



# Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

## Newsletter

4TH FLOOR, ROSS HOUSE, 247-251 FLINDERS LANE, MELBOURNE VIC 3000

E-MAIL: [SECRETARY@ACFS-VIC.ORG](mailto:SECRETARY@ACFS-VIC.ORG) WEB: [WWW.ACFS-VIC.ORG](http://WWW.ACFS-VIC.ORG)

FOLLOW US ON [TWITTER @ACFSVIC](https://twitter.com/ACFSVIC) AND [FACEBOOK @ACFSLTD](https://facebook.com/ACFSLTD).

**February 2025**

## President's Report

It is impossible to discuss the world at this point in time without reference to recent political events among too major Western powers, the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany. In the former, we have witnessed the return of Donald Trump as the President with a populist hard-right agenda, and in the latter a victory for the conservative Union Parties (the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and the Bavarian Christian Social Union), with the far-right Alternative for Germany in second place and, one may add, last year's legislative election in France with the successes of the far-right National Rally. It goes without saying that in the coming months there will be a lot to discuss as a result of these and probably other events.

Regardless of political persuasion, it is fair to say in these advanced and allegedly liberal-capitalist democracies, that the election processes has been significant swayed by demagogic manipulation that feeds from ignorance. Rife on Internet social media, there is a gaggle of often downright bizarre and confidently incorrect claims; whether it relates to public health (e.g., vaccinations), the environment (e.g., global warming), and even astrophysics (e.g., the shape of the earth). These claims are far beyond what is considered normal rational debate, backed by evidence. Rather, they are blatant demagoguery; conspiratorial feelings and prejudices. We may add, of course, false and offensive claims about China and Chinese people.

In such circumstances, it is worth considering whether political meritocracy as an alternative, or at the least a complement, to Western liberal democracy, of which China is presented as example, or at least, tending toward such a model. Daniel Bell, hardly a political radical, argues in "The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy" (Princeton University Press, 2016), that with increased complexity it is impossible for everyone to have sufficient grasp of everything, leaving the door open for emotional vitriol rather than reasoned discussion. Bell therefore argues for a model where officials are elected at local levels, and higher-level officials are promoted and selected by peers: "democracy at the bottom, experimentation in the middle, and meritocracy at the top." The argument is that this would preserve the participatory opportunities of democracy, ensure accountability, whilst at the same time ensuring a better co-ordination of collective action.

This is hardly to suggest that the Australian political system should be replaced with the Chinese one, or for that matter that Chinese is problem-free implementation of Bell's concept of political meritocracy. But it certainly is appropriate that Australia learns about those Chinese characteristics that avoid the prospect of demagogic manipulation in the same manner that China can learn the advantages from the Australian system. After all, it is through the meeting and rational consideration of different points of view and the will to change one's mind when presented with new information, that one learns.

As always, the Australia China Friendship Society encourages such dialogue. With the advent of the Lunar New Year, our association has been already working toward better relations between our two great countries that have so much to offer one another. There has been two major New Year events in the past month where the Australia China Friendship Society has attended with other appropriate

bodies and individuals. The first was a reception at the Kooyong Tennis Club with a Celebrity Tennis Friendship Match. It was, as it always is, an astoundingly well-organised event with a truly impressive array of speakers, attendees, and performers. The second was a Chinese New Year Concert at Hamer Hall with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra with invited guests from China (the conductor, the pianist, the pipa player). Mixing Chinese and European influences, the concert consisted of Tian's "Gift", Beethoven's "Piano Concerto No. 4", Strauss II's "Der Fledermaus", Jiping's "Pipa Concerto No. 2", and Kats-Chernin's "Momentum". Afterward, there was a smaller private function that included speeches from the Governor of Victoria (and MSO patron), the Chinese Consulate-General, and the outgoing and incoming chairs of the MSO.

The Society has a plan of activities in the coming months, including a Yum Cha and cultural speaker in May, a major concert in September, and we're exploring the possibility of Chinese-English classes. We've run into several hiccups with our planned annual dinner, and there is a good chance that we might have several smaller dinners over the year; certainly there is nothing wrong with a tour of Melbourne's best scattered over a year. But whatever we decide, our main priority is promoting goodwill between the people of Australia and China. There are certainly plenty of people who don't believe in this and, it must be stated clearly and strongly, that every Chinese person in Australia has experienced racism and exploitation at the hands of members of the dominant culture. We will not forget this fact; and we will do our utmost to rid this stain from our country.

