

China

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Podcast Blurb

The podcast [Sinobabble](#) describes itself as follows:

MAKING CHINESE HISTORY ACCESSIBLE

Welcome to Sinobabble, an online resource of free, educational content designed to make China easy to navigate and inspiring to learn about.

I'm a UK-based PhD graduate who has studied and lived in China over the course of seven years. As an aspiring historian and teacher, I created Sinobabble as a project to articulate and share what I have learnt with anyone interested in knowing more about China's history and its impact on modern China.

Sinobabble is produced so that it's easy to understand, relaxing to listen to, and most importantly of all, genuinely interesting. I encourage you to explore and learn with Sinobabble, and give me feedback and suggestions for what you want to know and how I can improve making Chinese history interesting for you.

Note on the podcast title: Sinobabble. “Sino” is a prefix generally referring to China.

Podcast's Most Recent Episode

Sinobabble's most recent podcast episode, which is available on the podcast website, as linked above, was on The Great Leap Forward. According to a [Wikipedia](#) article, this was a plan that was created to increase China's economy and industry. It was started by the Communist leader Chairman Mao Zedong in 1958 and ended in 1961. The Great Leap Forward failed to bring industrialization and the famine that it created killed millions of people. Some people think it to be the biggest famine in history.

The government tried to stop the famine by canceling orders for technology. Instead, they imported food for people to eat. However, the economy of China continued to fall after the end of the Great Leap Forward. Workers were stressed, and the Soviet Union took away its support of China. Mao used the Cultural Revolution to punish those he claimed caused the failure.

The start of the Cultural Revolution followed the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Mao tried to remove capitalists from the Communist Party of China, the party in charge of China. To get rid of the capitalists, he started the Socialist Education Movement. It started in 1962 and ended in 1965. At the same time, a redoing of the school system made sure that students were able to also work in factories and communes.

Hong Kong Protests

From a New York Times [article](#): In 2019, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in Hong Kong gathered for a march that became the start of the semi-autonomous Chinese city's biggest political crisis and the broadest expression of public anger with Beijing in decades.

In the months that followed, protesters filled the city's streets, broke into the local legislature and vandalized it, staged sit-ins at the airport, and turned a university campus into a fiery battleground. In early 2020, the demonstrations quieted amid the coronavirus pandemic.

But Beijing's push to impose national security laws over the territory has prompted some protesters to return to the streets. Their presence is a reminder that many thorny issues — including the demonstrators' demands for greater official accountability — remain unresolved. Organizers estimate that a million people marched on June 9, 2019, against a proposed law allowing extraditions to mainland China. The rally was mostly peaceful, though some protesters and police officers clashed after midnight. Three days later, the police fired tear gas at protesters who had blocked a major highway outside the local legislature. The heavy-handed response prompted another June march that organizers said drew nearly two million people. On July 1, hundreds of thousands of people marched to denounce police brutality and Beijing's growing influence over the city on the 22nd anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China. A group of demonstrators also smashed their way into the local legislature using metal bars and makeshift battering rams. That confrontation reflected a wider attempt by the protest movement to target symbols of authority, including local police stations and the Chinese government's liaison office in the city.

On July 21, after protesters vandalized Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong, a mob attacked a group of protesters in a train station. Dozens were injured. The appearance of police inaction that night would fuel widespread anger toward the Hong Kong police force, and suspicion that officers were unwilling to protect anti-government protesters.

By August, Hong Kong's sleek and efficient airport was the center of protesters' focus. First there were days of sit-ins by demonstrators who wanted to voice their complaints to some of the tens of thousands of travelers who move through the airport each day. The protesters then

blocked some travelers, snarling flights and causing hundreds of cancellations. After protesters attacked two men from mainland China, the airport obtained a court injunction barring access to its terminals to anyone except employees and travelers bearing flight tickets.

While Beijing marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on Oct. 1 with a military parade, protesters in Hong Kong held widespread demonstrations that turned violent. Days later, the Hong Kong government used emergency powers to ban face masks at protests, a move that was scaled back in a series of court rulings.

In some of the most dramatic moments of the protest movement, university campuses became focal points of unrest in November after a student demonstrator died in a fall from a parking garage during a police operation. Protesters occupied the Chinese University of Hong Kong for five days. The police later arrested hundreds of protesters after a lengthy siege.

