and eastern Turks. In 747, the hold of Tibet was loosened by the campaign of general Gao Xianzhi, who tried to re-open the direct communications between Central Asia and Kashmir. By 750 the Tibetans had lost almost all of their central Asian possessions to the Chinese. However, after Gao Xianzhi's defeat by the Arabs and Qarluqs at the Battle of Talas river (751), Chinese influence decreased rapidly and Tibetan influence resumed. In 821/822 CE Tibet and China signed a remarkable peace treaty. A bilingual account of this treaty including details of the borders between the two countries are inscribed on a stone pillar which stands outside the Jokhang temple in Lhasa. Tibet continued as a Central Asian empire until the mid-9th century.

### Tibet and the Mongols

At the end of the 1230s, the Mongols turned their attention to Tibet. At that time, Mongol armies had already conquered Northern China, much of Central Asia, and as far as Russia and modern Ukraine. The Tibetan nobility, however, was fragmented and mainly occupied with internal strife. Göden, a brother of Güyük, entered the country in 1240. A second invasion led to the submission almost all Tibetan states. In 1244, Göden summoned the Sakya Pandita to his court, and in 1247 appointed Sakya the Mongolian viceroy for Central Tibet, though the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo remained "under direct Mongol rule". When Kublai Khan founded Yuan Dynasty in 1271, Tibet became a part of the Yuan Dynasty.

Between 1346 and 1354, towards the end of the Yuan Dynasty, the House of Pagmodru toppled the Sakya. The following 80 years were a period of relative stability. They also saw the birth of the Gelugpa school (also known as *Yellow Hats*) by the disciples of Tsongkhapa Lobsang Dragpa, and the founding of the important Ganden, Drepung, and Sera monasteries near Lhasa. After the 1430s, the country entered another period of internal power struggles.

In 1578, Altan Khan of the Tümed Mongols invited Sonam Gyatso, a high lama of the Gelugpa school. They met near Khökh Nuur, where Altan Khan first referred to Sönam Gyatso as the *Dalai Lama*; *Dalai* being the Mongolian translation of the Tibetan name Gyatso, or "Ocean".

### Events leading to Qing dominion of Tibet

In the 1630s, Tibet became entangled in the power struggles between the rising Manchu and various Mongol and Oirad factions. Ligden Khan of the Mongolian Chakhar tribe, retreating from the Manchu forces, set out to destroy the Yellow Hat Gelug school in Tibet but died on the way near Kokonor, in 1634. His vassal Tsogt Tajj continued the fight but was defeated and killed by Güshi Khan of the Khoshud in 1637, who, in turn, became the overlord over Tibet, and acted as a "Protector of the Yellow Church". Güshi helped the Fifth Dalai Lama to establish himself as the highest spiritual and political authority in Tibet and destroyed any potential rivals.

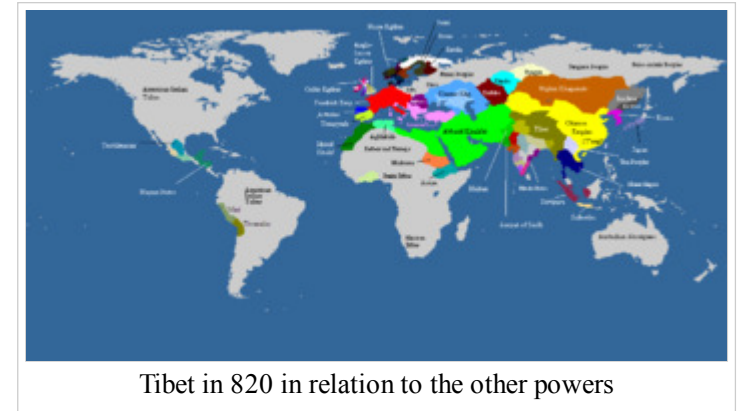
In 1705, Lobzang Khan of the Khoshud used the 6th Dalai Lama's refusal of the role of a monk (although the encumbant did not reject his political role as Dalai Lama) as an excuse to take control of Tibet. The regent was murdered, and the Dalai Lama sent to Beijing. He died on the way, also near Kokonor, ostensibly from illness. Lobzang Khan appointed a new Dalai Lama, who, however, was not accepted by the Gelugpa school.

A rival reincarnation was found in the region of Kokonor. The Dzungars invaded Tibet in 1717, deposed and killed a pretender to the position of Dalai Lama (who had been promoted by Lhabzang), which met with widespread approval. However, the Dzungars soon began to loot the holy places of Lhasa which brought a swift response from Emperor Kangxi in 1718, but his military expedition was annihilated by the Dzungars not far from Lhasa.

Emperor Kangxi finally expelled the Dzungars from Tibet in 1720 and the troops were hailed as liberators. They brought Kelzang Gyatso with them from Kumbum to Lhasa and he was installed as the Seventh Dalai Lama in 1721, though they did not make Tibet a province, allowed it to maintain its own officials and legal and administrative systems, and levied no taxes. However, the Manchu Qing put Amdo under their control in 1724, and incorporated eastern Kham into neighbouring Chinese provinces in 1728. The Qing government sent a resident commissioner, namely *Amban*, to Lhasa. In 1751, Emperor Qianlong installed the Dalai Lama as both the spiritual leader and political leader of Tibet leading the government, namely *Kashag*.

### Tibet under Qing

<http://cd3wd.com> [wikipedia-for-schools](http://wikipedia-for-schools) <http://gutenberg.org> page no: 482 of 537

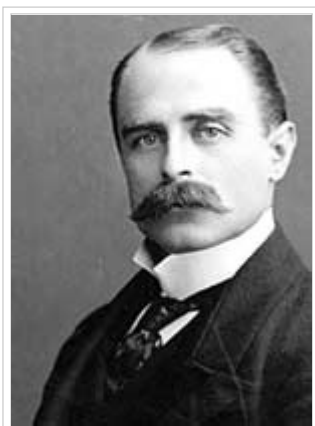


Tibet in 820 in relation to the other powers



Kublai Khan

While the ancient relations between Tibet and China are complicated, there can be no question regarding the subordination of Tibet to Manchu-ruled China following first decades of the 18th century. In 1788, Gurkha forces sent by Bahadur Shah, the Regent of Nepal, invaded Tibet, occupying a number of frontier districts. The young Panchen Lama fled to Lhasa and Qing Emperor Qianlong sent troops to Lhasa, upon which the Nepalese withdrew agreeing to pay a large annual sum. In 1791 the Nepalese Gurkhas invaded Tibet a second time, seizing Shigatse and destroyed, plundered, and desecrated the great Tashilhunpo Monastery. The Panchen Lama was forced to flee to Lhasa once again. Emperor Qianlong then sent an army of 17,000 men to Tibet. In 1793, with the assistance of Tibetan troops, they managed to drive the Nepalese troops to within about 30 km of Kathmandu.



Francis Younghusband

The first Europeans to arrive in Tibet were Portuguese missionaries in 1624 and were welcomed by the Tibetans who allowed them to build a church. The 18th century brought more Jesuits and Capuchins from Europe who gradually met opposition from Tibetan lamas who finally expelled them from Tibet in 1745. However, at the time not all Europeans were banned from the country — in 1774 a Scottish nobleman, George Bogle, came to Shigatse to investigate trade for the British East India Company, introducing the first potatoes into Tibet.

However, by the 19th century the situation of foreigners in Tibet grew more tenuous. The British Empire was encroaching from northern India into the Himalayas and Afghanistan and the Russian Empire of the tsars was expanding south into Central Asia and each power became suspicious of intent in Tibet. Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, the Hungarian scientist spent 20 years in British India (4 years in Ladakh) trying to visit Tibet. He created the first Tibetan-English dictionary.

By the 1850s Tibet had banned all foreigners from Tibet and shut its borders to all outsiders.

In 1865 Great Britain began secretly mapping Tibet. Trained Indian surveyor-spies disguised as pilgrims or traders counted their strides on their travels across Tibet and took readings at night. Then, in 1904 a British mission under the command of Colonel

Francis Younghusband, accompanied by a large military escort, invaded Tibet and reached Lhasa.

The principal pretext for the British invasion was a fear, which proved to be unfounded, that Russia was extending its power into Tibet and possibly even giving military aid to the local Tibetan government. But on his way to Lhasa, Younghusband slaughtered many Tibetan troops in Gyangzê who tried to stop the British advance.

When the mission reached Lhasa, the Dalai Lama had already fled to Urga in Mongolia, Younghusband found the option of returning to India empty-handed untenable, he proceeded to draft a treaty unilaterally, and have it signed in the Potala by the regent, Ganden Tri Rinpoche, and any other local officials he could gather together as an *ad hoc* government. The treaty made provisions for the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet to be respected, for free trade between British and Tibetan subjects, and for an indemnity to be paid from the Qing court to the British Government for its expenses in dispatching armed troops to Lhasa. The provisions of this 1904 treaty were confirmed in a 1906 treaty Anglo-Chinese Convention signed between Britain and China. The British, for a fee from the Qing court, also agreed "not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet", while China engaged "not to *permit* any other foreign state to interfere with the territory or internal administration of Tibet".

The position of British Trade Agent at Gyangzê was occupied from 1904 until 1944. It was not until 1937, with the creation of the position of "Head of British Mission Lhasa", that a British officer had a permanent posting in Lhasa itself.

In 1910, the Qing government sent a military expedition of its own to establish direct Chinese rule and deposed the Dalai Lama in an imperial edict. The Dalai Lama once again fled, this time to British India, in February 1910. The Dalai Lama returned to Tibet from India in July 1912, and by the end of the year the Chinese troops in Tibet had returned, via India, to China Proper.

### Proclaiming independence

In early 1913, Agvan Dorzhiev and two other Tibetan representatives signed a treaty between Tibet and Mongolia in Urga, proclaiming mutual recognition and their independence from China. The 13th Dalai Lama himself, however, denied he authorized Agvan Dorzhiev to conclude any treaties on behalf of Tibet. The Tibetan government never ratified this treaty and no Tibetan version of this treaty was published by Tibetan government. A Russian diplomat pointed out to the British ambassador that since Agvan Dorzhiev himself is a Russian subject, his legal ability to sign such a treaty is in question.

Some British authors have even disputed the existence of such a treaty but scholars of Mongolia generally are positive it exists, as were contemporary authors. The Mongolian text of the treaty has, for example, been published by the Mongolian Academy of Sciences in 1982. John Snelling says: "Though sometimes doubted, this Tibet-Mongolia Treaty certainly existed. It was signed on 29 December 1912 (OS) [that is, by the Julian Calendar - thus making it 8 January 1913 by the Gregorian Calendar that we use] by Dorzhiev and two Tibetans on behalf of the Dalai Lama, and by two Mongolians for the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu." He then quotes the full wording of the treaty (in English) from the British Public Records Office: FO [Foreign Office] 371 1609 7144: Sir George Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, St. Petersburg, dated 11 February 1913.

Nevertheless, pursuits of complete independence were officially renounced by Tibet and Mongolia respectively in 1914 and 1915. On 3 July, 1914, The Tibetans signed the Simla Convention which reaffirmed Chinese suzerainty and Tibet's status as "*part of Chinese territory*", and on 25 May, 1915, Mongolia



Sera Monastery, Lhasa, Tibet (2006)

signed a tripartite treaty reaffirming, at least nominally, subordination to China.

The subsequent outbreak of World War I and the division of China into military cliques ruled by warlords caused the Western powers and the infighting factions within China to lose interest in Tibet, and the 13th Dalai Lama ruled undisturbed until his death in 1933. At that time, the government of Tibet controlled all of Ü-Tsang (Dbus-gtsang) and western Kham (Khams), somewhat larger than the Tibet Autonomous Region today. Eastern Kham, separated by the Yangtze River, was under the control of Chinese warlord Liu Wenhui.

In 1935 the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso was born in Amdo in eastern Tibet and was recognized as the latest reincarnation. He was taken to Lhasa in 1937 where he was later given an official ceremony in 1939. In 1944, during World War II, two Austrian mountaineers, Heinrich Harrer and Peter Aufschnaiter came to Lhasa, where Harrer became a tutor and friend to the young Dalai Lama giving him a sound knowledge of western culture and modern society, until he was forced to leave in 1959.

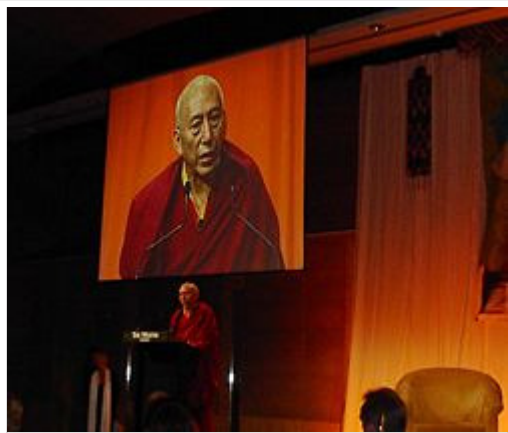
Since 1951, Tibet has been under China's control. According to a 1951 agreement between the Tibetan government and the PRC, Dalai Lama-ruled Tibetan area was supposed to be a largely autonomous region of China.

### **'feudal serfdom'**

Supporters of the PRC have characterised the socio-economy of Tibet prior to Communism as 'feudal serfdom'. However, supporters of an independent Tibet objected to this assessment. For a discussion of the debate see Allegations of serfdom in Tibet. For a description of the traditional social structure see Social classes of Tibet.

A rebellion against the Chinese occupation was led by noblemen and monasteries and broke out in Amdo and eastern Kham in June 1956. The insurrection, supported by the American CIA, eventually spread to Lhasa. It was crushed by 1959. During this campaign, tens of thousands of Tibetans were killed and the 14th Dalai Lama and other government principals fled to exile in India.

### **Tibet under PRC**



The Chairman of the Cabinet of the CTA,  
Samdhong Rinpoche

The Central Tibetan Administration states that the number that have died in the Great Leap Forward, of violence, or other indirect causes since 1950 is approximately 1.2 million, which the Chinese Communist Party denies. The Chinese Communist Party's official toll of deaths recorded for the whole of China for the years of the Great Leap Forward is 14 million, but scholars have estimated the number of the famine victims to be between 20 and 43 million. According to Patrick French, the estimate of 1.2 million in Tibet is not reliable because Tibetans were not able to process the data well enough to produce a credible total. There were, however, many casualties, with a figure of 400,000 extrapolated from a calculation Warren W. Smith made from census reports of Tibet which show 200,000 "missing" from Tibet.

The Dalai Lama has stated his willingness to negotiate with China for genuine autonomy, but according to the government in exile and Tibetan independence groups, most Tibetans still call for full Tibetan independence. The Dalai Lama sees the millions of government-imported Han immigrants and preferential socioeconomic policies, as presenting an urgent threat to the Tibetan nation and culture. Tibetan exile groups say that despite recent attempts to restore the appearance of original Tibetan culture to attract tourism, the traditional Tibetan way of life is now irrevocably changed. Tashi Wangdi, the Representative of the Dalai Lama, stated in an interview that China's Western China Development program "is providing facilities for the resettlement of Han Chinese in Tibet."

Projects that the PRC claims to have benefited Tibet as part of the China Western Development economic plan, such as the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, have roused fears of facilitating military mobilisation and Han migration. There is still ethnic imbalance in appointments and promotions to the civil and judicial services in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, with disproportionately few ethnic Tibetans appointed to these posts.

The PRC, on the other hand, claims that its rule over Tibet is an unalloyed improvement, but foreign governments continue to make occasional protests about aspects of PRC rule in Tibet because of frequent reports of human rights violation in Tibet by groups such as Human Rights Watch. The government of the PRC maintains that the Tibetan Government did almost nothing to improve the Tibetans' material and political standard of life during its rule from 1913–59, and that they opposed any reforms proposed by the Chinese government. According to the Chinese government, this is the reason for the tension that grew between some central government officials and the local Tibetan government in 1959.

The government of the PRC also rejects claims that the lives of Tibetans have deteriorated, and states that the lives of Tibetans have been improved immensely compared to self rule before 1950.