## **The Belt and Road Initiative is a positive contribution to shared global prosperity and harmony**

*By Joe Montero*

China's government recently accused its United States counterpart of trying to sabotage Belt and Road initiative. On this occasion the focus was about pressure put on Panama. It is no coincidence that the Central America country was threatened with an invasion force to take the Panama Canal. Added to



this was as 90 day warning to cancel Panama's signing up to join China in Belt and Road related projects.

This is not the place to go into the geopolitical details of this incident. Suffice to say that The Belt and Road Initiative is being sold by those fearing it, as a vehicle for a Chinese takeover of sovereign nations, and as threat to the United States in particular.

The Belt and Road Initiative is nothing of the sort. Anyone bothering to check it out will soon learn that this is about building nation and international infrastructure to enhance trade and economic opportunities. With this, a multitude of countries gain capacity for their own sovereign economic and social development. More than 150 countries are now participating.



Joint participation in this initiative opens the building friendship between nations and people to a new level. China does win kudos for playing a major role and contributing superior technology without strings, and this builds friendship ties between China and many other nations and peoples. This should not be seen as a threat by anyone.

Contrast this with the pressure put on Panama to move into bilateral ties with the United States with political conditions. Belt and Road doesn't impose political conditions.

Twenty Latin American and Caribbean countries have joined the Belt and Road initiative, and more are on the way to joining. This raises the ire of Washington, which sees itself as being threatened, rather being able to benefit from the opportunities that come into being.

Others are benefitting. Take the new railway line being built to join Tanzania and Burundi in Africa. This \$2.5 Billion project is being built with Chinese help, and the resulting capacity to carry 3 million metric tons of goods annually will drive growth in both economies. This is only one of similar projects in Africa. The biggest example is South Africa, where a partnership with China involving projects across sectors, including renewable energy, digital technology, and advanced manufacturing, is fuelling the emergence of South Africa as an economic powerhouse in the continent, and making the prospect of becoming a major global economy a real possibility. This is an economy owned and controlled by South Africa.

An example in Asia is Vietnam. Several infrastructure projects are involved. There is more. Advantage is being taken of both nations being the world's leaders in traditional medicines to create a partnership to enhance its sustainable development, while working together to protect natural fauna and flora. This partnership is seen as a model for the future of all.

It is useful to say something about China's successful BYD electric vehicles and breakneck advances in computer technology and applications. The BYD is a superior product and China seeks to share the benefit by encouraging the building of production plants in other nations as joint ventures. This is tantalising Europe which desperately needs a lifeline. Spain has signed up and Italy is knocking at the door.

Joining Belt and Road would provide the addition of low-cost transport and energy. Chances are that at least a few European nations will take advantage of the opportunity. BYD provides the best in cars

and happens to be the leading producer of electric buses and trucks. Other Chinese manufacturers lead in the production of electric trains and the systems on which to operate them. A partnership between Europe and China would do a lot to lower the cost of transporting goods and people. This and cooperation on building a sustainable economy would built and engine for progress.

The United States can enjoy the same benefits. So can Australia. If we joined most of Asia and the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions in the Belt and Road, the prospects for Australia's future would become so much brighter.

A separate but related development has been the rise of BRICS. This too is another story. One can't escape that the emergence of this alternative system for international trade and investment provides further opportunities for cooperation between nations as equals. Can anyone honestly say that building a better relationship with China is bad for Australia?

## UNESCO inscribes Spring Festival on intangible cultural heritage list



*Chinese delegates celebrate the inscription of Spring Festival, social practices of the Chinese people in celebration of traditional new year, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity during the 19th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Asuncion, Paraguay, Dec. 4, 2024. [Photo/Xinhua]*

ASUNCION, Dec. 4 -- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Wednesday inscribed Spring Festival, social practices of the Chinese people in celebration of the traditional new year, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The decision was made during the 19th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, taking place in Paraguay from Dec. 2 to 7. The committee recognized the festival for its wide array of rituals and unique cultural elements that engage all of Chinese society.

UNESCO highlighted that the Spring Festival, marking the start of the traditional Chinese Lunar New Year, involves various social practices, including prayers for good fortune and family reunions. It also features activities planned by elders and festive public events organised by communities.

According to UNESCO's documentation, the traditional knowledge and customs associated with the Spring Festival are passed down informally within families and communities, as well as formally through the education system. Craftsmanship and artistic skills related to the festival are transmitted through apprenticeships, promoting family values, social cohesion, and peace, while providing a sense of cultural identity.

The committee also emphasised that the festival embodies the harmony between humans and nature and contributes to sustainable development in areas such as food security and education. It also plays a key role in raising environmental awareness.