The protest movement earned a stunning victory in late November as pro-democracy candidates captured most of the seats in local elections for district councils, one of the lowest elected offices in the city. It was a vivid expression of the city's aspirations and its anger with the Chinese government, and the protests subsided for several weeks after that. On New Year's Day, demonstrators returned to the streets in full force in a protest that started peacefully but descended into violent clashes with the police.

Early this year, after the coronavirus emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan and spread around the world, the protests eased as residents stayed home and social-distancing rules were imposed. But demonstrators pressured the government in other ways, notably through a union of hospital employees who went on strike to force the government to slow travel from mainland China to lessen the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

Misconceptions About Modern China

The following information is featured on [moderndiplomacy](#):

China is, at once, feared and envied by many countries, the United States of America in the forefront. The USA looks upon China as a copycat out to obtain economic advantage for its state-owned enterprises through cyber-espionage. Cognitive dissonance in US-China relations is obvious. The USA likes China's economic progress, as long as it suits American interests. But, it abhors China's efforts to occupy more strategic space in the region around it, particularly the South China Sea.

China, too, wants to keep an eye on the USA. Its universities and think tanks teem with specialists in the USA, European Union and the rest of the world. There are 150 think tanks focusing on Australia alone. Though India shares a border with China, Chinese students have little interest in exploring Indian culture and history. The Chinese display an indifferent attitude, bordering ignorance about India

Misconception1: Chinese loans are predatory

The US has expressed its apprehensions about Chinese investment in Pakistan, Sri Lanka as elsewhere. For the US, the investments are a predatory debt trap that could lead to 'asset seizures' like Hambantota port of Sri Lanka.

The factual position is that Chinese infrastructure loans have not led to the forfeiture of a single valuable asset abroad. The US view is based on Rhodium Group study, which mentions only Hambantota port as the lone instance of seizure. The claim of forced lease or seizure is questionable. The Hambantota port lease, held jointly by the Hong Kong-based China Merchants Port and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority, was negotiated over 2016-2017.

Misconception 2: China wants to colonise Pakistan

China never harboured any such ambition. History tells that China did its best to ensure protection of Pakistan's sovereignty.

There are marked differences between China and Pakistan that rule out Pakistan as a colony for China. China's pragmatism as 'religion', now dollar-orientation, obedient labour force, enlightened leadership with a world vision, and hard work ethos is different from Pakistan's.

Misconception 3: Chinese to be Pakistan's second language

The popularity of a language rises or falls *pari passu* with a country's place in the comity of nations. Historically, English, French, Russian, Arabic and mandarin were the languages of imperialistic or conquering states. Shifts in power triggered shifts in the status of languages. English continues to hold sway as it has dominated the commercial, scientific, commercial, scientific and technological fields.

Hong Kong's effervescence for mandarin is due to the rise of China. When, around 2050, China displaces the USA as the world's premier economy, English is likely to give way to mandarin as the world's new lingua franca.

Misconception 4; The 21st Century will be China's, not America's

The fear is that China will surpass the USA within the next 10 to 20 years. Cash-rich Beijing with over US\$ 30 trillion in foreign capital-reserves will be increasingly uncompromising diplomatically. To entertain a rising Chinese middle class, the world would become more and more 'Sinicised'.

The truth is that the Western view of China is a bit too alarmist. The world will have to compromise with China's economic and cultural heft. The two world views can coexist. One is based on protection of individual self-interest, and the other is top-down Confucian patriarchy. Yet, the diarchy may co-exist peacefully without a Manichian struggle of the ilk of good and evil, darkness and light. Be it observed, aside from hype China has so far been non-hegemonic at heart. It has no desire to spin existing geo-politico-economic order out its axis.

Misconception 5: Ascendancy of American style individualism

Chinese are becoming better off with a rising middle class and concomitant changes in cultural outlook. Yet, the brutal truth is family life discourages individualism. 'Pursuit of happiness' is at best an adolescent fantasy. It is soon forsaken under stress of marriage mortgage, mother-in-law, and motor car ownership.

Parents, teachers, and bosses never encourage defining oneself independent of society. The clan, not society is the primary productive unit of society. Ego gratification is not synonymous with individualism. Success with societal acknowledgement is the norm, not solo flights.

Misconception 6: Atheism

Chinese are traditionally obsessed with survival, not eternity, or higher spiritual values. Chinese philosophy of **Daoism**, Confucianism, and legalism are mechanistic. They are concerned with values as a means to an end. Pragmatism is the key attitude. Buddhism stands secularized to align gods with wealth and kitchen not spiritual alignment.