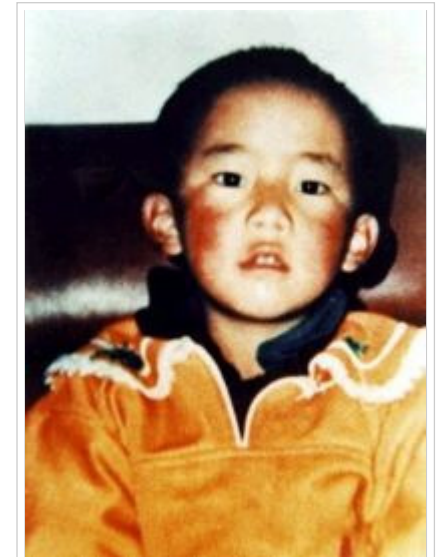
The Cultural Revolution and the cultural damage it wrought upon Tibet and, indeed, the entire PRC is generally condemned as a nationwide catastrophe, whose main instigators, in the PRC's view, the so-called Gang of Four, have been brought to justice. The China Western Development plan is viewed by the PRC as a massive, benevolent, and patriotic undertaking by the wealthier eastern coast to help the western parts of China, including Tibet, catch up in prosperity and living standards.



The Tibetan Parliament in Exile in Dharamsala, India.

These claims are, however, largely discredited by many Tibetans. In 1989, the Panchen Lama was finally allowed to return to Shigatse, where he addressed a crowd of 30,000 and described what he saw as the suffering of Tibet and the harm being done to his country in the name of socialist reform under the rule of the PRC in terms reminiscent of the petition he had presented to Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1962.. Five days later, he mysteriously died of a massive heart attack at the age of 50.

In 1995 the Dalai Lama named 6 year old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama without Chinese approval, while the PRC named another child, Gyancaïn Norbu in conflict. Gyancaïn Norbu was raised in Beijing and has appeared occasionally on state media. The PRC-selected Panchen Lama is rejected by exiled Tibetans and anti-China groups who commonly refer to him as the "Panchen Zuma" (literally "fake Panchen Lama"). Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family have gone missing — believed by some to be imprisoned by China — and under a hidden identity for protection and privacy according to the PRC. exile.



Gedhun Choekyi Nyima 11th Panchen Lama claimed by exiled Tibetan

In 2001 representatives of Tibet succeeded in gaining accreditation at a United Nations-sponsored meeting of non-governmental organizations. On August 29 Jampal Chosang, the head of the Tibetan coalition, stated that China had introduced "a new form of apartheid" in Tibet because "Tibetan culture, religion, and national identity are considered a threat" to China.

In 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's offered to hold talks with the 14th Dalai Lama on the Tibet issue, provided he dropped the demand for independence. The Dalai Lama said in an interview with the South China Morning Post "We are willing to be part of the People's Republic of China, to have it govern and guarantee to preserve our Tibetan culture, spirituality and our environment." A statement that was seen as a renewed diplomatic offensive by the Tibetan government-in-exile. He had already said he would accept Chinese sovereignty over Tibet but insisted on real autonomy over its religious and cultural life. Tibetan government-in-exile, called on the Chinese government to respond. The move was seen to be unpopular with many Tibetans.

In January 2007 the Dalai Lama, in an interview on a private television channel, said "What we demand from the Chinese authority is more autonomy for Tibetans to protect their culture." He added that he had told the Tibetan people not to think in terms of history and to accept Tibet as a part of China.

Talks between representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government began again in May, 2008 with little result, but more are scheduled to be held in June.

## Geography

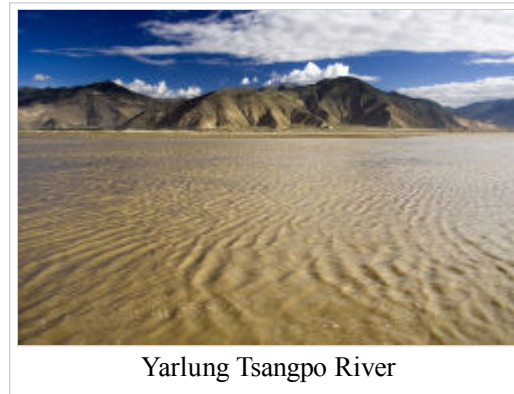
Tibet is located on the Tibetan Plateau, the world's highest region. The world's highest, Mount Everest, is on Nepal's border with Tibet. The average altitude is about 3,000 m in the south and 4,500 m in the north.

Several major rivers have their source in the Tibetan Plateau (mostly in present-day Qinghai Province). These include Yangtze, Yellow River, Indus River, Mekong, Brahmaputra River, Ganges, Salween and the Yarlung Tsangpo River. The Indus, Brahmaputra rivers originate from a lake (Tib: Tso Mapham) in Western Tibet, near **Mount Kailash**. The mountain is a holy pilgrimage for both Hindus and Tibetans. The Hindus consider the mountain to be the abode of Lord Shiva. The Tibetan name for Mt Kailash is Khang Rinpoche. Tibet has numerous high-altitude lakes referred to in Tibetan as *tso* or *co*. These include Lake Manasarovar, Namtso, Pangong Tso, Yamdrok Lake, Siling Co, Lhamo La-tso, Lumajangdong Co, Lake Puma Yumco, Lake Paiku, Lake Rakshastal, Dagze Co and Dong Co

The atmosphere is severely dry nine months of the year, and average annual snowfall is only 18 inches, due to



Yamdrok tso lake



Yarlung Tsangpo River

unchecked across vast expanses of arid plain. The Indian monsoon exerts some influence on eastern Tibet. Northern Tibet is subject to high temperatures in the summer and intense cold in the winter.

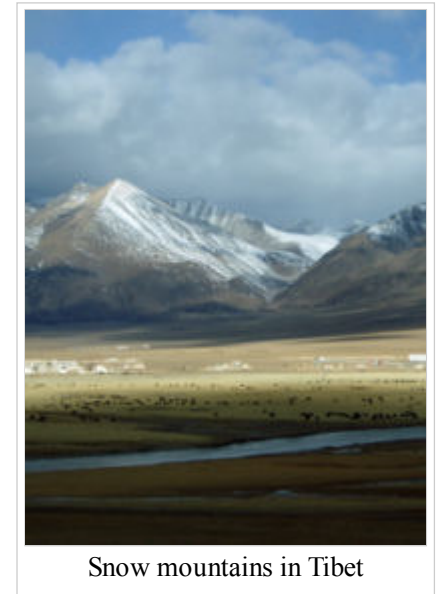
Historic Tibet consists of several regions. These include Amdo (*A mdo*) in the northeast, incorporated by China into the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan., Kham (*Khams*) in the east, divided between Sichuan, northern Yunnan and Qinghai., Western Kham, part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Ü-Tsang (*dBus gTsang*) (Ü in the center, Tsang in the centre-west, and Ngari (*mNga' ris*) in the far west), part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

Tibetan cultural influences extend to the neighboring states of Bhutan, Nepal, adjacent regions of India such as Sikkim and Ladakh, and adjacent provinces of



Tibet is located on the Tibetan Plateau, the world's highest region.

the rain shadow effect whereby mountain ranges prevent moisture from the ocean from reaching the plateaus. Western passes receive small amounts of fresh snow each year but remain traversable all year round. Low temperatures are prevalent throughout these western regions, where bleak desolation is unrelieved by any vegetation beyond the size of low bushes, and where wind sweeps



Snow mountains in Tibet



China where Tibetan Buddhism is the predominant religion.

On the border with India, the region popularly known among Chinese as South Tibet is claimed by China and administered by India as the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

## Cities, towns and villages



Looking across the square at Jokhang temple, Lhasa

There are over 800 settlements in Tibet, Lhasa is Tibet's traditional capital and the capital of Tibet Autonomous Region. Lhasa contains the world heritage site the Potala Palace and Norbulingka, the residences of the Dalai Lama. Lhasa contains a number of significant temples and monasteries which are deeply engrained in its history including Jokhang and Ramoche Temple.

Shigatse is the country's second largest city, west of Lhasa. Gyantse, Chamdo are also amongst the largest.

Other cities in Historic Tibet include, Nagchu, Nyingchi, Nedong, Barkam, Sakya, Gartse, Pelbar, Lhatse, and Tingri; in Sichuan, Kangding (Dartsedo); in Qinghai, Jyekundo or Yushu, Machen, and Golmud. There is also a large Tibetan settlement in South India near Kushalanagara. India created this settlement for Tibetan refugees which had fled to India.

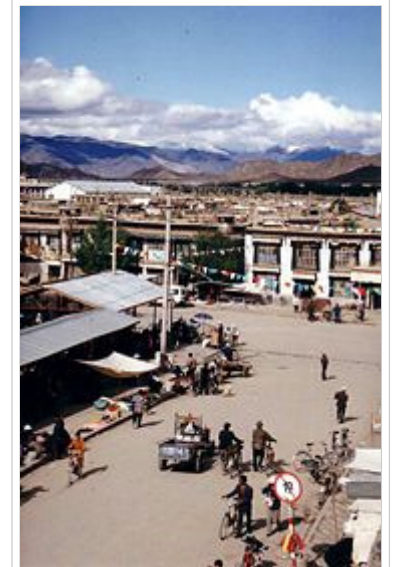
## Economy



The Tibetan yak is an integral part of Tibetan life.

According to Chinese sources, Tibet's GDP in 2001 was 13.9 billion yuan (USD1.8billion). The Central government exempts Tibet from all taxation and provides 90% of Tibet's government expenditures. The Tibetan economy is dominated by subsistence agriculture. Due to limited arable land, livestock raising is the primary occupation mainly on the Tibetan Plateau, among them are sheep, cattle, goats, camels, yaks and horses. However, the main crops grown are barley, wheat, buckwheat, rye, potatoes and assorted fruits and vegetables.

In recent years, due to the increased interest in Tibetan Buddhism, tourism has become an increasingly important sector, and is actively promoted by the authorities. The Tibetan economy is heavily subsidized by the Central government and government cadres receive the second-highest salaries in China.



Shigatse

Tourism brings in the most income from the sale of handicrafts. These include Tibetan hats, jewelry (silver and gold), wooden items, clothing, quilts, fabrics, Tibetan rugs and carpets. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway which links the region to Qinghai in China proper was opened in 2006. The Chinese government claims that the line will promote the development of impoverished Tibet. But opponents argue the railway will harm Tibet. For instance, Tibetan opponents contend that it would only draw more Han Chinese residents, the country's dominant ethnic group, who have been migrating steadily to Tibet over the last decade, bringing with them their popular culture. Opponents believe that the large influx of Han Chinese will ultimately extinguish the local culture.

Other opponents argue that the railway will damage Tibet's fragile ecology and that most of its economic benefits will go to migrant Han Chinese. As activists call for a boycott of the railway, the Dalai Lama has urged Tibetans to "wait and see" what benefits the new line might bring to them. According to the Government-in-exile's spokesmen, the Dalai Lama welcomes the building of the railway, "conditioned on the fact that the railroad will bring benefit to the majority of Tibetans."

In January 2007, the Chinese government issued a report outlining the discovery of a large mineral deposit under the Tibetan Plateau. The deposit has an estimated value of \$128 billion and may double Chinese reserves of zinc, copper, and lead. The Chinese government sees this as a way to alleviate the nation's dependence on foreign mineral imports for its growing economy. However, critics worry that mining these vast resources will harm Tibet's fragile ecosystem as well take valuable resources away from the Tibetan people.

## Demographics



The world's highest railway connecting Tibet with eastern Chinese provinces for the first time by rail. Operational since July 2006.



An elderly Tibetan lady



Ethnelinguistic Groups of Tibetan language,  
1967 ( See entire map, which includes a key)

Historically, the population of Tibet consisted of primarily ethnic Tibetans. Other ethnic groups in Tibet include Menba (Monpa), Lhoba, Mongols and Hui Chinese. According to tradition the original ancestors of the Tibetan people, as represented by the six red bands in the Tibetan flag, are: the Se, Mu, Dong, Tong, Dru and Ra.

The issue of the proportion of the Han Chinese population in Tibet is a politically sensitive one. The Central Tibetan Administration, an exile group, says that the PRC has actively swamped Tibet with Han Chinese migrants in order to alter Tibet's demographic makeup.

### View of the Tibetan exile community

Between the 1960s and 1980s, many prisoners (over 1 million, according to Harry Wu) were sent to laogai camps in Amdo ( Qinghai), where they were then employed locally after release. Since the 1980s, increasing economic liberalization and internal mobility has also resulted in the influx of many Han Chinese into Tibet for work or settlement, though the actual number of this floating population remains disputed.

The Government of Tibet in Exile claims that, despite official statistics to the contrary, in reality non-ethnic Tibetans (including Han Chinese and Hui Muslims) outnumber ethnic Tibetans. It claims that this is as a result of an active policy of demographically swamping the Tibetan people and further diminishing any chances of Tibetan political independence. The Dalai Lama has recently been reported as saying that the Tibetans had been reduced to a minority "in his homeland", by reference to population figures of Lhasa, and accusing China of "demographic aggression".



Ethnic Tibetan autonomous entities set up by the People's Republic of China. Opponents to the PRC dispute the actual level of autonomy.



Traditional Kham houses



A young Tibetan girl in a valley in the Kham region of Tibet.

The Government of Tibet in Exile questions all statistics given by the PRC government, since they do not include members of the People's Liberation Army garrisoned in Tibet, or the large floating population of unregistered migrants. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway ( Xining to Lhasa) is also a major concern, as it is believed to further facilitate the influx of migrants.

The Government of Tibet in Exile quotes an issue of *People's Daily* published in 1959 to claim that the Tibetan population has dropped significantly since 1959. According to the article, figures from the National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC show that the autonomous region of Tibet was populated by 1,273,969 persons. In the Tibetan sectors of Kham, 3,381,064 Tibetans were counted. In Qinghai and other Tibetan sectors that are incorporated in Gansu, 1,675,534 Tibetans were counted. According to the total of these three numbers, the Tibetan population attained 6,330,567 in 1959.

In 2000, the number of Tibetans as a whole of these regions was about 5,400,000 according to National Bureau of Statistics.

The Tibetan exile Government's analysis of these statistics originating from National Bureau of Statistics shows that in between 1959 and 2000, the Tibetan population decreased by about one million, a 15% decline. During the same period, the Chinese population doubled, and the world-wide population increased by 3-fold. This analysis gives an additional argument concerning the estimation of the number of Tibetan deaths during the period between 1959 and 1979. It also suggests the existence of a demographic deficit of the Tibetan population and the precise time course and causes must be specified.

The accuracy of this 1959 Tibetan population estimate quoted by the Government of Tibet in Exile is in conflict with the findings of the 1954 Chinese census report. The census states that the total population of the autonomous region of Tibet was 1,273,969; the total population of Kham was 3,381,064; and the total population of Qinghai was 1,675,534. These numbers were taken by the Government of Tibet in Exile as the population of Tibetans in each province.

## View of the People's Republic of China

The PRC government does not view itself as an occupying power and has vehemently denied allegations of demographic swamping. The PRC also does not recognize Greater Tibet as claimed by the government of Tibet in Exile, saying that the idea was engineered by foreign imperialists as a plot to divide China amongst themselves, (Mongolia being a striking precedent, gaining independence with Soviet backing and subsequently aligning itself with the Soviet Union) and that those areas outside the TAR were not controlled by the Tibetan government before 1959 in the first place, having been administered instead by other surrounding provinces for centuries.

The PRC gives the number of Tibetans in Tibet Autonomous Region as 2.4 million, as opposed to 190,000 non-Tibetans, and the number of Tibetans in all Tibetan autonomous entities combined (slightly smaller than the Greater Tibet claimed by exiled Tibetans) as 5.0 million, as opposed to 2.3 million non-Tibetans. In the TAR itself, much of the Han population is to be found in Lhasa. Population control policies like the one-child policy only apply to Han Chinese, not to minorities such as Tibetans .

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Jampa Phuntsok, chairman of the TAR, has also said that the central government has no policy of migration into Tibet due to its harsh high-altitude conditions, that the 6% Han in the TAR is a very fluid group mainly doing business or working, and that there is no immigration problem.

