

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE FUTURE OF CHINESE SOCIETY

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Synopsis in English, [Chinese](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#)

Since the 1990s, immigration to China has risen and become increasingly diverse. Chinese students and scholars abroad return to China. Traders and labour migrants are attracted by China's trading opportunities, political stability and prosperity. Women from China's border areas or farther afield in Asia or Europe migrate to China for marriage. Middle-class Koreans, Taiwanese and Southeast Asians are looking for lower living costs and better jobs. Western university graduates travel to China for employment or to start a business. Foreign firms post expatriates in China, usually in managerial or executive positions.

Immigration has become more managed, selective and less spontaneous. Priority is given to attracting skills, technology and capital. The government does not see large-scale immigration as a solution to future demographic bottlenecks, although it is an open question whether this view will continue to hold once the demographic crisis becomes acute.

With an emphasis on preserving the Chinese nature and unity of the nation, immigration policy is moving in the direction of a focus on returnees, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong and Macao residents. Immigrants from countries with friendly relations with China, particularly those bordering on China, will also continue to find their way to China, while citizens from US-linked developed countries will be fewer and stay shorter. Like in other countries, the Chinese government is likely to find that immigration proves only very partially manageable.

In future, efforts are likely to disincentivise Chinese citizens from moving abroad, especially to countries considered hostile to China. The world is currently moving towards a division between a sphere dominated by the United States and another dominated by China, and mobility and migration to China increasingly reflect this "new normal".

Chinese:

国际移民与中国社会的未来

自 20 世纪 90 年代以来，中国移民不断增加且日益多元化，这些移民包括中国在海外的学生、学者，因贸易机会、政治稳定和繁荣而吸引来的商务和劳务移民，边境或更远的地区的跨境婚姻移民，来自韩国、台湾和东南亚的中产阶级的工作移民，寻求就业或创业机会的西方大学毕业生；以及外国公司派遣的外籍高管。

中国对这些移民加强了管理和筛选，优先吸引技能、技术和资本。政府认为大规模移民不能解决未来人口发展的瓶颈，尽管这种观点在未来不一定仍会成立。

中国的移民政策本着以维护中华民族本质和民族团结为主旨，着重吸引海归和港澳台居民。然而来自周边友好国家，特别是与中国接壤的国家的移民也将继续寻找途径进入中国，而来自美国及其盟友的公民将减少在中国的停留频次和时间。因此，同诸多国家一样，中国也将会面临棘手的移民管理议题。

长期来看，这些政策可能会抑制中国公民移居海外的积极性，特别是前往被认为敌视中国的国家。当前，世界正走向以中美两极为主导的分裂状态，中国移民的趋势日益反映了这种“新常态”。

French:

MIGRATIONS INTERNATIONALES ET L'AVENIR DE LA SOCIÉTÉ CHINOISE

Depuis les années 1990, l'immigration en Chine a augmenté et est devenue de plus en plus diversifiée. Les étudiants et universitaires chinois à l'étranger retournent au pays. Les commerçants et les travailleurs migrants sont attirés par les opportunités d'affaires, la stabilité politique et la prospérité de la Chine. Les femmes des zones frontalières de la Chine ou de plus loin en Asie ou en Europe migrent vers la Chine pour se marier. Les classes moyennes de Corée, de Taïwanais et d'Asie du Sud-Est recherchent un coût de la vie moins élevé et de meilleurs emplois. Les diplômés des universités occidentales se rendent également en Chine pour y travailler ou créer une entreprise. Les entreprises étrangères envoient des expatriés en Chine, généralement à des postes gestion ou de direction.

L'immigration est devenue plus encadrée, sélective et moins spontanée. La priorité est donnée à l'attractivité des compétences, technologies et capitaux. Le gouvernement ne considère pas l'immigration à grande échelle comme une solution aux futurs problèmes démographiques, même si la question reste ouverte de savoir si cette vision perdurera une fois que la crise démographique deviendra aiguë.

En mettant l'accent sur la préservation de l'essence et de l'unité de la nation chinoise, la politique d'immigration tend à se concentrer sur les rapatriés, les Taïwanais et les résidents de Hong Kong et de Macao. Les migrants en provenance de pays entretenant des relations amicales avec la Chine, en particulier ceux frontaliers de la Chine, continueront également à se diriger vers la Chine, tandis que les citoyens des pays développés liés aux États-Unis seront moins nombreux et resteront moins longtemps. Comme dans d'autres pays, le gouvernement chinois constatera probablement que l'immigration n'est que très partiellement gérable.

