

**CHINA'S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT:
"CULTURAL RISE" TO COME AFTER
ECONOMIC RISE**

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Executive Summary

1. In China today, modern technology and the mass media have provided a new space for expression, making it possible for ordinary people to become cultural idols and icons, while blurring the distinction between elite and pop culture.
2. Sustained economic growth over the last decades has brought about a large matured base of a better-educated middle class whose tastes and consumption patterns (especially leisure) differ from those of peasants and manual workers. As China becomes increasingly connected to global affairs, the expansion of media space has further fueled their demands.
3. A combination of factors, including the endorsement of the concept of “cultural industry” by the Party, the growing demand for sophisticated cultural goods, the desire of many Chinese for a national revival that includes both economic rise and “cultural rise”, and the Chinese government’s view of culture as an important source of national strength, have provided the momentum to bring the issue of cultural development from the background to the fore.
4. 2006 turned out to be an important year for China’s cultural development. For the first time in nearly six decades, China has a national five-year program for its cultural development.
5. By putting culture in its priority list, this signifies that top Chinese leaders’ perception and attitude have changed. China seems to be shifting from a single-minded pursuit of economic growth to more balanced development.
6. The Chinese government plans to push its cultural development on three fronts. First, the government has pledged to ensure that poor regions and the disadvantaged have access to public cultural facilities and services.

7. Second, the government will promote elite culture as part of national pride-building and identity-forming process by providing greater financial support to elite cultural institutions. An array of beneficiaries including national performance troupes, art centers, public libraries and museums will be given a financial boost.

8. Last but not least, market forces and globalisation have upped the ante for China's cultural industries. Cultural development will also entail nurturing its cultural industry by making it competitive not only domestically, but also internationally.

9. Taking a first step forward is important, and China's cultural development is now turning a new page. After its impressive economic rise, will China also see a "cultural rise" as anticipated? That is an optimistic scenario that waits to be seen.