With regards to the historical population of ethnic Tibetans, the Chinese government claims that according to the First National Census conducted in 1954, there were 2,770,000 ethnic Tibetans in China, including 1,270,000 in the TAR; whereas in the Fourth National Census conducted in 1990, there were 4,590,000 ethnic Tibetans in China, including 2,090,000 in the TAR. These figures are used to advance the claim that the Tibetan population has doubled since 1951.

This table includes all Tibetan autonomous entities in the PRC, plus Xining PLC and Haidong P. The latter two are included to complete the figures for Qinghai province, and also because they are claimed as parts of Greater Tibet by the Government of Tibet in exile.

P = Prefecture; AP = Autonomous prefecture; PLC = Prefecture-level city; AC = Autonomous county.

Excludes members of the People's Liberation Army in active service.

Major ethnic groups in Greater Tibet by region, 2000 census.							
	Total	Tibetans		Han Chinese		others	
Tibet Autonomous Region:	2,616,329	2,427,168	<b>92.8%</b>	158,570	6.1%	30,591	1.2%
- Lhasa PLC	474,499	387,124	<b>81.6%</b>	80,584	17.0%	6,791	1.4%
- Qamdo Prefecture	586,152	563,831	<b>96.2%</b>	19,673	3.4%	2,648	0.5%
- Shannan Prefecture	318,106	305,709	<b>96.1%</b>	10,968	3.4%	1,429	0.4%
- Xigazê Prefecture	634,962	618,270	<b>97.4%</b>	12,500	2.0%	4,192	0.7%
- Nagqu Prefecture	366,710	357,673	<b>97.5%</b>	7,510	2.0%	1,527	0.4%
- Ngari Prefecture	77,253	73,111	<b>94.6%</b>	3,543	4.6%	599	0.8%
- Nyingchi Prefecture	158,647	121,450	<b>76.6%</b>	23,792	15.0%	13,405	8.4%
Qinghai Province:	4,822,963	1,086,592	22.5%	2,606,050	<b>54.0%</b>	1,130,321	23.4%
- Xining PLC	1,849,713	96,091	5.2%	1,375,013	<b>74.3%</b>	378,609	20.5%
- Haidong Prefecture	1,391,565	128,025	9.2%	783,893	<b>56.3%</b>	479,647	34.5%
- Haibei AP	258,922	62,520	24.1%	94,841	36.6%	101,561	<b>39.2%</b>
- Huangnan AP	214,642	142,360	<b>66.3%</b>	16,194	7.5%	56,088	26.1%
- Hainan AP	375,426	235,663	<b>62.8%</b>	105,337	28.1%	34,426	9.2%

- Golog AP	137,940	126,395	<b>91.6%</b>	9,096	6.6%	2,449	1.8%
- Gyêgu AP	262,661	255,167	<b>97.1%</b>	5,970	2.3%	1,524	0.6%
- Haixi AP	332,094	40,371	12.2%	215,706	<b>65.0%</b>	76,017	22.9%
Tibetan areas in Sichuan province							
- Ngawa AP	847,468	455,238	<b>53.7%</b>	209,270	24.7%	182,960	21.6%
- Garzê AP	897,239	703,168	<b>78.4%</b>	163,648	18.2%	30,423	3.4%
- Muli AC	124,462	60,679	<b>48.8%</b>	27,199	21.9%	36,584	29.4%
Tibetan areas in Yunnan province							
- Dêqên AP	353,518	117,099	33.1%	57,928	16.4%	178,491	<b>50.5%</b>
Tibetan areas in Gansu province							
- Gannan AP	640,106	329,278	<b>51.4%</b>	267,260	41.8%	43,568	6.8%
- Tianzhu AC	221,347	66,125	29.9%	139,190	<b>62.9%</b>	16,032	7.2%
Total for Greater Tibet:							
With Xining and Haidong	10,523,432	5,245,347	<b>49.8%</b>	3,629,115	34.5%	1,648,970	15.7%
Without Xining and Haidong	7,282,154	5,021,231	<b>69.0%</b>	1,470,209	20.2%	790,714	10.9%

## Human rights

According to the non-government Save Tibet website, the Tibetan people are denied most rights guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the rights to self-determination, freedom of speech, assembly, movement, expression, and travel. Elliot Sperling, an Associate Professor of Tibetan Studies at Indiana University, in a statement to the Human Rights Watch, also detailed human rights violation in Tibet. The Tibet Justice.org claims that according to UN Development Programme data, Tibet is ranked the lowest among China's 31 provinces, and is ranked 153 out of the 160 countries on the Human Development Index.

Amnesty International has stated that political prisoners are often beaten and tortured, and sometimes summarily executed. Since the 1988 ratification of the UN Convention Against Torture by China, 69 Tibetans are recorded as having died as a result of torture in Chinese prisons. Human rights groups have confirmed by name over 700 Tibetan political prisoners in Tibet, many of them detained without charge or trial.

Tibetologist Thomas Laird claims that there is no evidence to support China's claim that Tibet is autonomous, as all local legislation is subject to approval of the

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central government in Beijing.

The Tibetan exile government claims that China does not allow independent human rights organisations into Tibet, and foreign delegations invited to Tibet are denied independent access to meet with Tibetans. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy claims that more than 11,000 monks and nuns have been expelled from Tibet since 1996 for opposing "patriotic re-education" sessions conducted at monasteries and nunneries under the "Strike Hard" campaign.

Thomas Laird also claims that China continues to encourage the transfer of Chinese settlers into Tibet. This threatens the survival of the Tibetan religious, cultural and national identity. The Free Tibet website claims that unemployment in schools, discussion of Tibetan cultural, religious and social issues is discouraged, and Chinese culture is promoted.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy claims that unemployment among Tibetans is high. An unequal taxation system further exacerbates the conditions of poverty for Tibetans in rural areas. Many basic rights, such as the right to housing, education and health, remain unfulfilled.

## **Culture**



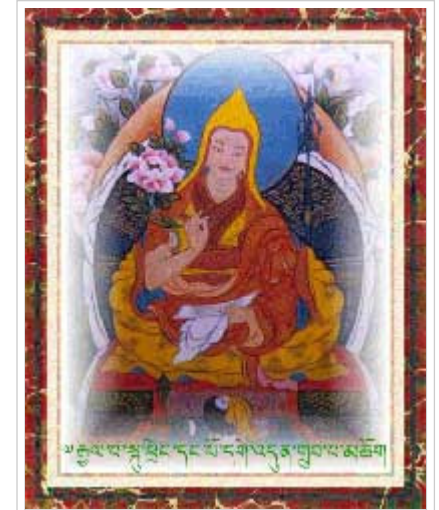
## Religion

### Tibetan Buddhism

Religion and spirituality is extremely important to the Tibetans and has a strong influence over all aspects of lives; ingrained deeply into their cultural heritage. Bön is the ancient traditional religion of Tibet, but following the introduction of Tantric Buddhism into Tibet by Padmasambhava this became eclipsed by Tibetan Buddhism, a distinctive form of Vajrayana. Tibetan Buddhism is practiced not only in Tibet but also in Mongolia, parts of northern India, the Buryat Republic, the Tuva Republic, and in the Republic of Kalmykia.

Tibetan Buddhism has four main traditions (the suffix *pa* is comparable to "er" in English):

- **Gelug(pa)**, *Way of Virtue*, also known casually as *Yellow Hat*, whose spiritual head is the Ganden Tripa and whose temporal, the Dalai Lama. Successive Dalai Lamas ruled **Tibet** from the mid-17th to mid-20th centuries. This order was founded in the 14th to 15th century by Je Tsongkhapa, based on the foundations of the Kadampa tradition. Tsongkhapa was renowned for both his scholasticism and his virtue. The Dalai Lama belongs to the Gelugpa school, and is regarded as the embodiment of the Bodhisattva of Compassion.
- **Kagyupa**, *Oral Lineage*. This contains one major subsect and one minor subsect. The first, the Dagpo Kagyu, encompasses those Kagyu schools that trace back to Gampopa. In turn, the Dagpo Kagyu consists of four major sub-sects: the Karma Kagyu, headed by a Karmapa, the Tsalpa Kagyu, the Barom Kagyu, and Pagtru Kagyu. There are further eight minor sub-sects, all of which trace their root to Pagtru Kagyu. Among the eight sub-sects the most notable of are the Drikung Kagyu and the Drukpa Kagyu. The once-obscure Shangpa Kagyu, which was famously represented by the 20th century teacher Kalu Rinpoche, traces its history back to the Indian master Niguma, sister of Kagyu lineage holder Naropa. This is an oral tradition which is very much concerned with the experiential dimension of meditation. Its most famous exponent was Milarepa, an eleventh century mystic.
- **Nyingma(pa)**, *The Ancient Ones*. This is the oldest, the original order founded by Padmasambhava.
- **Sakya(pa)**, *Grey Earth*, headed by the Sakya Trizin, founded by Khon Konchog Gyalpo, a disciple of the great translator Drokmi Lotsawa. Sakya Pandita 1182–1251CE was the great grandson of Khon Konchog Gyalpo. This school very much represents the scholarly tradition.



The 1st Dalai Lama



A young monk at Labrang

### Islam

In Tibetan cities, there are also small communities of Muslims, known as Kachee (Kache), who trace their origin to immigrants from three main regions: Kashmir (Kachee Yul in ancient Tibetan), Ladakh and the Central Asian Turkic countries. Islamic influence in Tibet also came from Persia. After 1959 a group

of Tibetan Muslims made a case for Indian nationality based on their historic roots to Kashmir and the Indian government declared all Tibetan Muslims Indian citizens later on that year. There is also a well established Chinese Muslim community (gya kachee), which traces its ancestry back to the Hui ethnic group of China. It is said that Muslim migrants from Kashmir and Ladakh first entered Tibet around the 12th century. Marriages and social interaction gradually led to an increase in the population until a sizable community grew up around Lhasa.

## Buddhist monasteries in Tibet

### Tibetan art

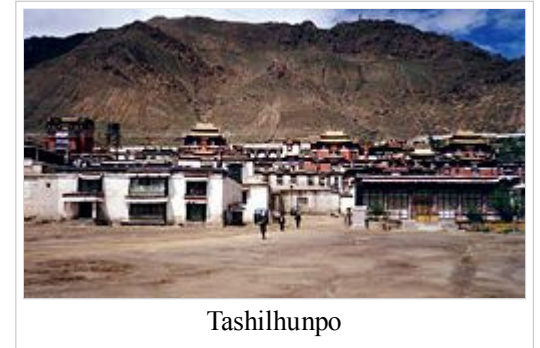


A thangka painting in Sikkim

Tibetan representations of art are intrinsically bound with Tibetan Buddhism and commonly depict deities or variations of Buddha in various forms from bronze Buddhist statues and shrines, to highly colorful thangka paintings and mandalas.

### Architecture

Tibetan architecture contains Oriental and Indian influences, and reflects a deeply Buddhist approach. The Buddhist wheel, along with two dragons, can be seen on nearly every Gumpa in Tibet. The design of the Tibetan Chörtens can vary, from roundish walls in Kham to squarish, four-sided walls in Ladakh.



Tashilhunpo

The most distinctive feature of Tibetan architecture is that many of the houses and monasteries are built on elevated, sunny sites facing the south, and are often made out of a mixture of rocks, wood, cement and earth. Little fuel is available for heat or lighting, so flat roofs are built to conserve heat, and multiple windows are constructed to let in sunlight. Walls are usually sloped inwards at 10 degrees as a precaution against frequent earthquakes in the mountainous area.



The Potala Palace

Standing at 117 meters in height and 360 meters in width, the Potala Palace is considered as the most important example of Tibetan architecture. Formerly the residence of the Dalai Lama, it contains over one thousand rooms within thirteen stories, and houses portraits of the past Dalai Lamas and statues of the Buddha. It is divided between the outer White Palace, which serves as the administrative quarters, and the inner Red Quarters, which houses the assembly hall of the Lamas, chapels, 10,000 shrines, and a vast library of Buddhist scriptures.

## Music

The music of Tibet reflects the cultural heritage of the trans-Himalayan region, centered in Tibet but also known wherever ethnic Tibetan groups are found in India, Bhutan, Nepal and further abroad. First and foremost Tibetan music is religious music, reflecting the profound influence of Tibetan Buddhism on the culture.

Tibetan music often involves chanting in Tibetan or Sanskrit, as an integral part of the religion. These chants are complex, often recitations of sacred texts or in celebration of various festivals. Yang chanting, performed without metrical timing, is accompanied by resonant drums and low, sustained syllables. Other styles include those unique to the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism, such as the classical music of the popular Gelugpa school, and the romantic music of the Nyingmapa, Sakyapa and Kagyupa schools.

Nangma dance music is especially popular in the karaoke bars of the urban centre of Tibet, Lhasa. Another form of popular music is the classical gar style, which is performed at rituals and ceremonies. Lu are a type of songs that feature glottal vibrations and high pitches. There are also epic bards who sing of Tibet's national hero Gesar.

## Festivals



Boudhanath, Nepal. 1973

Tibet has various festivals which commonly are performed to worship the Buddha throughout the year. Losar is the Tibetan New Year Festival. Preparations for the festive event are manifested by special offerings to family shrine deities, painted doors with religious symbols, and other painstaking jobs done to prepare for the event. Tibetans eat Guthuk (barley crumb food with filling) on New Year's Eve with their families. The Monlam Prayer Festival follows it in the first month of the Tibetan calendar, falling on the fourth up to the eleventh day of the first Tibetan month. which involves many Tibetans dancing and participating in sports events and sharing picnics. The event was established in 1049 by Tsong Khapa, the founder of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama's order.

## Other

The Potala Palace, former residence of the Dalai Lamas, is a World Heritage Site, as is Norbulingka, former summer residence of the Dalai Lama.

Since 2002, Tibetans in exile have allowed a Miss Tibet beauty contest in spite of concerns that this event is considered a Western influence. The beauty contest is condemned by the Tibetan government in exile.

## Cuisine



A monk churning Butter tea

The most important crop in Tibet is barley, and dough made from barley flour called tsampa, is the staple food of Tibet. This is either rolled into noodles or made into steamed dumplings called momos. Meat dishes are likely to be yak, goat, or mutton, often dried, or cooked into a spicy stew with potatoes. Mustard seed is cultivated in Tibet, and therefore features heavily in its cuisine. Yak yoghurt, butter and cheese are frequently eaten, and well-prepared yoghurt is considered something of a prestige item. Butter tea is very popular to drink.

## Tibet in popular culture

In recent years there have been a number of films produced about Tibet, most notably Hollywood films such as *Seven Years in Tibet*, starring Brad Pitt, and *Kundun*, a biography of the 14th Dalai Lama, directed by Martin Scorsese. Both of these films were banned by the Chinese government because of Tibetan nationalist overtones. Other films include *Samsara*, *The Cup* and the 1999 *Himalaya*, a French-American produced film with a Tibetan cast set in Nepal and Tibet. In 2005, exile Tibetan filmmaker Tenzing Sonam and his partner Ritu Sarin made *Dreaming Lhasa*, the first internationally recognized feature film to come out of the diaspora to explore the contemporary reality of Tibet.



The Monlam Prayer Festival



Tibetan sand mandala

*Kekexili: Mountain Patrol*, is a film made by National Geographic about a Chinese reporter that goes to Tibet to report on the issue involving the endangerment of Tibetan Antelope. It won numerous awards at home and abroad.

In 1995 a British electronic music act Banco de Gaia released the album *Last Train to Lhasa*, dedicated to the music of Tibet, with many samples of Tibetan chanting.

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# Turkmenistan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

**Turkmenistan** ( Turkmen: **Türkmenistan**; also known as *Turkmenia*) is a Turkic country in Central Asia. The name Turkmenistan is derived from Persian, meaning "land of the Turkmen". The name of its capital, Ashgabat, derived from Persian as well, loosely translating as "the city of love". Until 1991, it was a constituent republic of the Soviet Union, the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic. It is bordered by Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the southwest, Uzbekistan to the northeast, Kazakhstan to the northwest, and the Caspian Sea to the west.

