

New China in 70 years: From agrarian backwater to industrial powerhouse



Trainees attend a training course in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, July 22, 2019. (Xinhua/Li Yibo)



A staff member controls a robot with 5G technology during an international mobile Internet of Things expo in Yingtan, east China's Jiangxi Province, July 18, 2019. (Xinhua/Zhou Mi)

An agrarian backwater that struggled to feed its population 70 years ago, China is now an indispensable supplier in the global industrial chain, manufacturing and exporting everything from daily necessities to high-speed trains.

The following are quick walk-throughs of the tectonic shifts in China's industrial strength and the drivers behind the changes, which may offer a glimpse of the country's industrial future.

How was the 'world factory' built from scratch?

From having only mining, textile and some simple manufacturing industries to covering nearly all industrial categories, China's emergence as the 'world factory' is built upon low labor and production costs compared with that of more developed countries.

The country's reform and opening-up drive in the

late 1970s enabled the more adventurous entrepreneurs in coastal cities to start their own businesses, overcoming difficulties and successfully turning small workshops into big manufacturing companies.

Since then, China's manufacturing sector started to take off. World Bank data showed that China overtook the United States as the world's largest manufacturing country in terms of added value in 2010 and has retained first place ever since.

How China has moved up the industrial value chain?

Coming into the 21st century, China started to focus on high-tech and advanced manufacturing sectors, with a modern industrial system gradually taking shape.

Apart from the traditional 'Made in China' tags on the store shelves, high-speed trains and semi-conductors are becoming the new signatures for Chinese

manufacturing.

In 2017, the high-tech sector's prime operating revenue above the designated size came in at 15.9 trillion yuan (about 2.2 trillion U.S. dollars), up 55.8 percent than the same period in 2012.

The rapid development can be attributed to the continuous investment in research and development, with its expenditure surging 83.6 percent in the same period to 318.3 billion yuan.

How will China's industrial strength contribute to a shared future?

Over the past decades, China's industrial development has benefited from open cooperation with other countries, and its gaining strength will in turn help deliver more opportunities for other market players.

In June 2019, China officially approved 5G com-

mercial services, marking the start of a smart new era as the application of the superfast wireless technology helps connect more things, services and market players.

Foreign enterprises including Nokia, Ericsson, Qualcomm and Intel have been deeply involved in the experimentation of the technologies, and Chinese regulators have welcomed enterprises from home and abroad to actively participate in the building, application and promotion of its 5G network and share the sector's development dividends.

As the 5G case has showed, China's industrial ambition means more opportunities for domestic and foreign companies to compete and prosper together. The one propeller for the country's industrial upgrading is to keep opening up its market and economy to the world.

Seventy years of change measured in just 'one hour'

In China, what can be achieved in a single hour? The answer today is quite different from that 70 years ago when the People's Republic of China was founded. Sitting in his reaping machine, Zhao Shunhua, a 53-year-old farmer in central China's Hunan Province, can harvest rice from nearly 0.2 hectares of field within one hour. It is about 30 times faster than the past when he used to finish the same amount of work manually.

'I can still remember the old days when I worked in the fields before dawn and got sunburned, just to reap the early rice and plant for the next season,' Zhao said.

In every hour in the first half of 2019, each Chinese contributed 7.4 yuan (about 1 U.S. dollar) to the country's GDP, over 500 times higher than in 1952.

The hourly money spent online by Chinese consumers today is 1.1 billion yuan, while the country's total retail sales of consumer goods was only 3 million yuan in 1952.



A giant screen displays sales on Alibaba's online marketplace Tmall for Singles' Day shopping spree in Shanghai, east China, Nov. 11, 2018. (Xinhua/Huang Zongzhi)

Most Chinese people in 1949 never dreamed of setting foot on foreign soil, while there are 19,000 trips made every hour today by Chinese travelers going abroad.

A single mine in Shenmu, a major coal production base

in northwest China's Shaanxi Province, has an annual output higher than the country's total in 1949, digging out 3,700 tonnes of coal every hour on average.

Seventy years on, China has transformed itself into the second largest economy in the world, with

the largest foreign exchange reserves, the largest social security system and the largest output of industrial products.

Even greater Chinese miracles promise to emerge as the hourglass is turned once more.



A farmer harvests wheat in Xizhuang Village of Tangshan City, north China's Hebei Province, June 18, 2019. (Xinhua/Liu Mancang)

Chinese life expectancy more than doubled in past 70 years

'Many people died in their 30s or 40s when I was a child, and living to be 60 was considered longevity,' said Chen Zhixiang, an 81-year-old retired teacher who grew up in Xi'an, capital of northwest China's Shaanxi Province.

Chen can't remember eating meat during his childhood. As he recalled, people suffered from a scarcity of food and clothing at that time, and if anyone caught an epidemic disease there was little hope of a cure.

That, however, has become history. The average life expectancy of Chinese people has more than doubled in the past 70 years.

According to statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics, the life expectancy of Chinese people has been continuously increasing from 35 in 1949 to 57 in 1957, 68 in 1981, and reaching 77 years in 2018.

China's per capita disposable income was 49.7 yuan (7 U.S. dollars) in 1949 but reached 28,228 yuan in 2018, an increase of nearly 60 times in real terms after deducting price factors.

With a more affluent life, people are enjoying healthier and more nutritious diets. Fresh vegetables and fruits of every season and from every corner of the country are available all year round.

Smallpox has been eradicated completely, and there are no more local cases of malaria. Endemic diseases, such as iodine deficiency disorders, have been effectively controlled or eliminated. Full basic medical coverage has been achieved.

'My little sister died of diarrhea and dehydration at the age of three. If only she had been born now!' Chen sighed.



An elderly couple poses for photos at the library of Binhai New Area in north China's Tianjin, Aug. 7, 2019. (Xinhua/Li Ran)

Not only has death from minor illnesses become history, but living a long and healthy life is increasingly becoming the norm.

China has been promoting the Healthy China initiative, which aims to improve the national health policy and ensure the delivery of comprehensive lifecycle health services for the Chinese people.

In 2016, China's healthy life expectancy reached

68.7 years, surpassing that of the United States for the first time. Chinese people not only live longer lives, but also healthier ones.

'Now people over 65 can enjoy a free physical examination every year, and most diseases can be found and treated in time,' said Shi Kecun, 86, who lives in Shizhai Village of Shanxian County, east China's Shandong Province.

'The number of people looking after their health is increasing. Living to my age is not rare in the village, and some people even live to over 100 years old. Our county has been rated a 'longevity town', Shi said.

Living a long and healthy life, the sincere wish of Chinese people for thousands of years, is becoming a reality.



Shen Xuean (2nd R, front), 84, has a gathering with her family members at Jiu'an senior center in Nanxun Town of Huzhou City, east China's Zhejiang Province, Sept. 13, 2019. (Xinhua/Tan Jin)