China's vice minister of Culture and Tourism, Rao Quan, who led the Chinese delegation at the UNESCO session, expressed gratitude for the recognition. He stressed that the Spring Festival is China's most important traditional holiday, symbolising the Chinese people's hopes for a better life, strong ties to family and country, and the values of harmony between humans and nature.

Rao further explained that the festival, passed down through generations, has provided lasting spiritual strength to the Chinese people. It has played a significant role in promoting family and social harmony, driving economic development, protecting the environment, and fostering global cultural exchange.

He added that the inclusion of the Spring Festival on the UNESCO list will help promote universal values of peace and harmony and highlight the important role of intangible cultural heritage in sustainable development.

With this addition, China now has 44 cultural elements or practices recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

## **Inscribed in 2024 ([19.COM](#)) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

In China, the spring festival marks the beginning of the new year. It falls on the first day of the first month of the Chinese calendar and involves a variety of social practices to usher in the new year, pray for good fortune, celebrate family reunions and promote community harmony. This process of celebration is known as 'Guo nian' (crossing the year). In the days preceding the festival, people clean their homes, stock provisions and prepare food. On New Year's Eve, families dine together and stay up late to welcome the new year. During the festival, people wear new clothes, make offerings to heaven, earth and ancestors, and extend greetings to elders, relatives, friends and neighbours. Public festivities are held by communities, cultural institutions, social groups and art troupes. The traditional knowledge of the rituals, customs, legends and ballads associated with the spring festival, and the skills of preparing festival decorations and supplies, are transmitted informally within families and communities as well as formally through the public education system. Related crafts and performing arts are transmitted through apprenticeships. The spring festival promotes family values, social cohesion and peace while providing a sense of identity and continuity for the Chinese people.

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/spring-festival-social-practices-of-the-chinese-people-in-celebrtion-of-traditional-new-year-02126>

# All You Need to Know About Chinese National Holidays in 2025

As 2024 is over, the perfect time to start planning for 2025. Here's a detailed guide to the Chinese public holidays for 2025, complete with dates, durations, and any compensatory workdays. Let's dive in!

## Holiday-Related Vocabulary

Let's begin by looking at the essential terms for the holidays:

2025 Holiday arrangements	2025年放假安排 Èr líng èr wǔ nián fàng jià ānpái
holiday; recess (lit. "to release-holiday")	放假 fàng jià
annual leave (lit. "year-holiday")	年假 niánjià
compensatory leave (lit. "compensatory-holiday")	补假 bǔ jià

## China National Holidays in 2025

### Holidays Calendar

Here's a full list of holidays in 2025:

- Jan 01: New Year's Day
- Jan 28-Feb 4: Spring Festival
- Apr 4-6: Tomb Sweeping Day
- May 1-5: Labour Day Holiday
- May 31-June 2: Dragon Boat Festival
- Oct 1-8: Mid-Autumn Festival
- Oct 1-8: National Day, or Golden Week

### Jan 1: New Year Holiday (1 Day)

January 1st marks the start of the year according to the Gregorian calendar. This year, January 1st fell on a weekday, giving us one day off to celebrate the New Year.

New Year Day	元旦 Yuándàn
--------------	------------

### Jan 28-Feb 4: Spring Festival (8 Days)

China's most significant traditional festival, the Spring Festival, kicks off on January 28, 2025. This celebration, ran from January 28 to February 4, marks the arrival of the Year of the Snake.

**IMPORTANT:** To compensate for a long 8-days break, we need to work on Jan 26 (Sunday) and Feb 8 (Saturday).

Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year	春节 Chūnjié
--------------------------------------	------------

### Apr 4-6: Clear & Bright Day (3 Days)

Clear & Bright Day also as known Tomb Sweeping Day or Qingming Festival (清明节), is a meaningful

time in April when families honour their ancestors by visiting graves, making offerings, and embracing the beauty of spring. In 2025, Qingming Festival falls on April 4, and as it aligns with a weekend, we'll enjoy a 3-day break with no compensatory workdays.

Clear & Bright Day or Tomb Sweeping Day 清明节 Qīngmíng Jié

### May 1-5: Labour Day Holiday (5 Days)

Labour day is a public holiday that celebrates workers contributions to the country. Due to the warm weather over this period, it's a perfect time to travel to natural settings and enjoy time outside.

This year, you'll have time to enjoy the holiday for 5 days: from May 01 to May 05.