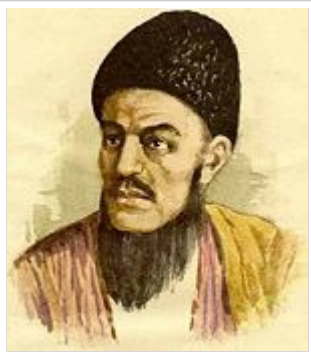
According to CIA World Factbook 2006 figures, Turkmenistan ranks 5th in the world for GDP growth rate. Although it is wealthy in natural resources in certain areas, most of the country is covered by the Karakum (Black Sands) Desert. It has a single-party system, and was ruled by President for Life Saparmurat Niyazov until 21 December 2006, when he (and his term) expired. Presidential elections were held on 11 February 2007. Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedow was declared the winner with 89% of the vote. He was sworn in on 14 February 2007.

## History

The territory of Turkmenistan has a long and checkered history, as armies from one empire after another decamped there on their way to more prosperous territories. The region's written history begins with its conquest by the Achaemenid Empire of ancient Persia, as the region was divided between the satrapies of Margiana, Khwarezm, and Parthia.

Alexander the Great conquered the territory in the fourth century BCE on his way to South Asia, around the time that the Silk Road was established as a major trading route between Asia and the Mediterranean Region. One hundred and fifty years later, Persia's Parthian Kingdom established its capital in Nisa, now in the suburbs of the capital, Ashgabat. In the seventh century CE, Arabs conquered this region, bringing with them Islam and incorporating the Turkmen into Middle Eastern culture. The Turkmenistan region soon came to be known as the capital of Greater Khorasan, when the caliph Al-Ma'mun moved his capital to Merv.

<i><b>Türkmenistan</b></i> <b>Turkmenistan</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> Independent, Neutral, Turkmenistan State Anthem	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Ashgabat
<b>Official languages</b>	Turkmen
Recognised regional languages	Russian, Uzbek, Dari
<b>Demonym</b>	Turkmen
<b>Government</b>	Single-party state



Magtymguly Pyragy  
(imaginary portrait)

In the middle of the eleventh century, the Turkoman-ruled Seljuk Empire concentrated its strength in the territory of modern Turkmenistan in an attempt to expand into Khorasan (modern Afghanistan). The empire broke down in the second half of the twelfth century, and the Turkmen lost their independence when Genghis Khan took control of the eastern Caspian Sea region on his march west. For the next seven centuries, the Turkmen people lived under various empires and fought constant intertribal wars. Little is documented of Turkmen history prior to Russian engagement. However, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, Turkmen formed a distinct ethnolinguistic group. As the Turkmen migrated from the area around the Mangyshlak Peninsula in contemporary Kazakhstan toward the Iranian border region and the Amu Darya basin, tribal Turkmen society further developed cultural traditions that would become the foundation of Turkmen

national consciousness.

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, control of Turkmenistan was fought over by Persian shahs, Khiva khans, the emirs of Bukhara and the rulers of Afghanistan. During this period, Turkmen spiritual leader Magtymguly Pyragy reached prominence with his efforts to secure independence and autonomy for his people. At this time, the vast territory of Central Asia including the region of Turkmenistan was largely unmapped and virtually unknown to Europe and the Western world. Rivalry for control of the area between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia was characterised as The Great Game. Throughout their conquest of Central Asia, the Russians were met with the stiffest resistance by the Turkmen. By 1894, however, Russia had gained control of Turkmenistan and incorporated it into its empire. The rivalry officially concluded with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Slowly, Russian and European cultures were introduced to the area. This was evident in the architecture of the newly-formed city of Ashgabat, which became the capital. The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and subsequent political unrest led to the declaration of the area as the Turkmen SSR, one of the six republics of the Soviet Union in 1924, assuming the borders of modern Turkmenistan.

The new Turkmen SSR went through a process of further Europeanization. The tribal Turkmen people were encouraged to become secular and adopt European-style clothing. The Turkmen alphabet was changed from the traditional Arabic script to Latin and finally to Cyrillic. However, bringing the Turkmen to abandon their previous nomadic ways in favour of communism was not fully embraced until as late as 1948. Nationalist organizations in the region also existed during the 1920s and the 1930s.

When the Soviet Union began to collapse, Turkmenistan and the rest of the Central Asian states heavily favored maintaining a reformed version of the state, mainly because they needed the economic power and common markets of the Soviet Union to prosper. Turkmenistan declared independence on October 27,

- President	Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedow
<b>Independence</b>	from the Soviet Union
- Declared	October 27, 1991
- Recognized	December 8, 1991
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	488,100 km <sup>2</sup> ( 52nd) 188,456 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.9
<b>Population</b>	
- December 2006 estimate	5,110,023 ( 113th)
- Density	9.9/km <sup>2</sup> ( 208th) 25.6/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
- Total	\$45.11 billion ( 86th)
- Per capita	\$8,900 ( 95th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	▼ 0.712 (medium) ( 109th)
<b>Currency</b>	Turkmen Manat ( ₸ )
<b>Time zone</b>	TMT ( UTC+5)
- Summer ( DST)	<i>not observed</i> ( UTC+5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.tm
<b>Calling code</b>	+993

1991, one of the last republics to secede.

In 1991, Turkmenistan became a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, an international organization of former Soviet republics. However, Turkmenistan reduced its status in the organization to "associate member" in August 2005. The reason stated by the Turkmen president was the country's policy of permanent neutrality. It is the only former Soviet state (aside from the Baltic states now in the European Union) without a full membership.

The former Soviet leader, Saparmurat Niyazov, remained in power as Turkmenistan's leader after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Under his post-Soviet rule, Russian-Turkmeni relations greatly suffered. He styled himself as a promoter of traditional Muslim and Turkmen culture (calling himself "Turkmenbashi", or "leader of the Turkmen people"), but he became notorious in the West for his dictatorial rule and extravagant cult of personality. The extent of his power greatly increased during the early 1990s, and in 1999 he became President for Life.

Niyazov died unexpectedly on December 21, 2006, leaving no heir apparent and an unclear line of succession. A former deputy prime minister rumored to be the illegitimate son of Niyazov, Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedow, became acting president, although under the constitution the Chairman of the People's Council, Ovezgeldy Atayev, should have succeeded to the post. However, Atayev was accused of crimes and removed from office.

In an election on February 11, 2007, Berdimuhammedow was elected president with 89% of the vote and 95% turnout, although the election was condemned by outside observers as unfair.

## Politics

The politics of Turkmenistan take place in the framework of a presidential republic, with the President both head of state and head of government. Turkmenistan has a single-party system.

After 69 years as part of the Soviet Union (including 67 years as a union republic), Turkmenistan declared its independence on October 27, 1991.

President for Life Saparmurat Niyazov, a former bureaucrat of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, ruled Turkmenistan from 1985, when he became head of the Communist Party of the Turkmen SSR, until his death in 2006. He retained absolute control over the country after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. On December 28, 1999, Niyazov was declared President for Life of Turkmenistan by the Mejlis (parliament), which itself had taken office a week earlier in elections that included only candidates hand-picked by President Niyazov. No opposition candidates were allowed.

The current President of Turkmenistan is Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedow, who took control following Niyazov's 2006 death.

The former Communist Party, now known as the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, is the only one legally-permitted to operate. Political gatherings are illegal

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Turkmenistan national assembly building in Ashgabat



unless government sanctioned.

## Human rights

Human rights are generally not respected by many authorities in Turkmenistan, although some human rights are guaranteed in the Constitution of Turkmenistan, such as social equality, sex equality, freedom from cruel and unusual punishment, and freedom of movement. Other social and economic rights include the right to work, the right to rest, and the right to education.

However, there are freedom of religion and freedom of sexuality issues. Any act of homosexuality in Turkmenistan is punishable by up to five years in prison. According to Forum 18, despite international pressure, the authorities keep a close watch on all religious groups. The legal framework is so constrictive that many prefer to exist underground rather than pass through the official processes, which act as barriers. Protestant Christian adherents are affected, in addition to groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahá'is, and the followers of the Hare Krishna movement. Hare Krishna followers are not allowed to seek donations at the country's main airport, Ashgabat.

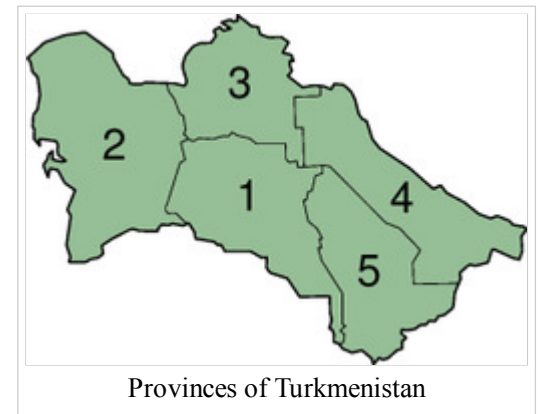
According to the 2007 Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, Turkmenistan had the third-worst restrictions on the freedom of the press in the world.

In addition, according to the BBC, the new president enforced a ban on satellite dishes, a measure often threatened under Niyazov, but never acted upon.

## Provinces and districts

Turkmenistan is divided into five provinces or *welayatlar* (singular - *welayat*) and one independent city:

Division	ISO 3166-2	Capital City	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Area ( sq. mi)	Pop (1995)	Key
<b>Ashgabat</b>		Ashgabat			604,000	
<b>Ahal Province</b>	TM-A	Annau	95,000	36,680	722,800	1
<b>Balkan Province</b>	TM-B	Balkanabat	138,000	53,280	424,700	2
<b>Daşoguz Province</b>	TM-D	Daşoguz	74,000	28,570	1,059,800	3
<b>Lebap Province</b>	TM-L	Turkmenabat	94,000	36,290	1,034,700	4
<b>Mary Province</b>	TM-M	Mary	87,000	33,590	1,146,800	5



## Geography

At 188,457 mi<sup>2</sup> (488,100 km<sup>2</sup>), Turkmenistan is the world's 52nd-largest country. It is slightly smaller than Spain, and somewhat larger than the US state of California.



The Caspian Sea at  
Türkmenbaşy

Over 80% of the country is covered by the Karakum Desert. The centre of the country is dominated by the Turan Depression and the Karakum Desert. The Kopet Dag Range, along the southwestern border, reaches 2,912 meters (9,553 ft). The Turkmen Balkan Mountains in the far west and the Kugitang Range in the far east are the only other significant elevations. Rivers include the Amu Darya, the Murghab, and the Tejen.

The climate mostly consists of an arid subtropical desert, with little rainfall. Winters are mild and dry, with most precipitation falling between January and May. The area of the country with the heaviest precipitation is the Kopet Dag range.



Map of Turkmenistan

The Turkmen shore along the Caspian Sea is 1768 km long. The Caspian Sea is entirely landlocked, with no access to the ocean.

The major cities include Ashgabat, Türkmenbaşy (formerly Krasnovodsk) and Daşoguz.

## Economy

Half of the country's irrigated land is planted with cotton, making the country the world's tenth-largest producer of it. It possesses the world's fifth-largest reserves of natural gas and substantial oil resources. In 1994, the Russian government's refusal to export Turkmen gas to hard currency markets and mounting debts of its major customers in the former Soviet Union for gas deliveries contributed to a sharp fall in industrial production and caused the budget to shift from a surplus to a slight deficit.

Turkmenistan has taken a cautious approach to economic reform, hoping to use gas and cotton sales to sustain its economy. In 2004, the unemployment rate was estimated to be 60%; the percentage of the population living below the poverty line was thought to be 58% a year earlier. Privatization goals remain limited. Between 1998 and 2002, Turkmenistan suffered from the continued lack of adequate export routes for natural gas and from obligations on extensive short-term external debt. At the same time, however, the value of total exports has risen sharply because of increases in international oil and gas prices. Economic prospects in the near future are discouraging because of widespread internal poverty and the burden of foreign debt.



Turkmenbashi Palace in Ashgabat



A bazaar in Ashgabat

President Niyazov spent much of the country's revenue on extensively renovating cities, Ashgabat in particular. Corruption watchdogs voiced particular concern over the management of Turkmenistan's currency reserves, most of which are held in off-budget funds such as the Foreign Exchange Reserve Fund in the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, according to a report released in April 2006 by London-based non-governmental organization Global Witness. According to the decree of the Peoples' Council of 14 August 2003, electricity, natural gas, water and salt will be subsidized for citizens up to 2030; however, shortages are frequent. On September 5, 2006, after Turkmenistan threatened to cut off supplies, Russia agreed to raise the price it pays for Turkmen natural gas from \$65 to \$100 per 1,000 cubic meters. Two-thirds of Turkmen gas goes through the Russian state-owned Gazprom.

## Demographics

The majority of Turkmenistan's citizens are ethnic Turkmen who predominately adhere to Islam with sizeable minorities of Uzbeks, Persians and Russians. Smaller minorities include Kazakhs, Azeris, Balochis, Armenians,

Koreans, and Tatars. A small number of Bukharian Jews used to live in Turkmenistan but almost none are left now. Turkmen is the official language of Turkmenistan, though Russian still is widely spoken in cities as a "language of inter-ethnic communication" (per the 1992 Constitution).

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Turkmen girl

# Uzbekistan

## 2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Asia; Asian Countries

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**Uzbekistan**, officially the **Republic of Uzbekistan** (Uzbek: *O‘zbekiston Respublikasi* or Ўзбекистон Республикаси), is a doubly landlocked country in Central Asia, formerly part of the Soviet Union. It shares borders with Kazakhstan to the west and to the north, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east, and Afghanistan and Turkmenistan to the south.

## History

The **territory** of Uzbekistan was already populated in the second millennium BC. Early human tools and monuments have been found in the Ferghana, Tashkent, Bukhara, Khorezm (Khwarezm, Chorasmia) and Samarkand regions.

Alexander the Great conquered Sogdiana and Bactria in 327 BC, marrying Roxsana, daughter of a local Bactrian chieftain. The conquest was supposedly of little help to Alexander as popular resistance was fierce, causing Alexander's army to be bogged down in the region. In the fourteenth century AD, Timur, known in the west as Tamerlane, overpowered the Mongols and built an empire. In his military campaigns, Tamerlane reached as far as the Middle East. He defeated Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I, who was captured, and died in captivity. Tamerlane sought to build a capital for his empire in Samarkand. Today Tamerlane is considered to be one of the greatest heroes in Uzbekistan. He plays a significant role in its national identity and history. Following the fall of the Timurid Empire, Uzbek nomads conquered the region.

In the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire began to expand, and spread into Central Asia. The "Great Game" period is generally regarded as running from approximately 1813 to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 a second less intensive phase followed. At the start of the 19th century, there were some 2,000 miles (3,200 km) separating British India and the outlying regions of the Tsarist Russia. Much of the land in between was unmapped.

<b><i>O‘zbekiston Respublikasi</i></b> <b>Republic of Uzbekistan</b>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
<b>Anthem:</b> National Anthem of the Republic of Uzbekistan	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Tashkent
<b>Official languages</b>	Uzbek
<b>Demonym</b>	Uzbekistani. sometimes Uzbek or Uzbeki
<b>Government</b>	Presidential republic



Registan complex in Samarkand, Timur's capital

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Central Asia was firmly in the hands of Russia and despite some early resistance to Bolsheviks, Uzbekistan and the rest of Central Asia became a part of the Soviet Union. On 27 October 1924 the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was created. On August 31, 1991, Uzbekistan declared independence, marking September 1 as a national holiday.

The country is now the world's second-largest exporter of cotton – while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves.

## Politics

- President	Islom Karimov
- Prime Minister	Shavkat Mirziyoyev
<b>Independence</b>	from the Soviet Union
- Formation	1747 <sup>1</sup>
- Declared	September 1, 1991
- Recognized	December 8, 1991
- Completed	December 25, 1991
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	447,400 km <sup>2</sup> ( 56th) 172,742 sq mi
- Water (%)	4.9
<b>Population</b>	
- 2007 estimate	27,372,000 ( 44th)
- Density	59/km <sup>2</sup> ( 136th) 153/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2007 estimate
- Total	\$64.149 billion ( 73th)
- Per capita	\$2,283 ( 145th)
<b>Gini (2000)</b>	26.8 (low)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	▲ 0.702 (medium) ( 113th)
<b>Currency</b>	Uzbekistan som (Uzbekiston so'mi) ( uzs)
<b>Time zone</b>	UZT ( UTC+5)
- Summer ( DST)	not observed ( UTC+5)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.uz
<b>Calling code</b>	+998
<sup>1</sup> As Bukharian Emirate, Kokand Khanate, Khwarezm.	

