

*Secretary Gale submitted this article to Nebraska newspapers for their consideration.*

## **China trip reveals an intriguing nation on the move**

By John Gale  
Nebraska Secretary of State

During a two-week trip in China, I got a firsthand look at this intriguing nation and why it is likely to have such a significant impact on world affairs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Although China got a late start in terms of developing its economy, one should not underestimate the potential of the country or its 1.4 billion people. This is a dynamic nation that is on the move.

As Nebraska's chief protocol officer for international relations, I was part of a Nebraska delegation that visited China in June. The trip was organized by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Confucius Institute, which is a partnership between UNL and Jiaotong University of Xi'an, one of the top ten universities in China.

The Office of Chinese Language Council International funds some 300 Confucius Institutes throughout the world. It is a reflection of China's deep commitment to promote an understanding of its history, culture and language.

We spent one week in Beijing, China's national capital of 16 million, which has considerable manufacturing, financial, engineering and energy businesses. The other week was spent in Xi'an, a city of 8 million that is a major center of higher education and served as the country's ancient capital.

The Chinese are still very influenced by Confucian doctrines of reverence for authority, family and elders, and the importance of the group over the desires of the individual. The Chinese honor harmony, loyalty, respect, obedience and a peaceful society.

Although all levels of Chinese government are controlled by the Communist Party, the country has opened itself up in recent decades. As a result, the country has become more capitalistic with less central planning, more engaged in world affairs and more urban.

The economic results have been spectacular. China has gone through its own industrial revolution in two decades, as opposed to the century taken by European nations for their industrial revolutions. China's economy has enjoyed amazing annual growth rates of about 10 percent for two decades.

Everywhere you look in the major cities, there are huge construction cranes in the horizon. The Chinese like to say that the "crane" is their national bird!

The country's infrastructure development is very impressive on a number of fronts: commercial buildings, hotels, convention centers, highways (many are toll roads), parks, apartment complexes (where almost all the people live), museums and antiquity displays.

China has moved 300 million citizens from poor, rural areas to cities with jobs, adequate housing and health care. It intends to shift its population from 60 percent rural to 60 percent urban within 15 years, moving another 300 million citizens into cities.

China now has over 120 cities with at least one million citizens and is expected to have over 220 cities of that size within 15 years.

The gap between urban China and urban America is very small, although the gap between urban China and rural China is very large and growing. If you leave a major city in China and drive 60 miles away into the rural areas, you suddenly feel transported back in time some 60 to 70 years.

While the United States may be the only superpower today, we will need to share world leadership with newly emerging world powers such as China, India and Brazil. Diplomacy, trade, tourism and mutual study of each other's cultures can help foster international cooperation and understanding.

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