**IMPORTANT:** We'll need to work on Sunday, April 27 to compensate.

Labour Day 劳动节 Láodòng Jié

### May 31-June 2: Dragon Boat Festival (3 Days)

The Dragon Boat Festival celebrated on the 5th day of the 5th month of the Lunar calendar. In 2025, it falls on May 31, Saturday.

**GOOD NEWS:** With Dragon Boat Festival falling on a Saturday, we'll get an extra day off on Monday, creating a 3-day holiday - perfect for a quick city escape!

Dragon Boat Festival 端午节 Duānwǔ Jié

### Oct 1-8: Mid-Autumn Festival & National Day (8 Days)

In 2025, the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day overlap in early October, creating an extended 8-day holiday.

**IMPORTANT:** We'll have to work on September 28 (Sunday) and October 11 (Saturday) to compensate.

Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋节 Zhōngqiū Jié

National Day 国庆节 Guóqìng Jié

## The Difference between Chinese and Western Society (中西文化比较) Pt 2

This month's article is a continuation from the last newsletter and this edition we will look at modern society and the new world order

In both China and Western countries, we now have systems of government rather than rulers (well in most cases). Social structure has changed in both environments. It is possible that only a few European cities—Paris and the Italian commercial cities of Venice, Genoa and Naples—had as many as 100,000 people at the beginning of the modern era. London may have had only about half that number. By the end of the 17th century London probably had 500,000 inhabitants. The sheer number of townspeople change social structures for ever. To attach another name .... it is called 'Industrialisation'

Modern society is characterised by:

- **Advanced industry:** and technology
- **Urbanisation:** cluster towns and residential buildings

- **High population pressure:** population is high in cities with millions of people and puts pressure on resources and infrastructure
- **Sub social institutions:** basic social institutions along with working organisations are found within, this is due to diversity in the needs of the people and volume of population
- **Job opportunities:** societies are hubs of industrial and economic organisations, better job opportunities available for educated and technically skilled people.
- **Better income opportunities:** due to economic activity better income opportunities are available for a materialistic society
- **Social stratification:** people are divided into different social strata based on their socio-economic background
- **Urban facilities:** modern urban facilities like gas, electricity, water, sewerage systems, airports, railways, road networks, hospitals, schools, universities etc.
- **Sources of communication:** modern sources of communication like telephone, internet, mobile phone, optical fibre for communicating with each other
- **Social mobility:** a high degree of social mobility
- **International relations:** better relationships with their neighboring countries which provide economic benefits to both (in international trade terms called “comparative advantage”)
- **Crime rate:** due to anonymity and population pressure a high crime rate is found
- **Women’s status:** status of women in modern society is slowly but surely increasing



There have been two major population explosions during human social evolution.

By the end of the Paleolithic Period the world’s human population is estimated to have been between five and six million. Following the Neolithic or agricultural revolution the population made its first major leap, reaching over a short span of 8,000 years to 150 million 1000 BCE. For the next 2500 years there was relatively little change. The world population reached about 500 million by the middle of the 17th century. During this time any tendency for the population to grow was punished by the checks of starvation and pestilence. Only with the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century did population growth break out again from its ‘Malthusian Trap’ (the relative stagnation of living standards as the population grows exponentially and food production grows linearly).

Economic historians have been inclined to stress economic growth as the defining feature of an industrial as opposed to a non-industrial economy. The British historian Edward Anthony Wrigley declared that “industrialisation is said to occur in a given country when real incomes per head begin to rise steadily and without apparent limit.” The American economic historian W.W. Rostow popularised a similar conception in suggesting that with industrialisation the economy at a certain point “takes off” into “self-sustained growth Technology has played a big part in this growth.

Modern urbanisation: Industrialism does not simply increase numbers, it distributes them in particular ways, concentrating mass populations in cities. In ancient cities less than 15% of the population lived in cities. In industrialised nations, by 1851 it had risen to 40% and by 1901 75%. Looking at the entire world, by the year 2000 slightly less than 50% urbanisation. China has moved millions of people from outlying areas to the city, chiefly to build infrastructure.

In preindustrial society the family is the basic unit of production all its members engage in a cooperative set of subsistence activities. In a typical example from early 18<sup>th</sup> century England the man might be a weaver and his wife a spinner, with the younger children acting as assistants in the joint domestic enterprise. Industrialisation radically disrupted this autonomous family economy. It took away the economic function of the family and reduced it to a unit of consumption and socialisation. Production

moved from the household to the factory. Family members become either landless agricultural labourers or, increasingly, workers in the factories of the industrial towns.