À l'avenir, il est probable que des efforts soient déployés pour dissuader les citoyens chinois de partir à l'étranger, notamment vers des pays considérés comme hostiles à la Chine. Le monde évolue actuellement vers une division entre une sphère dominée par les États-Unis

et une autre dominée par la Chine, et la mobilité et la migration vers la Chine reflètent de plus en plus cette « nouvelle normalité ».

Spanish:

LA MIGRACIÓN INTERNACIONAL Y EL FUTURO DE LA SOCIEDAD CHINA

Desde la década de 1990, la inmigración a China ha aumentado y se ha vuelto cada vez más diversa. Los estudiantes y académicos chinos en el extranjero regresan a China. Los comerciantes y los trabajadores migrantes se sienten atraídos por las oportunidades comerciales, la estabilidad política y la prosperidad de China. Las mujeres de las zonas fronterizas de China o de lugares más lejanos de Asia o Europa migran a China para casarse. Los coreanos, taiwaneses y asiáticos del sudeste de clase media buscan costos de vida más bajos y mejores empleos. Los graduados de universidades occidentales viajan a China en busca de empleo o para iniciar un negocio. Las empresas extranjeras envían a expatriados a China, normalmente en puestos directivos o ejecutivos.

La inmigración se ha vuelto más controlada, selectiva y menos espontánea. Se da prioridad a atraer habilidades, tecnología y capital. El gobierno no ve la inmigración a gran escala como una solución a futuros obstáculos demográficos, aunque sigue siendo una cuestión abierta si esta visión se mantendrá una vez que la crisis demográfica se agudice.

Con énfasis en preservar la naturaleza china y la unidad de la nación, la política de inmigración se está dirigiendo hacia los repatriados, los taiwaneses y los residentes de Hong Kong y Macao. Los inmigrantes de países con relaciones amistosas con China, particularmente aquellos que tienen frontera con China, también seguirán llegando a China, mientras que los ciudadanos de países desarrollados vinculados a Estados Unidos serán menos y permanecerán por menos tiempo. Como en otros países, es probable que el gobierno chino descubra que la inmigración resulta sólo parcialmente manejable.

En el futuro, es probable que los esfuerzos desincentiven a los ciudadanos chinos a la hora de trasladarse al extranjero, especialmente a países considerados hostiles a China. Actualmente, el mundo avanza hacia una división entre una esfera dominada por Estados Unidos y otra dominada por China, y la movilidad y la migración hacia China reflejan cada vez más esta “nueva normalidad”.

Executive Summary

1. Since the 1990s, immigration to China has risen and become increasingly diverse. Five broad and overlapping categories of both older and new types of immigrants can be distinguished: (1) students; (2) professionals and entrepreneurs; (3) Chinese return migrants; (4) traders; and (5) cross-border migrants. Other immigrants include contract labourers, foreign volunteers and marriage or family migrants.
2. In 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic had forced many foreigners to leave, the total foreign population in China stood at 1,430,695 people, which was 50% higher than in the 2010 census. Among them, 845,697 were foreign nationals and 584,998 residents of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao. Nevertheless, international migrants still constitute a minute fraction of 0.1% of China's 1.4 billion people.
3. Immigration policy has become more managed and selective. Priority is given to attracting skills, technology and capital. Immigration by unskilled labourers, marriage and family migrants is not encouraged. Asylum is only very rarely given.
4. The government does not see large-scale immigration as a solution to future demographic bottlenecks, although it remains to be seen if this view will hold up once the consequences of past family planning policies and a dropping fertility rate become acute in the mid-2030s.
5. Changes in Chinese society and the international environment are having an impact on immigration and mobility to China. Industrial diversification away from China already started 10 years ago. Foreign-invested firms employ more Chinese and less foreigners, particularly expatriates. The US-China conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic have also had a deep impact on immigration and mobility to China.
6. Immigration and mobility from developed Western and East Asian countries have been slow to recover after the pandemic. This immigration flow to China will likely never fully rebound. Heightened geo-political tensions and the COVID-19

pandemic have fundamentally changed life in China for many foreigners from the United States and its allies and partners.

7. Foreign students are returning to China, but it is likely that their number is dominated by those from Belt-and-Road countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Traders, seasonal labourers, marriage migrants and refugees, particularly from surrounding countries, continue to flow to China.
8. With an emphasis on preserving the Chinese nature and unity of the nation, immigration policy is moving in the direction of a focus on returnees, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong and Macao residents. In future, there might possibly even be efforts to disincentivise Chinese citizens from moving abroad, especially to countries considered hostile to China.
9. Immigrants from countries with friendly relations with China will also continue to find their way to China, while citizens from US-linked developed countries will be fewer and stay shorter. The world is currently moving towards a division between a sphere dominated by the United States and another dominated by China, and migration to China increasingly reflects this “new normal”.