Constitutionally, the Government of Uzbekistan provides for democracy. In reality, the executive holds a great deal of power and the legislature and judiciary has little power to shape laws. Under terms of a December 27, 1995 referendum, Islom Karimov's first term was extended. Another national referendum was held January 27, 2002 to extend Constitutional Presidential term from 5 years to 7 years. The referendum passed and Karimov's term was extended by act of the parliament to December 2007. Most international observers refused to participate in the process and did not recognize the results, dismissing them as not meeting basic standards. The 2002 referendum also included a plan to create a bicameral parliament, consisting of a lower house (the Oliy Majlis) and an upper house (Senate). Members of the lower house are to be "full time" legislators. Elections for the new bicameral parliament took place on December 26, but no truly independent opposition candidates or parties were able to take part. The OSCE limited observation mission concluded that the elections fell significantly short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. Several political parties have been formed with government approval. Similarly, although multiple media outlets (radio, TV, newspaper) have been established, these either remain under government control or rarely broach political topics. Independent political parties were allowed to organize, recruit members, and hold conventions and press conferences, but have been denied registration under restrictive registration procedures. Terrorist bombings were carried out March 28– April 1, 2004 in Tashkent and Bukhara.



Islom Karimov -  
President of Uzbekistan

## Human rights

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan asserts that "democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be based upon common human principles, according to which the highest value shall be the human being, his life, freedom, honour, dignity and other inalienable rights."

However, non-government human rights watchdogs, such as IHF, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, as well as United States Department of State and Council of the European Union define Uzbekistan as "an authoritarian state with limited civil rights" and express profound concern about "wide-scale violation of virtually all basic human rights". According to the reports, the most widespread violations are torture, arbitrary arrests, and various restrictions of freedoms: of religion, of speech and press, of free association and assembly. The reports maintain that the violations are most often committed against members of religious organizations, independent journalists, human rights activists, and political activists, including members of the banned opposition parties. In 2005, Uzbekistan was included into Freedom House's "The Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies".

The official position is summarized in a memorandum "The measures taken by the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of providing and encouraging human rights" and amounts to the following: the government does everything that is in its power to protect and to guarantee the human rights of Uzbekistan's citizens. Uzbekistan continuously improves its laws and institutions in order to create a more humane society. Over 300 laws regulating the rights and basic freedoms of the people have been passed by the parliament. For instance, an office of Ombudsman was established in 1996. On August 2, 2005, President Islom Karimov signed a decree that was to abolish capital punishment in Uzbekistan on January 1, 2008.

The 2005 civil unrest in Uzbekistan, which resulted in several hundred people being killed is viewed by many as a landmark event in the history of human rights abuse in Uzbekistan. A concern has been expressed and a request for an independent investigation of the events has been made by the United States, European Union, the UN, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The government of Uzbekistan is accused of

unlawful termination of human life, denying its citizens freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. The government vehemently rebuffs the accusations, maintaining that it merely conducted an anti-terrorist operation, exercising only necessary force. In addition, some officials claim that "an information war on Uzbekistan has been declared" and the human rights violations in Andijan are invented by the enemies of Uzbekistan as a convenient pretext for intervention into the country's internal affairs.

## Geography



Map of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is approximately the size of Morocco and has an area of 447,400 square kilometers (172,700 sq mi). It is the 56th largest country in the world by area and the 42nd by population. Among the CIS countries, it is the 5th largest by area and the 3rd largest by population.

Uzbekistan stretches 1,425 kilometers (885 mi) from west to east and 930 kilometers (578 mi) from north to south. Bordering Kazakhstan and the Aral Sea to the north and northwest, Turkmenistan to the southwest, Tajikistan to the southeast, and Kyrgyzstan to the northeast, Uzbekistan is not only one of the larger Central Asian states but also the only Central Asian state to border all the other four. Uzbekistan also shares a short border (less than 150 km) with Afghanistan to the south.

Uzbekistan is a dry, landlocked country; it is one of two double-landlocked countries in the world, i.e., a country completely surrounded by land-locked countries – the other being

Liechtenstein. Less than 10% of its territory is intensively cultivated irrigated land in river valleys and oases. The rest is vast desert (Kyzyl Kum) and mountains. The highest point in Uzbekistan is 4,643 meters (15,233 ft), located in the southern part of the Gissar Range in Surkhandarya Province, on the border with Tajikistan, just north-west of Dushanbe (formerly called **Peak of the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party**, today apparently unnamed).

The climate in the Republic of **Uzbekistan** is continental, with little precipitation expected annually (100–200 millimeters, or 3.9–7.9 inches). The average summer temperature tends to be 40 °C, while the average winter temperature is around 0 °C.

Major cities include: Bukhara, Samarqand, Namangan, and the capital Tashkent.



Lake Tcharvak

## Provinces

Uzbekistan is divided into twelve provinces (*viloyatlar*, singular *viloyat*, compound noun *viloyati* e.g. Tashkent *viloyati*, Samarqand *viloyati*, etc.), one

autonomous republic (*respublika*, compound noun *respublikasi* e.g. Qaraqalpaqstan Avtonom *Respublikasi*, Karakalpakstan *Autonomous Republic*, etc.), and one independent city (*shahar*, compound noun *shahri*, e.g. Toshkent *shahri*). Names are given below in the Uzbek language, although numerous variations of the transliterations of each name exist.

Division	Capital City	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	Key
<b>Andijon Viloyati</b>	Andijon	4,200	1,899,000	2
<b>Buxoro Viloyati</b>	Buxoro ( Bukhara)	39,400	1,384,700	3
<b>Farg'ona Viloyati</b>	Farg'ona ( Fergana)	6,800	2,597,000	4
<b>Jizzax Viloyati</b>	Jizzax	20,500	910,500	5
<b>Xorazm Viloyati</b>	Urganch	6,300	1,200,000	13
<b>Namangan Viloyati</b>	Namangan	7,900	1,862,000	6
<b>Navoiy Viloyati</b>	Navoiy	110,800	767,500	7
<b>Qashqadaryo Viloyati</b>	Qarshi	28,400	2,029,000	8
<b>Qaraqalpaqstan Respublikasi</b>	Nukus	160,000	1,200,000	14
<b>Samarqand Viloyati</b>	Samarqand	16,400	2,322,000	9
<b>Sirdaryo Viloyati</b>	Guliston	5,100	648,100	10
<b>Surxondaryo Viloyati</b>	Termez	20,800	1,676,000	11
<b>Toshkent Viloyati</b>	Toshkent (Tashkent)	15,300	4,450,000	12
<b>Toshkent Shahri</b>	Toshkent (Tashkent)	No Data	2,205,000	1



The statistics for Toshkent Viloyati also include the statistics for Toshkent Shahri.

The provinces are further divided into districts (*tuman*).

## Economy

Along with many Commonwealth of Independent States economies, Uzbekistan's economy declined during the first years of transition and then recovered after 1995, as the cumulative effect of policy reforms began to be felt. It has shown robust growth, rising by 4% per year between 1998 and 2003 and accelerating



thereafter to 7%-8% per year. According to IMF estimates, the GDP in 2008 will be almost double its value in 1995 (in constant prices). Since 2003 annual inflation rates averaged less than 10%.

Uzbekistan has a very low GNI per capita (US\$610 in current dollars in 2006, giving a PPP equivalent of US\$2,250). By GNI per capita in PPP equivalents Uzbekistan ranks 169 among 209 countries; among the 12 CIS countries, only Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had lower GNI per capita in 2006. Economic production is concentrated in commodities: Uzbekistan is now the world's sixth-largest producer and second-largest exporter of cotton, as well as the seventh largest world producer of gold. It is also a regionally significant producer of natural gas, coal, copper, oil, silver, and uranium. Agriculture employs 28% of Uzbekistan's labor force and contributes 24% of its GDP (2006 data). While official unemployment is very low, underemployment - especially in rural areas - is estimated to be at least 20%. Still, at cotton-harvest time, all students and teachers are mobilized as unpaid labour to help in the fields.

Facing a multitude of economic challenges upon acquiring independence, the government adopted an evolutionary reform strategy, with an emphasis on state control, reduction of imports, and self-sufficiency in energy. Since 1994, the state controlled media have repeatedly proclaimed the success of this "Uzbekistan Economic Model" and suggested that it is a unique example of a smooth transition to the market economy while avoiding shock, pauperization, and stagnation.

The gradualist reform strategy has involved postponing significant macroeconomic and structural reforms. The state in the hands of the bureaucracy has remained a dominant influence in the economy. Corruption permeates the society and grows more rampant over time: Uzbekistan's 2005 Corruption Perception Index was 137 out of 159 countries, whereas in 2007 Uzbekistan is at the very bottom of the ranking, 175 out of 179. A February 2006 report on the country by the International Crisis Group suggests that revenues earned from key exports, especially cotton, gold, corn, and increasingly gas, are distributed among a very small circle of the ruling elite, with little or no benefit for the populace at large.



Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.



Samarkand

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, "the government is hostile to allowing the development of an independent private sector, over which it would have no control". Thus, the national bourgeoisie in general, and the middle class in particular, are marginalized economically, and, consequently, politically.

The economic policies have repelled foreign investment, which is the lowest per capita in the CIS. For years, the largest barrier to foreign companies entering the Uzbekistani market has been the difficulty of converting currency. In 2003, the government accepted the obligations of Article VIII under the International Monetary Fund, providing for full currency convertibility. However, strict currency controls and the tightening of borders have lessened the effect of this measure.

Uzbekistan experienced galloping inflation of around 1000% per year immediately after independence (1992-1994). Stabilization efforts implemented with active guidance from the IMF rapidly paid off, as inflation rates were brought down to 50% in 1997 and then to 22% in 2002. Since 2003 annual inflation rates averaged less than 10%. Tight economic policies in 2004 resulted in a drastic reduction of inflation to 3.8% (although alternative estimates based on the price of a true market basket, put it at 15%). The inflation rates moved up to 6.9% in 2006 and 7.6% in 2007, but have remained in the single-digit range.

The government of Uzbekistan restricts foreign imports in many ways, including high import duties. Excise taxes are applied in a highly discriminatory manner to protect locally produced goods. Official tariffs are combined with unofficial, discriminatory charges resulting in total charges amounting to as much as 100 to 150% of the actual value of the product, making imported products virtually unaffordable. Import substitution is an officially declared policy and the government proudly reports a reduction by a factor of two in the volume of consumer goods imported. A number of CIS countries are officially exempt from Uzbekistan import duties.

The Republican Stock Exchange (RSE) 'Tashkent' opened in 1994. It houses a securities exchange, real estate traders, the national investment fund and the national securities depository. It does not trade all joint-stock companies each month and therefore market capitalisation varies widely.

Uzbekistan's external position has been strong since 2003. Thanks in part to the recovery of world market prices of gold and cotton, the country's key export commodities, expanded natural gas and some manufacturing exports, and increasing labour migrant transfers the current account turned into a large surplus – of between 9 and 11 per cent of GDP in 2003-05 – and foreign exchange reserves, including gold, more than doubled to around US\$3 billion.

## Demographics

Uzbekistan is Central Asia's most populous country. Its 27.7 million people comprise nearly half the region's total population.

The population of Uzbekistan is very young: 34.1% of its people are younger than 14. According to official sources, Uzbeks comprise a majority (80%) of the total population. Other ethnic groups include Russians 5.5%, Tajiks 5%, Kazakhs 3%, Karakalpaks 2.5%, and Tatars 1.5%. There is some controversy about the percentage of the Tajik population. While official numbers from Uzbekistan put the number at 5%, some Western scholars believe it to be much higher, going as high as 40%. There is also an ethnic Korean population that was forcibly relocated to Uzbekistan by Stalin in the 1930s. There are also small groups of Armenians in Uzbekistan, mostly in Tashkent and Samarkand, most of them came during the Armenian Genocide. The nation is 88% Muslim (mostly Sunni, with a 5% Shi'a minority), 9% Eastern Orthodox and 3% other faiths. The U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report 2004 reports that 0.2% of the population are Buddhist (these being ethnic Koreans). The Bukharian Jews have lived in Central Asia, mostly in Uzbekistan, for thousands of years. There were also an estimated 93,000 Jews in Uzbekistan in the early 1990s (source Library of Congress Country Studies). But now, since the collapse of the USSR, most Central Asian Jews left the region for the United States or Israel. Only about 500-1,500 Jews remain in Uzbekistan.

At least 10 percent of the Uzbekistan's labour force works abroad (mostly in Russia and Kazakhstan).

Uzbekistan has a 99.3% literacy rate among adults older than 15, which is attributable to the free and universal education system of the Soviet Union.

## Languages

The Uzbek language is the only official state language. Russian is still an important language for interethnic communication, especially in the cities, including much day-to-day technical, scientific, governmental and business use. The use of Russian in remote rural areas has always been limited, and today school children have no proficiency in Russian even in urban centers. In 1992 Uzbekistan officially shifted back to Latin script from traditional considerations of consistency with Turkey, but many signs and notices (including official government boards in the streets) are still written in Uzbek Cyrillic script that had been used in Uzbek SSR since 1940. Computers as a rule operate using the so-called "Uzbek Cyrillic" keyboard, and Latin script is reportedly composed using the standard English keyboard.

## Communications

According to the official source report, as of 10 March 2008, the number of cellular phone users in Uzbekistan reached 7 million, up from 3.7 million on 1 July 2007. The largest mobile operator in terms of number of subscribers is MTS-Uzbekistan (former Uzdunrobita and part of Russian Mobile TeleSystems) and it is followed by Beeline (part of Russia's Beeline) and Coscom (owned by US MCT Corp., but there is news that it is selling its asset to TeliaSonera.

As of 1 July 2007, the estimated number of internet users was 1.8 million, according to UzACI.



Boys pose for a picture at Registan. Over a third of Uzbekistan's population is under 14 years old.

## Transportation

Tashkent, the nation's capital and largest city, has a three-line rapid transit system built in 1977, and expanded in 2001 after ten years' independence from the Soviet Union. Uzbekistan is currently the only country in Central Asia with a subway system, and promotes itself as one of the cleanest systems in the world. The stations are exceedingly ornate. For example Kosmonavtov is decorated throughout using a space travel theme to recognise the achievements of an Uzbek Cosmonaut

There are government operated trams, buses and trolley buses running across the city. There are also many taxis, both registered and unregistered. Uzbekistan has car-producing plants which produce modern cars. The car production is supported by the government and the Korean auto company Daewoo. The Uzbek government acquired a 50% stake in Daewoo in 2005 for an undisclosed sum, and in May 2007 UzDaewooAuto, the car maker, signed a strategic agreement with General Motors-Daewoo Auto and Technology (GMDAT). The government also bought a stake in Turkey's Koc in SamKocAuto, a producer of small buses and lorries. Afterwards, it signed an agreement with Isuzu Motors of Japan to produce Isuzu buses and lorries.

Train links connect many towns within Uzbekistan, as well as neighbouring ex-republics of the Soviet Union. Moreover, after independence two fast-running train systems were established. There is also a large airplane plant that was built during the Soviet era – Tashkent Chkalov Aviation Manufacturing Plant or ТАПОиЧ in Russian. The plant originated during World War II, when production facilities were evacuated south and east to avoid capture by advancing Nazi forces. Until the late 1980s, the plant was one of the leading airplane production centers in the USSR, but with collapse of the Soviet Union its manufacturing equipment became outdated, and most of the workers were laid off. Now it produces only a few planes a year, but with interest from Russian companies growing in it, there are rumors of production-enhancement plans.