Given the importance of economic institutions and employment it is not surprising to find that industrial society tends to produce a new ordering and ranking of individuals. Economic position and relationships become the key to social position and class membership. While wealth or the lack of it were always important in determining social position it's not usually the sole determinant. In all nonindustrial society's attributes of tribal membership, race, religion, age and gender are of equal and often greater importance. Remember in an earlier article we identified ancient Chinese society as consisting of Shi, Nong, Gong, and Shang. Lily Qu, a correspondent for Chinascope, suggests that there are now 10 different levels. Not significantly different to western society, these are:

1. Administrators and government.
2. Management.
3. Private business owners.
4. Technocrats and professionals.
5. Assistant and help staff.
6. Private businessmen.
7. Service personnel.
8. Manufacturers.
9. Farmers
10. The jobless and part-time workers

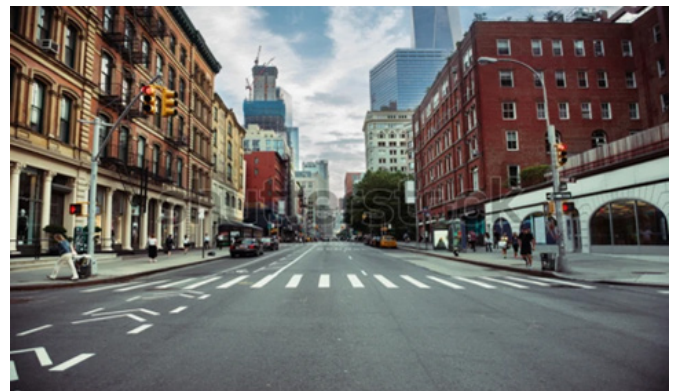
.....more on this later.

Being able to feed a large population brings with it crowding, pollution and environmental destruction. Quiet, privacy and space become scarce, an increasingly treasured commodity. Massed together in cities seeking rest and recreation, the populations of industrial societies force open the whole world to entertainment and tourism. The other side of the coin is the loneliness of the city dweller (partially offset with social media).

Western industrialisation became the model for the world. To become modern was to become something like Western industrial society. Many eastern societies were not always given much choice in the matter. Colonies of western powers were being developed in western ways before being able to take political control of their own destinies. Throughout most of the 20th century the nations of the world system were categorised according to political or economic criteria. Applying this thinking resulted in the familiar "West-East" divide.

Modern Chinese and Western Societies are becoming less and less polarised. As mentioned in recent decades China migrated millions of people from rural areas to build the cities and infrastructure. And thus, we see many similarities between the two societies. A large proportion of the population are 'floating', that is without local household registration.

This limits access to many of the things that urban population enjoy such as education in some cities.



#### Bibliography

1. [www.hierarchystructure.com/chinese-social-hierarchy/](http://www.hierarchystructure.com/chinese-social-hierarchy/), viewed 22/2/25
2. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/modernization/The-nature-of-modern-society>, viewed 22/2/25

*Ian Parker*

## THE AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY'S AIMS

Cultivate friendly relations with the people of China by fostering the study of China's history, language, culture, social and political structure.

Promote mutual understanding through friendly exchanges between the people of China and Australia. Strengthening ties with travel, the exchange of ideas, information and trade between the two countries.

To seek to clarify misunderstandings between the peoples of China and Australia, which may arise from the misrepresentation of information.

## THE ACFS VICTORIAN BRANCH

PRESIDENT: Lev Lafayette  
VICE PRESIDENT: Tower Liu  
SECRETARY: Edith Wilson  
TREASURER: Ian Parker  
COMMITTEE: Lia Cross, Joe Montero, James Doery, Charlotte Hall

We are always looking for interesting stories and articles to share with our members. Any members who have great stories to tell please contact ACFS office or e-mail to [secretary@acfs-vic.org](mailto:secretary@acfs-vic.org)

ACFS (VICTORIA) Inc. A0038007M ABN NO. 39 746 574 225

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Family Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms) ..... Given Names .....  
Address ..... P/code.....  
Phone ..... Email .....

### VICTORIAN MEMBERSHIP RATES

Family \$40.00    Single \$30.00    Concession \$15.00    Corporate on Application

I/We support the Society's aims: .....Signature/s

I/We enclose the sum of \$.....for my/our membership subscription.

Pay directly into the ACFS Victoria Branch Account, Commonwealth Bank

BSB: 063-019, Account number: 10040625

Please put your name in the subject line & email REFERENCE to [secretary@acfs-vic.org](mailto:secretary@acfs-vic.org)

You may send cheques to the Treasurer at the ACFS office address YOUR DONATION  
WOULD BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED

Promoting Friendship and Understanding Between the Australian and Chinese People