The Chinese society is in transition. Materialism now means faith in a bright future. Even the spread of Christianity in both rural and urban areas is not tantamount to rejection of traditional

values. During the Tang dynasty, Buddhism emerged as a complement, not repudiation material secularism.

Misconception 7: Revolutionary influence of the Internet

Chinese are free to play violent computer games, indulge in free music-downloads, access to boot-legged movies, and e-commerce. Too, gaps between rulers and the ruled have been narrowing. Anonymous sentinels (Weibo, China's Twitter clone) relay reports of corruption in real time.

Yet, the internet is unlikely to upend people-to-government relationships. Internet chats do not crystallise into massive organised dissent. Pre-occupied with the welfare of their families, few would dare risking trouble with authorities.

Chinese cyberspace is like a walled crystal-globe. People can gaze through it over the world around but they can't take part in violent agitation. The government cleverly uses cyberspace in advancing social harmony. It facilitates e-commerce platforms. They expand supply and improve quality of consumer goods available in lower-tier markets, down to the rural fringe.

Misconception 8: Chinese people are akin to Europeans

Not so. Average Chinese values stability in the family above individualism. There are no political or religious divides as in Europe: lackadaisical Italians versus industrious Germans, anti-institutional Protestants versus statist Catholic.

China displays differences in the north, dominated by bureaucratic state-owned enterprises and the south close to the sea, encumbered by governmental hierarchy. Generally, the Chinese have an identical world view.

Misconception 9: Inscrutable Chinese consumer

Usually reticent, Chinese evince warmth once trust has been established. They are not complicated and display warmth and directness in everyday attitude. They are attracted to Western brands just as any other consumer.

Misconception 10: China growth bubble is about to burst

Critics outline a host of challenges to Chinese growth model. They include rising inflation and commodity prices, wage increases inimical to low-cost manufacturing, bureaucratic hurdles to bold structural reforms, urban-rural income militating against social harmony, and an education system that squelches harmony. The fact is that the resilient Chinese economy is not overheating. The economist noted that China's accumulated investment in fixed assets is still low and real wages have been rising strongly, which should help boost consumption in the medium term. Talk of popping bubbles is confined to high-end neighbourhoods in coastal capitals.

Misconception 11: Burgeoning poverty due to unbalanced growth

China was able to bridge the stark differences that existed between rural and urban lifestyles. The *hukou* system was designed to prevent rural to urban migration. In China today, poverty refers mainly to the rural poor, as decades of economic growth have largely eradicated urban poverty. The dramatic progress in reducing poverty over the past three decades in China is well known. According to the World Bank, more than 850 million Chinese people have been lifted out of extreme poverty.

Misconception 12: China is militarily aggressive

China is accused of harbouring outlandish territorial claims in the South China Sea, confronting Japan on the high seas and the Philippines. Over 1000 ballistic weapons aim at Taiwan.

The US Department of Defense concludes that China's 2018 defense budget likely exceeded \$200 billion. In 2017, the magazine Popular Mechanics estimated that China's annual military spending is greater than \$200 billion, around 2% of the GDP.

But, be it noted that the U.S. spent \$649 billion on its military in 2018, according to a report published in 2019 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Temperamentally, Chinese shield themselves from danger (The great Wall). But, they have no itch to wage a war.

Misconception 13: Uyghur's persecution and social issues

The Uyghurs, alternately Uygurs, Uighurs or Uigurs, are a Minority Turkic ethnic group originating from and culturally affiliated with the general region of Central and East Asia. The Uyghurs are recognized as native to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

Insider dated December 24, 2019 reported that China has initiated a "Pair Up and Become Family" program to dilute the Uyghur minority. Han Chinese men are sent to live with Uighur women in China's western region of Xinjiang. "Neither the girls nor their families can reject such a marriage because they will be viewed [by Chinese authorities] as Islamic extremists for not wanting to marry atheist Han Chinese. They have no choice but to marry them. It is alleged that the Han Chinese have been raping Uighur women in the name of marriage for years. China denies the allegation.

Conclusion: Though China wants to overcome present and future challenges, it has no manifesto detailing goals for the next two decades. The alarmist or envious view of a rising China engendered many misconceptions. One could however peek through Xi Jinping's pronouncements, or his predecessors, to sift his 'benchmark vision'. **There are three benchmarks. In the first ten years, the goal was to provide adequate food and clothing to Chinese population (already achieved). In the second phase, the plan is to build a moderately-prosperous country by 2012 with a per capita gross Domestic Product of around US\$ 13,000. The final phase, 2020 to 2050, envisions complete modernization of both rural and urban parts of China.**

Since early 2013, Xi has been talking about '*fuqiang guojia*' ('rich, strong, powerful country'). To realise his dreams, he needs to stay in power. Yet, his dream is threatened by emerging challenges to China's stability and development. The most potent challenge emanates from US machinations to destabilize China (tariff and trade war, religious concerns, BRI/CPEC concerns). True, there are social issues involving China's unity, need for political reform in view of the Party's long continuation in power and economic or political deterioration in the international environment.