## Military

Uzbekistan possesses the largest military force in the Central Asian region, having around 65,000 people in uniform. Its structure is inherited from the Soviet armed forces, although it is moving rapidly toward a fully restructured organization, which will eventually be built around light and Special Forces. The Uzbekistan Armed Forces equipment is not modern, and training, while improving, is neither uniform nor adequate for its new mission of territorial security. The government has accepted the arms control obligations of the former Soviet Union, acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (as a non-nuclear state), and supported an active program by the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in western Uzbekistan ( Nukus and Vozrozhdeniye Island). The Government of Uzbekistan spends about 3.7% of GDP on the military but has received a growing infusion of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and other security assistance funds since 1998. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., Uzbekistan approved the U.S. Central Command's request for access to a vital military air base, Karshi-Khanabad Airbase, in southern Uzbekistan. However Uzbekistan demanded that the U.S. withdraw from the airbases after the Andijan massacre and the U.S. reaction to this massacre. The last US troops left Uzbekistan in November 2005.

## Foreign relations

Uzbekistan joined the Commonwealth of Independent States in December 1991. However, it is opposed to reintegration and withdrew from the CIS collective security arrangement in 1999. Since that time, Uzbekistan has participated in the CIS peacekeeping force in Tajikistan and in UN-organized groups to help resolve the Tajikistan and Afghanistan conflicts, both of which it sees as posing threats to its own stability.

Previously close to Washington (which gave Uzbekistan half a billion dollars in aid in 2004, about a quarter of its military), the government of Uzbekistan has recently restricted American military use of the airbase at Karshi-Khanabad for air operations in neighboring Afghanistan. Uzbekistan was an active supporter of U.S. efforts against worldwide terrorism and joined the coalitions that have dealt with both Afghanistan and Iraq. The relationship between Uzbekistan and the United States began to deteriorate after the so-called "colour revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine (and to a lesser extent Kyrgyzstan). When the U.S. joined in a call for an independent international investigation of the bloody events at Andijon, the relationship took an additional nosedive, and President Islom Karimov changed the political alignment of the country to bring it closer to Russia and China, countries which chose not to criticize Uzbekistan's leaders for their alleged human rights violations.

In late July 2005, the government of Uzbekistan ordered the United States to vacate an air base in Karshi-Khanabad (near the Uzbekistan's border with Afghanistan) within 180 days. Karimov had offered use of the base to the U.S. shortly after 9/11. It is also believed by some Uzbeks that the protests in Andijon were brought about by the UK and US influences in the area of Andijon. This is another reason for the hostility between Uzbekistan and the West.

Uzbekistan is a member of the United Nations (since March 2, 1992), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Partnership for Peace, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It belongs to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (comprising the five Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan). In 1999, Uzbekistan joined the GUAM alliance (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), which was formed in 1997 (making it GUUAM), but pulled out of the organization in 2005. Uzbekistan is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and hosts the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. Uzbekistan joined the new Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) in 2002. The CACO consists of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. It is a founding member of, and remains involved in, the Central Asian Union, formed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and joined in March 1998 by Tajikistan.

In September 2006, UNESCO presented Islom Karimov an award for Uzbekistan's preservation of its rich culture and traditions. Despite criticism, this seems to be a sign of improving relationships between Uzbekistan and the West.

The month of October 2006 also saw a decrease in the isolation of Uzbekistan from the West. The EU announced that it was planning to send a delegation to Uzbekistan to talk about human rights and liberties, after a long period of hostile relations between the two. Although it is equivocal about whether the official or unofficial version of the Andijon Massacre is true, the EU is evidently willing to ease its economic sanctions against Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, it is generally assumed among the Uzbekistan's population that the government will stand firm in maintaining its close ties with the Russian Federation and in its theory that the 2004-2005 protests in Uzbekistan were promoted by the USA and UK.

## Environment

Uzbekistan's environmental situation ought to be a major concern among the international community. Decades of questionable Soviet policies in pursuit of

greater cotton production has resulted in a catastrophic scenario. The agricultural industry appears to be the main contributor to the pollution and devastation of the air and water in the country.

The Aral Sea disaster is a classic example. The Aral Sea used to be the fourth largest inland sea on Earth, acting as an influencing factor in the air moisture. Since the 1960s, the decade when the misuse of the Aral Sea water began, it has shrunk to less than 50% of its former area, and decreased in volume threefold. Reliable – or even approximate – data has not been collected, stored or provided by any organization or official agency. The numbers of animal deaths and human refugees from the area around the sea can only be guessed at. The question of who is responsible for the crisis – the Soviet scientists and politicians who directed the distribution of water during the sixties, or the post-Soviet politicians who did not allocate sufficient funding for the building of dams and irrigation systems - remains open.

Due to the almost insoluble Aral Sea problem, high salinity is widespread in Uzbekistan. The vast majority of the nation's water resources are used for farming, which consumes nearly 94% of the water usage. This results in a heavy use of pesticides and fertilizers.

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# Vietnam

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SOS Children works in Vietnam. For more information see SOS Children in Vietnam

**Vietnam** (pronounced /ˌviːɛtˈnɑːm/; Vietnamese: *Việt Nam*), officially the **Socialist Republic of Vietnam** ( Vietnamese: *Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam*), is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. It is bordered by China to the north, Laos to the northwest, Cambodia to the southwest, and the South China Sea to the east. With a population of over 86 million, Vietnam is the 13th most populous country in the world.

Vietnam was under Chinese control for a thousand years before becoming a nation-state in the 10th century. Successive dynasties flourished until it was colonized by the French in the mid-19th century. Efforts to resist the French eventually led to their expulsion from the country in the mid-20th century, leaving a nation divided politically into two countries. Bitter fighting between the two sides continued during the Vietnam War, ending with a communist victory in 1975.

Emerging from a long and bitter war, the war-ravaged nation was politically isolated. The government's centrally-planned economic decisions hindered post-war reconstruction and its treatment of the losing side engendered more resentment than reconciliation. In 1986, it instituted economic and political reforms and began a path towards international reintegration. By 2000, it had established diplomatic relations with most nations. Its economic growth had been among the highest in the world in the past decade. These efforts culminated in Vietnam joining the World Trade Organization in 2007 and its successful bid to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2008.

## Etymology

Through the centuries, Vietnam has been called by many different names: Văn Lang during the Hùng Vương Dynasty, Âu Lạc during the An Dương Vương dynasty, Văn Xuan during the Anterior Lý Dynasty, Đại Cồ Việt during the Đinh dynasty and Anterior Lê Dynasty. Starting in 1054, Vietnam was called Đại Việt (Great Viet). During the Hồ Dynasty, Vietnam was called Đại Ngu. Then, in 1804, King Gia Long planned to use the name of Nam Việt for Vietnam then changed it to Việt Nam. In English, the

### *Cộng hòa Xã hội Chủ nghĩa Việt Nam* Socialist Republic of Vietnam



Flag



Coat of arms

**Motto:** *Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc*  
"Independence - Freedom - Happiness"

**Anthem:** *Tiến Quân Ca*  
"Army March" (first verse)



Map of Vietnam, see also; Atlas of Vietnam

<b>Capital</b>	Hanoi
<b>Largest city</b>	Ho Chi Minh City
<b>Official languages</b>	Vietnamese

two syllables were written into one: Vietnam. From 1839 to 1945, Emperor Minh Mạng renamed Việt Nam to Đại Nam (literally "Great South").

The name Việt Nam had been used for this country before it became the official name in "Đư địa chí" of Nguyễn Trãi written in 1435 and perhaps even before. "Việt" is the name of the largest ethnic group in Vietnam: the Kinh (người Kinh) and "Nam" means "the South", affirming Vietnam's sovereignty from China (usually called "North country" by the Vietnamese).

## History

### Pre-Dynastic era

The area now known as Vietnam has been inhabited since Paleolithic times, and some archaeological sites in Thanh Hoa Province purportedly date back several thousand years. Archaeologists link the beginnings of Vietnamese civilization to the late Neolithic, Early Bronze Age, Phùng-nguyen culture, which was centered in Vinh Phu Province of contemporary Vietnam from about 2000 to 1400 BCE. By about 1200 BCE, the development of wet-rice cultivation and bronze casting in the Ma River and Red River plains led to the development of the Dong Son culture, notable for its elaborate bronze drums. The bronze weapons, tools, and drums of Dongsonian sites show a Southeast Asian influence that indicates an indigenous origin for the bronze-casting technology. Many small, ancient copper mine sites have been found in northern Vietnam. Some of the similarities between the Dong Sonian sites and other Southeast Asian sites include the presence of boat-shaped coffins and burial jars, stilt dwellings, and evidence of the customs of betel-nut-chewing and teeth-blackening.

The legendary Hồng Bàng Dynasty of the Hùng kings is considered by many Vietnamese as the first Vietnamese state, known as Văn Lang. In 257 BCE, the last Hùng king lost to Thục Phán, who consolidated the Lạc Việt tribes with his Âu Việt tribes, forming Âu Lạc and proclaiming himself An Dương Vương. In 207 BCE, a Chinese general named Zhao Tuo defeated An Dương Vương and consolidated Âu Lạc into Nanyue. In 111 BCE, the Chinese Han Dynasty consolidated Nanyue into their empire.

For the next thousand years, Vietnam was mostly under Chinese rule. Early independence movements such as those of the Trưng Sisters and of Lady Triệu were only briefly successful. It was independent as Vạn Xuân under the Anterior Ly Dynasty between 544 and 602. By the early 10th century, Vietnam had gained autonomy, but not independence, under the Khúc family.

<b>Demonym</b>	Vietnamese
<b>Government</b>	Socialist republic <sup>1</sup>
<span> </span> - General Secretary	Nông Đức Mạnh
<span> </span> - President	Nguyễn Minh Triết
<span> </span> - Prime Minister	Nguyễn Tấn Dũng
<b>Independence</b>	from France
<span> </span> - Date	September 2, 1945
<span> </span> - Recognized	1954
<b>Area</b>	
<span> </span> - Total	331,690 km <sup>2</sup> ( 65th) 128,527 sq mi
<span> </span> - Water (%)	1.3
<b>Population</b>	
<span> </span> - 2008 mid-year estimate	86,116,559 ( 13th)
<span> </span> - 1999 census	76,323,173
<span> </span> - Density	253/km <sup>2</sup> ( 46th) 655/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	2006 estimate
<span> </span> - Total	\$262.5 billion ( 36th)
<span> </span> - Per capita	\$3,100 ( 123rd)
<b>Gini (2002)</b>	37 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 59th)
<b>HDI (2007)</b>	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> 0.733 ( <b>medium</b> ) ( 105th)
<b>Currency</b>	đồng (₫) ( VND)
<b>Time zone</b>	UTC+7 ( UTC+7)
<span> </span> - Summer ( DST)	No DST ( UTC+7)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.vn



## Dynastic era

In 938 CE, a Vietnamese lord named Ngô Quyền defeated Chinese forces at the Bạch Đằng River and gained independence after 10 centuries under Chinese control. Renamed as Đại Việt, the nation went through a golden era during the Lý and Trần Dynasties. During the rule of the Trần Dynasty, Đại Việt repelled three Mongol invasions. Buddhism flourished and became the state religion. Following the brief Hồ Dynasty, Vietnamese independence was momentarily interrupted by the Chinese Ming Dynasty, but was restored by Lê Lợi, the founder of the Lê Dynasty. Vietnam reached its zenith in the Lê Dynasty of the 15th century, especially during the reign of Emperor Lê Thánh Tông (1460–1497). Between the 11th and 18th centuries, the Vietnamese expanded southward in a process known as *nam tiến* (*southward expansion*). They eventually conquered the kingdom of Champa and part of the Khmer Empire.

<b>Calling code</b>	+84
1 According to the official name and 1992 Constitution.	

Towards the end of the Lê Dynasty, civil strife engulfed much of Vietnam. First, the Chinese-supported Mạc Dynasty challenged the Lê Dynasty's power. After the Mạc Dynasty was defeated, the Lê Dynasty was reinstated, but with no actual power. Power was divided between the Trịnh Lords in the North and the Nguyễn Lords in the South, who engaged in a civil war for more than four decades. During this time, the Nguyễn expanded southern Vietnam into the Mekong Delta, annexing the Champa in the central highlands and the Khmer land in the Mekong. The civil war ended when the Tây Sơn brothers defeated both and established their new dynasty. However, their rule did not last long and they were defeated by the remnants of the Nguyễn Lords led by Nguyen Anh with the help of the French. Nguyen Anh unified Vietnam, and established the Nguyễn Dynasty, ruling under the name Gia Long.

## Western Colonial era

Vietnam's independence was gradually eroded by France in a series of military conquests from 1859 until 1885 when the entire country became part of French Indochina. The French administration imposed significant political and cultural changes on Vietnamese society. A Western-style system of modern education was developed, and Christianity was introduced into Vietnamese society. Developing a plantation economy to promote the exports of tobacco, indigo, tea and coffee, the French largely ignored increasing calls for self-government and civil rights. A nationalist political movement soon emerged, with leaders such as Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chu Trinh, Phan Dinh Phung, Emperor Ham Nghi and Ho Chi Minh calling for independence. However, the French maintained control of their colonies until World War II, when the Japanese war in the Pacific triggered the invasion of French Indochina in 1941. This event was preceded by the establishment of the Vichy French administration, a puppet state of Nazi Germany then ally of the Japanese Empire. The natural resources of Vietnam were exploited for the purposes of the Japanese Empire's military campaigns into the British Indochinese colonies of Burma, the Malay Peninsula and India.

## First Indochina War

In 1941, the Viet Minh — a communist and nationalist liberation movement — emerged under Ho Chi Minh, to seek independence for Vietnam from France as well as to oppose the Japanese occupation. Following the military defeat of Japan and the fall of its Empire of Vietnam in August 1945, Viet Minh occupied Hanoi and proclaimed a provisional government, which asserted independence on September 2. In the same year the Provisional French Republic sent the French Far East Expeditionary Corps, which was originally created to fight the Japanese occupation forces, in order to pacify the liberation movement and to restore French rule. On November 20, 1946, triggered by the Haiphong Incident, the First Indochina War between Viet Minh and the French forces ensued, lasting until July 20, 1954.

Despite fewer losses—Expeditionary Corps suffered 1/3 the casualties of the Chinese and Soviet-backed Viet Minh—during the course of the war, the U.S.-backed French and Vietnamese loyalists eventually suffered a major strategic setback at the Siege of Dien Bien Phu, which allowed Ho Chi Minh to negotiate a ceasefire with a favorable position at the ongoing Geneva conference of 1954. Colonial administration ended as French Indochina was dissolved. According to the Geneva Agreements the country was partitioned at the 17th parallel. Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam ruled the north, while Emperor Bao Dai's State of Vietnam ruled the south. This was intended to be temporary, pending an election in 1956, which never took place. Instead, State of Vietnam Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem toppled Bao Dai in a fraudulent referendum organised by his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu and proclaimed himself president of the Republic of Vietnam.

## Vietnam War

The Communist-held Democratic Republic of Vietnam was opposed by the US-supported Republic of Vietnam. Disagreements soon emerged over the organizing of elections and reunification, and the Viet Cong began a guerrilla campaign in the late 1950s, assisted by North Vietnam, hoping to bring South Vietnam under communist rule. To support South Vietnam's struggle against the communist insurgency, the US began increasing its contribution of military advisers. US forces became embroiled in combat operations in 1965 and at their peak they numbered more than 500,000. North Vietnamese forces unsuccessfully attempted to overrun the South during the 1968 Tet Offensive and the war soon spread into neighboring Laos and Cambodia, in both of which the United States bombed Communist forces supplying the North Vietnamese Army.

With its own casualties mounting, the U.S. began transferring combat roles to the South Vietnamese military in a process the U.S. called Vietnamization. The effort had mixed results. The Paris Peace Accords of January 27, 1973, formally recognized the sovereignty of both sides. Under the terms of the accords all American combat troops were withdrawn by March 29, 1973. Limited fighting continued, but all major fighting ended until the North once again sent troops to the South during the Spring of 1975, culminating in the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. South Vietnam briefly became the Republic of South Vietnam, under military occupation by North Vietnam, before being officially integrated with the North under communist rule as the *Socialist Republic of Vietnam* on July 2, 1976.

## Postwar

Upon taking control, the Vietnamese communists banned all other political parties, arrested public servants and military personnel of the Republic of Vietnam and sent them to reeducation camps. The government also embarked on a mass campaign of collectivization of farms and factories. Reconstruction of the war-ravaged country was slow, and serious humanitarian and economic problems confronted the communist regime. Millions of people fled the country in crudely-built boats, creating an international humanitarian crisis. In 1978, the Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia (sparking the Cambodian-Vietnamese War) to remove the Khmer Rouge from power. This action worsened relations with China, which launched a brief incursion into northern Vietnam (the Sino-Vietnamese War) in 1979. This conflict caused Vietnam to rely even more heavily on Soviet economic and military aid.

