

The pace of the development of China's infrastructure is breathtaking. High-speed rail is just one example. Five years ago China didn't have a single kilometre of high-speed track. Today it has more than the whole of Europe, and by the end of next year it will have more than the rest of the world put together. And that's not all. China plans international high-speed lines south to Singapore and west to India, Pakistan and Europe.

Of course, not having to answer to voters at the ballot-box makes it easier for China's leaders to plan on this grand scale. But they face big political dangers too, because while Chinese people have got richer and better educated, as one young entrepreneur told me, they're demanding more than endless drudgery in factories, or hard slog tilling the soil.

A growing source of tension in China has been the great divide between prosperity at the coast and relative poverty inland. 150 million people are reckoned to have travelled from the interior to find work in the coastal factories. That's the biggest migration in human history.

There is a gap between the western region and the coastal region in the east. But the central government has launched a series of measures and launched this whole project to develop the west. I think that's helped quite a lot. I think that's helped reduce the gap.

BBC World Service  
Broadcast 26<sup>th</sup> July 2010