History of US-Chinese Relations

A *Council on Foreign Relations* [article](#) provides an excellent timeline of US relations with China.

US Attempts to Destabilize China

CPC Visa

According to an [article](#) featured on *Global Times*:

In yet another hysterical anti-China policy, the outgoing administration of US President Donald Trump announced in December 2020 new visa rules for members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and their family members. The new policy, which took effect immediately, will limit the maximum duration of their travel visas to one month.

The policy is part of the all-out China containment strategy advocated by the Trump administration since the beginning of this year. It came not as an accident, but rather as the result of delicate calculations.

The impact of relevant Chinese people's travel will be limited. But indeed the policy is another malicious gesture of the US toward China and its ruling party. Directly targeting CPC members and their relatives shows the US' hostility toward the CPC and a US attempt to fan the ideological, confrontational flame between the two countries. The arbitrary and shallow move of the US administration proves the lack of understanding among US policymakers toward China's political system and the significance of the CPC leadership to China and the Chinese people.

Reality of China Threat

A journalistic [piece](#) from *The Conversation* discusses the reality of a Chinese threat to America.

The information that follows was sourced from the aforementioned work.

In October 2017, at the National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi confirmed Western fears. He publicly declared his goal of moving China to the “center stage” of world affairs.

Xi said China did not seek global domination but warned that no one “should expect China to swallow anything that undermines its interests.” He also hinted that China’s rise would create a world order with “Chinese characteristics.”

In December 2017 an updated U.S. national security strategy officially declared China’s rise a threat, citing intellectual property theft and the development of advanced weapons capable of nullifying America’s military advantage.

Internal Challenges: Beijing faces a U.S.-led coalition that is committed to resisting China’s economic, military and diplomatic power plays in Asia. China also has rising debt, stagnating GDP growth rate and declining productivity.

Then there are China’s troubling demographics: The population is both shrinking and getting old.

China’s population declined in 2018 for the first time since the deadly famines induced by Mao’s “Great Leap Forward” in the 1960s. The Chinese Academy of Science predicts that if fertility continues to drop from its current rate of 1.6 children per woman to a projected 1.3, China’s population would be reduced by about 50% by the end of this century.

China ended in 2015 its policy of limiting families to one child, but its population still skews old, leaving fewer workers to support increasing numbers of elderly.

Together, these predictions have raised concerns within the Chinese Communist Party that the nation will “get old before it gets rich.” This predicament could create serious social unrest.

Accusation Against US by China

[NBC News](#) provided the following information.

China has accused the United States of undermining global stability and warned it would consider using force to gain control of Taiwan.

The comments came in China's first defense white paper since 2015, giving an insight into the policy priorities for the world's most populous country and second-largest economy.

It is also an indicator of the messages the administration headed by President Xi Jinping wants to broadcast for both domestic and international audiences.

The paper said the administration of President Donald Trump "has provoked and intensified competition among major countries ... and undermined global strategic stability."

China "resolutely opposes the wrong practices and provocative activities of the U.S." when it comes to Taiwan, the disputed South China Sea, and Washington's sanctions against China last year after it bought arms from Russia's blacklisted state arms-export agency.

Beijing and Washington are engaged in a trade war, with Trump and Xi hiking tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of each other's goods.

They have also clashed over the South China Sea, where the U.S. and others accuse China of building artificial militarized islands on reefs in disputed waters, through which about \$5 trillion in shipping trade passes each year.

Another point of contention is Taiwan, an island off the Chinese mainland that has governed itself since 1949, but that Beijing sees as a rogue breakaway province. The U.S. has no formal ties with Taiwan but is bound by law to help it defend itself.

A Lawfare [article](#) from February 2021 continued the conversation above.

Interviews with Historians

- [Interview with Oxford expert: China's history of subjugation fuel its obsession with territory](#)
- [WWII still shapes Chinese public consciousness: UK historian](#)
- [The Pulse: Interview with historian Niall Ferguson on China-US relationships](#)