## Đổi Mới

In a historic shift in 1986, the Communist Party of Vietnam implemented free-market reforms known as Đổi Mới (*renovation*). With the authority of the state

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remaining unchallenged, private ownership of farms and companies, deregulation and foreign investment were encouraged. The economy of Vietnam has achieved rapid growth in agricultural and industrial production, construction and housing, exports, and foreign investment. It is now one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

## Government and politics

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a single-party state. A new state constitution was approved in April 1992, replacing the 1975 version. The central role of the Communist Party was reasserted in all organs of government, politics and society. Only political organizations affiliated with or endorsed by the Communist Party are permitted to contest elections. These include the Vietnamese Fatherland Front, worker and trade unionist parties. Although the state remains officially committed to socialism as its defining creed, the ideology's importance has substantially diminished since the 1990s. The President of Vietnam is the titular head of state and the nominal commander in chief of the military of Vietnam, chairing the Council on National Defense and Security. The Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Tan Dung is the head of government, presiding over a council of ministers composed of 3 deputy prime ministers and the heads of 26 ministries and commissions.

The National Assembly of Vietnam is the unicameral legislature of the government, composed of 498 members. It is superior to both the executive and judicial branches. All members of the council of ministers are derived from the National Assembly. The Supreme People's Court of Vietnam, which is the highest court of appeal in the nation, is also answerable to the National Assembly. Beneath the Supreme People's Court stand the provincial municipal courts and the local courts. Military courts are also a powerful branch of the judiciary with special jurisdiction in matters of national security. All organs of Vietnam's government are controlled by the Communist Party. Most government appointees are members of the party. The General Secretary of the Communist Party is perhaps one of the most important political leaders in the nation, controlling the party's national organization and state appointments, as well as setting policy.

The Vietnam People's Army is the official name for the combined military services of Vietnam, which is organized along the lines of China's People's Liberation Army. The VPA is further subdivided into the Vietnamese People's Ground Forces (including Strategic Rear Forces and Border Defense Forces), the Vietnam People's Navy, the Vietnam People's Air Force and the coast guard. Through Vietnam's recent history, the VPA has actively been involved in Vietnam's workforce to develop the economy of Vietnam, in order to coordinate national defense and the economy. The VPA is involved in such areas as industry, agriculture, forestry, fishery and telecommunications. The total strength of the VPA is close to 500,000 officers and enlisted members. The government also organizes and maintains provincial militias and police forces. The role of the military in public life has steadily been reduced since the 1980s.

## Provinces

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Vietnam National Convention Centre

Vietnam is divided into **59 provinces** (known in Vietnamese as *tỉnh*, from the Chinese 省, *shěng*). There are also **5 centrally-controlled municipalities** existing at the same level as provinces (*thành phố trực thuộc trung ương*).

The provinces are further subdivided into provincial municipalities (*thành phố trực thuộc tỉnh*), townships (*thị xã*) and counties (*huyện*), and then, subdivided into towns (*thị trấn*) or communes (*xã*).

The centrally-controlled municipalities are subdivided into districts (*quận*) and counties, and then, subdivided into wards (*phường*).

## Geography and climate

Vietnam is approximately 331,688 km<sup>2</sup> (128,066 sq mi) in area (not including Hoang Sa and Truong Sa islands), larger than Italy and almost the size of Germany. The perimeter of the country running along its international boundaries is 4,639 km (2,883 mi). The topography consists of hills and densely forested mountains, with level land covering no more than 20%. Mountains account for 40% of the area, with smaller hills accounting for 40% and tropical forests 42%. The northern part of the country consists mostly of highlands and the Red River Delta. Phan Xi Păng, located in Lào Cai province, is the highest mountain in Vietnam at 3,143 m (10,312 ft). The south is divided into coastal lowlands, Annamite Chain peaks, extensive forests, and poor soil. Comprising five relatively flat plateaus of basalt soil, the highlands account for 16% of the country's arable land and 22% of its total forested land.

The delta of the Red River (also known as the Sông Hồng), a flat, triangular region of 15,000 square kilometers, is smaller but more intensely developed and more densely populated than the Mekong River Delta. Once an inlet of the Gulf of Tonkin, it has been filled in by the enormous alluvial deposits of the rivers over a period of millennia, and it advances one hundred meters into the Gulf annually. The Mekong delta, covering about 40,000 square kilometers, is a low-level plain not more than three meters above sea level at any point and criss-crossed by a maze of canals and rivers. So much sediment is carried by the Mekong's various branches and tributaries that the delta advances sixty to eighty meters into the sea every year.

Because of differences in latitude and the marked variety of topographical relief, the climate tends to vary considerably from place to place. During the winter or dry season, extending roughly from November to April, the monsoon winds usually blow from the northeast along the China coast and across the Gulf of Tonkin, picking up considerable moisture; consequently the winter season in most parts of the country is dry only by comparison with the rainy or summer season. The average annual temperature is generally higher in the plains than in the mountains and plateaus and in the south than in the north. Temperatures in the southern plains (Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta) varies less, going between 21 and 28 degree



Ha Long Bay, a World Heritage Site

Celsius (70 and 82.5 °F) over the course of a year. The seasons in the mountains and plateaus and in the north are much more dramatic, and temperatures may vary from 5 degree Celsius (41 °F) in December and January to 37 degree Celsius (98.6 °F) in July and August.

## Nature



Sunset in the fishing village of Mui Ne on the south-east coast

Vietnam has two World's Natural Heritage sites: Halong Bay and Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park and 6 World's biosphere reserves including: Can Gio Mangrove Forest, Cat Tien, Cat Ba, Kien Giang, Red River Delta, Western Nghe An.

### Biodiversity

Vietnam is in the Indomalaya ecozone.

According to chapter 1 in National Environmental Present Condition Report 2005- Biodiversity Subject of Vietnam Environment Protection Agency, in species diversity, Vietnam is one of 25 countries having high level in biodiversity all over the world, is ranked 16th of biologically diverse level (having 16% world's species) (page 9). 15,986 flora was identified of which 10% was

endemic (p9). Statistic says that there are 307 nematodes, 200 oligochaeta, 145 acarina, 113 springtails, 7750 insects, 260 reptiles, 120 amphibians, 840 birds and 310 mammals of which 100 birds and 78 mammals are endemic (p9,10). Vietnam also have 1438 fresh water microalgae (9,6% species in the world) (Table 1.2, p9). It is defined that there are 794 aquatic invertebrate and 2458 sea fish (p10,11). In recent years, there have been 13 genera, 222 species, 30 taxa of flora newly described and 6 mammals have been discovered such as the saola, giant muntjac, Edwards's Pheasant, Tonkin Snub-nosed Langur, *livistona halongensis*, *geothelphusa vietnamica*, etc (frame 1.4, p11,12). In agricultural genetic diversity, Vietnam is one of 12 world's original cultivar centers (p13). Vietnam National Cultivar Gene Bank is preserving 12,300 cultivars of 115 species (p14).



Saola

In chapter 4 of that report, it is said that Vietnam government spent 49.07 million USD for biodiversity in 2004 (p71) and have established 126 conservation areas including 28 national parks (p73).

## Economy

The Vietnam War destroyed much of the economy of Vietnam. Upon taking power, the Government created a planned economy for the nation. Collectivization of farms, factories and economic capital was implemented, and millions of people were put to work in government programs. For many decades, Vietnam's economy was plagued with inefficiency and corruption in state programs, poor quality and underproduction and restrictions on economic

activities and trade. It also suffered from the trade embargo from the United States and most of Europe after the Vietnam War. Subsequently, the trade partners of the Communist blocs began to erode. In 1986, the Sixth Party Congress introduced significant economic reforms with market economy elements as part of a broad economic reform package called "đổi mới" (*Renovation*). Private ownership was encouraged in industries, commerce and agriculture. Vietnam achieved around 8% annual GDP growth from 1990 to 1997 and continued at around 7% from 2000 to 2005, making it the world's second-fastest growing economy. Simultaneously, foreign investment grew threefold and domestic savings quintupled.



Rice farming in Ninh Binh Province

Manufacturing, information technology and high-tech industries form a large and fast-growing part of the national economy. Vietnam is a relative new-comer to the oil business, but today it is the third-largest oil producer in Southeast Asia with output of 400,000 barrels per day (64,000 m<sup>3</sup>/d). Vietnam is one of Asia's most open economies: two-way trade is around 160% of GDP, more than twice the ratio for China and over four times India's.

Vietnam is still a relatively poor country with an annual GDP of US\$280.2 billion at purchasing power parity (2006 estimate). This translates to a purchasing power of about US\$3,300 per capita (or US\$726 per capita at the market exchange rate). Inflation rate was estimated at 7.5% per year in 2006. Deep poverty, defined as a percent of the population living under \$1 per day, has declined significantly and is now smaller than that of China, India, and the Philippines.

As a result of several land reform measures, Vietnam is now the largest producer of cashew nuts with a one-third global share and second largest rice exporter in the world after Thailand. Vietnam has the highest percent of land use for permanent crops, 6.93%, of any nation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Besides rice, key exports are coffee, tea, rubber, and fishery products. However, agriculture's share of economic

output has declined, falling as a share of GDP from 42% in 1989 to 20% in 2006, as production in other sectors of the economy has risen. According to the CIA World Fact Book, the unemployment rate in Vietnam is one of the lowest in the world at 2%, trailing behind only Azerbaijan, Cuba, Iceland, Andorra and Liechtenstein. Among other steps taken in the process of transitioning to a market economy, Vietnam in July 2006 updated its intellectual property legislation to comply with TRIPS. Vietnam was accepted into the WTO on November 7, 2006. Vietnam's chief trading partners include Japan, Australia, ASEAN countries, the U.S. and Western European countries.

## Military

*Quân Đội Nhân Dân Việt Nam*, The Vietnam People's Army (VPA), is the official collective term for the armed forces of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The VPA consists of the Vietnam People's Ground Forces, Vietnam People's Navy, Vietnam People's Air Force, and Vietnam People's Coast Guard.

## Transport

The modern transport network of Vietnam was originally developed under French rule for the purpose of raw materials harvesting, and reconstructed and extensively modernized following the Vietnam War. The road system is the most popular form of transportation in the country. Vietnam's road system includes national roads administered by the central level; provincial roads managed by the provincial level; district roads managed by the district level; urban roads managed by cities and towns; and commune roads managed by the commune level.

Bicycles, motor scooters and motorcycles remain the most popular forms of road transport in Vietnam's cities, towns, and villages although the number of privately-owned automobiles is also on the rise, especially in the larger cities. Public bus operated by private companies is the main long distance travel means for many people. Traffic congestion is a serious problem in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as the cities' roads struggle to cope with the booming numbers of automobiles. There are also more than 17,000 kilometers of navigable waterways, which play a significant role in rural life owing to the extensive network of rivers in Vietnam.

The nation has seven developed ports and harbors at Cam Ranh, Da Nang, Hai Phong, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Gai (Halong City), Qui Nhon, and Nha Trang.



Coast guard station in Hà Tiên



Hai Van Pass.

## Demography

### Population

Recent census estimates the population of Vietnam at beyond 84 million. Vietnamese people, also called "Viet" or "Kinh", account for 86.2 percent of the population. Their population is concentrated in the alluvial deltas and coastal plains of the country. A homogeneous social and ethnic majority group, the Kinh exert political and economic control. There are more than 54 ethnic minorities throughout the country, but the Kinh are purveyors of the dominant culture. Most ethnic minorities, such as the Muong, a closely related ethnic of the Kinh, are found mostly in the highlands covering two-thirds of the territory. The Hoa (ethnic Chinese) and Khmer Krom are mainly lowlanders. The largest ethnic minority groups include the Hmong, Dao, Tay, Thai, and Nung.

### Languages

The people of Vietnam speak Vietnamese as a native language. In its early history, Vietnamese writing used Chinese characters. In the 13th century, the

Vietnamese developed their own set of characters called Chữ nôm. The celebrated epic Đoạn trường tân thanh (Truyện Kiều or The Tale of Kieu) by Nguyễn Du was written in Chữ nôm. During the French colonial period, Quốc ngữ, the romanized Vietnamese alphabet used for spoken Vietnamese, which was developed in 17th century by Jesuit Alexandre De Rhodes and several other Catholic missionaries, became popular and brought literacy to the masses.

Various other languages are spoken by several minority groups in Vietnam. The most common of these are Tày, Mường, Khmer, Chinese, Nùng, and H'Mông. The French language, a legacy of colonial rule, is still spoken by some older Vietnamese as a second language, but is losing its popularity. Vietnam is also a full member of the Francophonie. Russian — and to a much lesser extent German, Czech, or Polish — is sometimes known among those whose families had ties with the Soviet bloc. In recent years, English is becoming more popular as a second language. English study is obligatory in most schools. Chinese and Japanese have also become more popular.

## Religions

Vietnam religiosity	
religion	percent
Buddhism	85%
Christianity	8%
Caodaiism	3%
Others	4%



For much of Vietnamese history, Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism have strongly influenced the religious and cultural life of the people. About 85% of Vietnamese identify with Buddhism even though they do not practice on a regular basis. About 8% of the population are Christians (about 6 million Roman Catholics and less than 1 million Protestants, census of 2007). Christianity was introduced first by the Portuguese and the Dutch traders in the 16th and 17th centuries, then further propagated under the French colonists in the 19th and 20th centuries, and to a lesser extent, by American Protestant missionaries during the presence of American forces during the 1960s and early 70's. The largest Protestant churches are the Evangelical Church of Vietnam and the Montagnard Evangelical Church.

Vietnam has great reservation towards Roman Catholicism. This mistrust originated during the French colonial time when some Catholics collaborated with the French colonists as espionage agents and militiamen to suppress the Vietnamese independence movement. Furthermore, the Church's teaching regarding communism made it an unwelcome counterforce to communist rule. Relationship with the Vatican, however, has improved in recent years. Membership of Sunni and Bashi Islam is usually accredited to the ethnic Cham minority, but there are also a few ethnic Vietnamese adherents of Islam in the southwest. The total number of Muslims remains very small nevertheless. The communist government has from time to time been criticized for its religious restrictions although it has categorically denied that such restrictions exist today.

The vast majority of Vietnamese people of Asian religions practice Ancestor Worship, although this may not be strictly considered a religion.

From the articles of Religions by country, Religion in Vietnam and Demographics of Vietnam; 85% is nominal/secular Buddhists including predominant 83% East Asian Buddhist or "Triple religion" (80% of people are worship the mixture of Mahayana Buddhism mainly, Taoism, Confucianism with Ancestor Worship; 2% Hòa Hảo with 1% of some new Vietnamese-Buddhist sects as Tứ Ân Hiếu Nghĩa, Pure Land Buddhist, etc) and 2% Theravada Buddhism, mainly among Khmer people but the census of Government showed that only over 10 million people have taken refuge in the Three Jewels; 8% Christians (7% Catholics and 1% Protestants); 3% Caodaism; 2.5% Tribal animism; less than 70 thousand Muslims; small Hindu communities (over 50 thousand people) and a small numbers of Baha'is.

## Education

Vietnam has an extensive state-controlled network of schools, colleges and universities but the number of privately-run and mixed public and private institutions is also growing. General education in Vietnam is imparted in 5 categories: Kindergarten, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and college / university. Courses are taught mainly in Vietnamese. A large number of public schools have been organized across cities, towns and villages with the purpose of



"One pillar" pagoda, Hanoi capital.



Cao Dai temple in My Tho

raising the national literacy rate which is already among the highest in the world. There are a large number of specialist colleges, established to develop a diverse and skilled national workforce. A large number of Vietnam's most acclaimed universities are based in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Facing serious crises, Vietnam's education system is under a holistic reform launched by the government. In Vietnam, education from age 6 to 11 is free and mandatory. Education above these ages is not free, therefore some poor families may find it hard to come up with the tuition for their children without some forms of public or private assistance. Regardless, school enrollment is among the highest in the world and the number of colleges and universities increased quite dramatically in recent years, from 178 in 2000 to 299 in 2005.

## Health service

## Science

In the past, Vietnam did not have "science" in its generally accepted meaning, but many fields were well developed, especially social science and humanities. It has at least ten centuries of commentary and analytic writings. Among the best known works are those of "Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư" of Ngô Sĩ Liên. Writings that deal with geography, nature, customs and people were written by "Đư địa chí" of Nguyễn Trãi. In mathematics, operations (including power and extract the root) of primary arithmetics and surveying, measurement (length, area, volume...) of primary geometry were taught in schools using the famous textbook: "Đại thành toán pháp" of Lương Thế Vinh. Lương Thế Vinh had notion of zero and Mạc Hiến Tích used the term "số ẩn" (unknown/secret/hidden number) to refer to negative numbers. Much knowledge was collected into encyclopedia: "Vân đài loại ngữ" of Lê Quý Đôn and "Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí" of Phan Huy Chú.

## Culture

The official spoken and written language of Vietnam is Vietnamese.

The culture of Vietnam has been influenced by neighboring China. Due to Vietnam's long association with the south of China, one characteristic of Vietnamese culture is financial duty. Education and self-betterment are highly valued. Historically, passing the imperial Mandarin exams was the only means for Vietnamese people to socially advance themselves.

In the socialist era, the cultural life of Vietnam has been deeply influenced by government-controlled media and the cultural influences of socialist programs. For many decades, foreign cultural influences were shunned and emphasis placed on appreciating and sharing the culture of communist nations such as the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and others. Since the 1990s, Vietnam has seen a greater exposure to Southeast Asian, European and American culture and media.

One of the most popular Vietnamese traditional garments is the " Áo Dài", worn often for special occasions such as weddings or festivals. White Áo dài is the required uniform for girls in many high schools across Vietnam. Áo Dài was once worn by both genders but today it is worn mainly by females, except for certain important traditional culture-related occasions where some men do wear it.

Vietnamese cuisine uses very little oil and many vegetables. The main dishes are often based on rice, soy sauce, and fish sauce. Its characteristic flavours are sweet (sugar), spicy ( serrano peppers), sour (lime), nuoc mam (fish sauce), and flavored by a variety of mint and basil.

Vietnamese music varies slightly in the three regions: Bắc or North, Trung or Central, and Nam or South. Northern classical music is Vietnam's oldest and is traditionally more formal. Vietnamese classical music can be traced to the Mongol invasions, when the Vietnamese captured a Chinese opera troupe. Central classical music shows the influences of Champa culture with its melancholic melodies. Southern music exudes a lively laissez-faire attitude.

Football (soccer) is the most popular sport in Vietnam. Sports and games such as badminton, tennis, ping pong, and chess are also popular with large segments of the population. Volleyball, especially women's volleyball, is watched by a fairly large number of Vietnamese. The (expatriate Vietnamese) community forms a prominent part of Vietnamese cultural life, introducing Western sports, films, music and other cultural activities in the nation.

See also *List of Vietnamese traditional games*.

Vietnam is home to a small film industry.

Among countless other traditional Vietnamese occasions, the traditional Vietnamese wedding is one of the most important. Regardless of westernization, many of the age-old customs in a Vietnamese wedding continue to be celebrated by both Vietnamese in Vietnam and overseas, often combining both western and eastern elements.



The Văn Miếu (Temple of Literature).



The Hanoi Opera House is an example of French Colonial architecture in Vietnam.



My Dinh National Stadium in Western Hanoi

See also *List of festivals in Vietnam*

## Tourism

Vietnam's number of visitors for tourism and vacation has increased steadily over the past ten years. About 3.56 million international guests visited Vietnam in 2006, an increase of 3.7% from 2005. The country is investing capital into the coastal regions that are already popular for their beaches and boat tours. Hotel staff and tourism guides in these regions speak a good amount of English.

## Sports and games

## International rankings

Organization	Survey	Ranking
Heritage Foundation/ <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	Index of Economic Freedom	142 out of 157
<i>The Economist</i>	Worldwide Quality-of-life Index, 2005	61 out of 111
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide Press Freedom Index	155 out of 167
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index	111 out of 163
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	109 out of 177
World Economic Forum	Global Competitiveness Report	77 out of 125

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# Wallis and Futuna

2008/9 Schools Wikipedia Selection. Related subjects: Geography of Oceania (Australasia)

**Wallis and Futuna**, officially the **Territory of Wallis and Futuna Islands** (French: *Wallis-et-Futuna* or *Territoire des îles Wallis-et-Futuna*, Fakauvea and Fakafutuna: *Uvea mo Futuna*), is a Polynesian French island territory (but not part of, or even contiguous with, French Polynesia) in the South Pacific between Fiji and Samoa. It is made up of three main volcanic tropical islands and a number of tiny islets. The territory is split into two island groups lying about 260 km apart:

- Wallis Islands (Uvea), in the north
  - Wallis Island (Uvea)
- Hoorn Islands (Futuna Islands), in the south
  - Futuna
  - Alofi

Since 2003 Wallis and Futuna has been a French overseas collectivity ( *collectivité d'outre-mer*, or *COM*). Between 1961 and 2003, it had the status of a French overseas territory ( *territoire d'outre-mer*, or *TOM*).



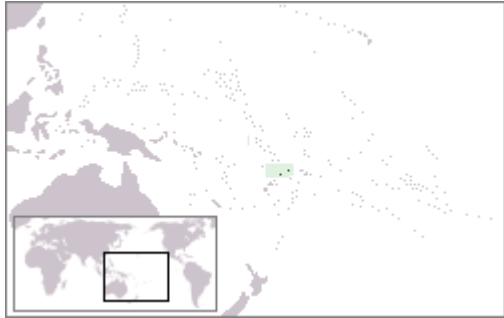
## History

Although the Dutch and the British were the European discoverers of the islands in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was the French who were the first Europeans to settle in the territory, with the arrival of French missionaries in 1837, who converted the population to Roman Catholicism. Wallis is named after the British explorer, Samuel Wallis.

On April 5, 1842, they asked for the protection of France after the rebellion of a part of the local population. On April 5, 1887, the queen of Uvea (on the island of Wallis) signed a treaty officially establishing a French protectorate. The kings of Sigave and Alo on the islands of Futuna and Alofi also signed a treaty establishing a French protectorate on February 16, 1888. The islands were put under the authority of the French colony of New Caledonia.

In 1917, the three traditional chiefdoms were annexed to France and turned into the Colony of Wallis

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<b>Territoire des îles Wallis-et-Futuna</b>	
	
Unofficial flag	Coat of arms
<b>Motto:</b> n/a	
<b>Anthem:</b> <i>La Marseillaise</i>	
	
<b>Capital</b> (and largest city)	Mata-Utu
<b>Official languages</b>	French 'Uvean, Futunan
<b>Government</b>	Overseas territory of France
- President of France	Nicolas Sarkozy
- Administrateur supérieur	Richard Didier

and Futuna, still under the authority of the Colony of New Caledonia.

In 1959, the inhabitants of the islands voted to become a French overseas territory, effective in 1961, thus ending their subordination to New Caledonia.

In 2005 the 50th king, Tomasi Kulimoetoke II, faced being deposed after giving sanctuary to his grandson who was convicted of manslaughter. The king claimed his grandson should be judged by tribal law rather than by the French penal system. There were riots in the streets involving the king's supporters, which were victorious over attempts to replace the king. Two years later, Tomasi Kulimoetoke died on 7 May 2007. The state was in a six-month period of mourning. During this period, mentioning a successor was forbidden.

## Politics

The territory is divided into three traditional chiefdoms (*royaumes coutumiers*): Uvea, on the island of Wallis, Sigave, on the western part of the island of Futuna, and Alo, on the island of Alofi and on the eastern part of the island of Futuna (only Uvea is further subdivided, into three districts):

Chiefdom District	Capital	Area (km²)	Population Census 2003	Villages
<b>Wallis Islands</b>				
Uvea (Wallis)	Matā'utu	77.5	10071	23
Hihifo ( <i>West</i> )	Vaitupu	23.4	2422	5
Hahake ( <i>East</i> )	Matā'utu	27.8	3950	6
Mu'a ( <i>First</i> )	Mala'efo'ou <sup>(1)</sup>	26.3	3699	12
<b>Hoorn Islands</b>				
Sigave (Singave)	Leava	30.0	1880	6
Alo	Mala'e	85.0	2993	9
Wallis and Futuna	Matā'utu	192.5	14944	38

<sup>(1)</sup> formerly called Mua

- President of the Territorial Assembly	Victor Brial
- Kings (traditionally three)	King of Uvea (none at present), king of Alo (none at present) Visesio Moeliku, king of Sigave since 2004
<b>Non-sovereign</b>	(overseas territory)
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	264 km² ( 211th) 102 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2005 estimate	15,480 ( 219th)
- 2003 census	14,944
- Density	77/km² ( 112th) 199/sq mi
<b>GDP ( PPP)</b>	
- Total	2004 estimate \$60 million ( not ranked)
- Per capita	\$ 3,800 ( not ranked)
<b>Currency</b>	CFP franc ( <span>₣</span> PF)
<b>Time zone</b>	( UTC+12)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.wf
<b>Calling code</b>	+681

The capital of the territory is Matā'utu on the island of Wallis, the most populated island. As a territory of France, it is governed under the French constitution of September 28, 1958, uses the French legal system, and suffrage is universal for those over 18 years of age. The French president elected by popular vote for a five-year term; the high administrator is appointed by the French president on the advice of the French Ministry of the Interior; the presidents of the Territorial Government and the Territorial Assembly are elected by the members of the assembly.

The head of state is President Nicolas Sarkozy of France as represented by High Administrator Richard Didier (since July 19, 2006). The President of the Territorial Assembly is Pesamino Taputai (since April 1st 2001. The Council of the Territory consists of three kings (kings of the three traditional chiefdoms, who are "de jure" members) and three members appointed by the high administrator on the advice of the Territorial Assembly.

The legislative branch consists of the unicameral Territorial Assembly or *Assemblée territoriale* of 20 seats; the members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. Wallis and Futuna elects one senator to the French Senate and one deputy to the French National Assembly.

Justice is generally administered under French law by a tribunal of first instance in Mata-Utu, but the three traditional chiefdoms administer justice according to customary law (only for non-criminal cases). The court of appeal is in Nouméa, New Caledonia.

The territory participates in the Franc Zone, and as a permanent member of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and as an observer member of the South Pacific Forum.

## Geography

Wallis and Futuna is located about two-thirds of the way from Hawaii to New Zealand, at .

The territory includes the island of Wallis (the most populated), the island of Futuna, the uninhabited island of Alofi (the population of Alofi was reportedly eaten by the cannibal people of Futuna in one single raid in the 19th century), and 20 uninhabited islets, totaling 274 square kilometres (106 sq mi) with 129 kilometres (80 mi) of coastline. The highest point in the territory is Mont Singavi (on the island of Futuna) at 765 metres (2,510 ft).

The islands have a hot, rainy season from November to April and a cool, dry season from May to October. The rains accumulate 2,500 to 3,000 millimeters (98–118 in) each year. The average humidity is 80% and the temperature 26.6 °C (79.9° F).

Only five percent of the islands' land area is arable land; permanent crops cover another 20%. Deforestation (only small portions of the original forests remain), largely as a result of the continued use of wood as the main fuel source, is a serious problem; as a consequence of cutting down the forests, the mountainous terrain of Futuna is particularly prone to erosion. There are no permanent settlements on Alofi because of the lack of natural fresh water resources.

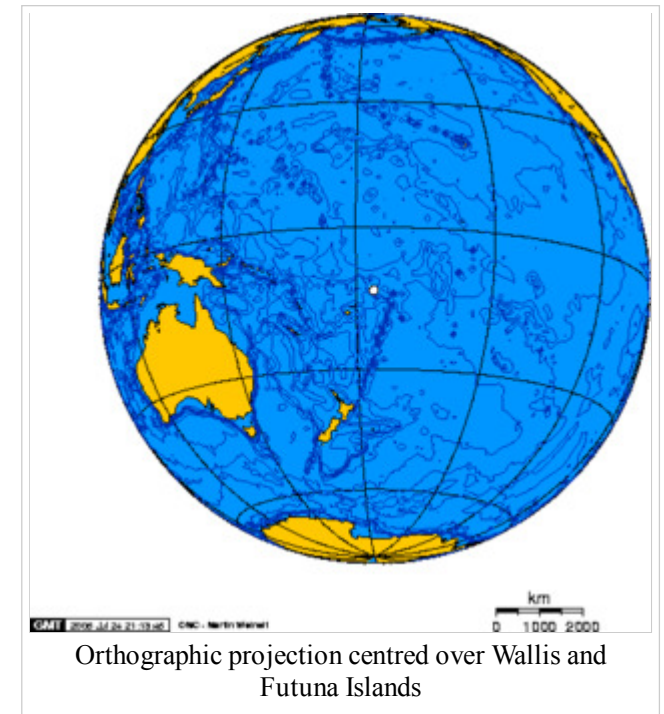
## Economy

The territory's economy is limited to traditional subsistence agriculture, with about 80% of the labor force earning its livelihood from agriculture (coconuts and vegetables), livestock (mostly pigs), and fishing. About 4% of the population is employed in government. Revenues come from French Government subsidies, licensing of fishing rights to Japan and South Korea, import taxes, and remittances from expatriate workers in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and France.

The gross domestic product had in 1995 a purchasing power parity of about \$28.7 million total, about \$2,000 per capita. The territory takes in about \$20 million per year in revenues against about \$17 million in expenditures.

Industries include copra, handicrafts, fishing, and lumber. Agricultural products include breadfruit, yams, taro, bananas, pigs, and goats. In 1995, about \$370,000 worth of commodities ( copra, breadfruit, yams, taro roots, handicrafts) were exported, and about \$13.5 million worth of commodities (foodstuffs, manufactured goods, transportation equipment, fuel, clothing) were imported, primarily from France, Australia, and New Zealand.

The territory uses the CFP Franc, along with the French territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia; the CFP franc (XPF) is fixed vs. the euro, at the rate of 1,000 XPF = 8.38 euro.



Lake Lalolalo on Uvea



**Banking:** In 1991, BNP Nouvelle-Calédonie, a subsidiary of BNP Paribas, established a subsidiary, Banque de Wallis-et-Futuna, which currently is the only bank in the territory. Two years earlier Banque Indosuez had closed the branch at Mata-Utu that it had opened in 1977, leaving the territory without any bank.

## Demographics

The total population of the territory at the 2003 census was 14,944 (67.4% on the island of Wallis, 32.6% on the island of Futuna), the vast majority of Polynesian ethnicity, with a small minority of French descent. More than 16,000 Wallisians and Futunians live as expatriates in New Caledonia, which is more than the total population of Wallis and Futuna. The overwhelming majority of the people in Wallis and Futuna are Roman Catholic. They speak both French and Wallisian or Futunian, the indigenous Polynesian languages. However, French is only spoken by 10% of the population as a first language. Half the total population (both men and women) age 15 and over can read and write.

## Culture

The culture of those islands is Polynesian, the Music of Wallis and Futuna has a rich tradition. The Kailao, often thought of as a Tongan war dance was imported to Tonga from 'Uvea.

## Transportation and communications

In 1994, the territory had 1,125 telephones in use, had one AM radio station, and two television broadcast stations.

The island of Wallis has about 100 kilometers (62 mi) of highway, 16 paved, while the island of Futuna has only 20 kilometers (12.5 mi), none of it paved.

The territory has two main ports and harbors, Mata-Utu and Leava (on the island of Futuna), that support its merchant marine fleet consisting of three ships (two passenger ships and a petroleum tanker), totaling 92,060 GRT or 45,881 metric tons of deadweight (DWT).

There are two airports, one on Wallis with a paved runway of 2,100 meters (6,890 ft), and one on Futuna with a 1,000-meter (3,300 ft) unpaved strip. New Caledonia-based Aircalin operates the only commercial flights that go to Wallis, where it has an office in Mata-Utu. There are no commercial boat operators.

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