

Our Country's Administrative Divisions

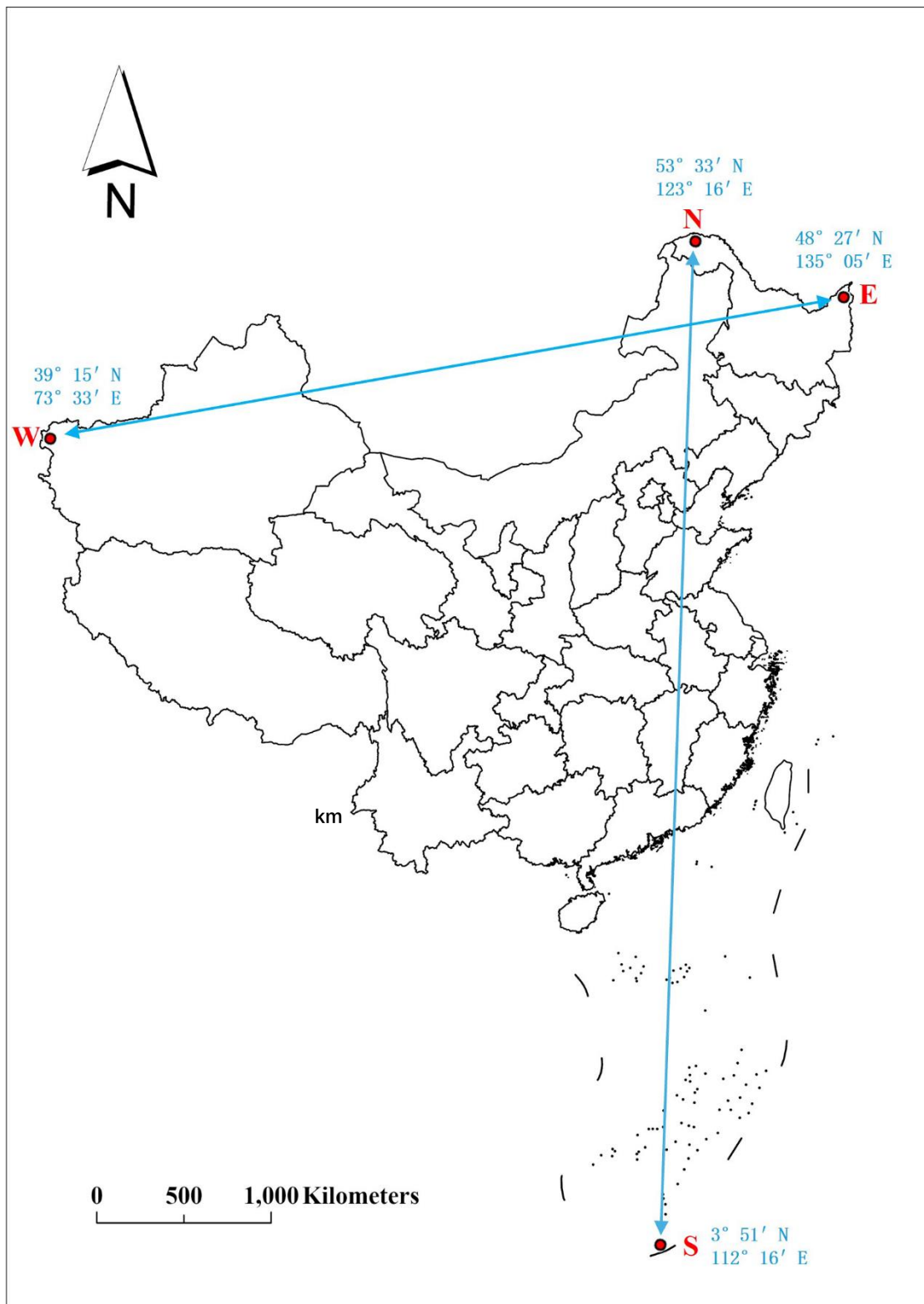
I. The geographical location of our country

- Our country is in eastern Asia. It has a large latitudinal and longitudinal extent. Its latitude ranges from 3°51'N to 53°33'N, while its longitude ranges from 73°33'E to 135°05'E.
- Our country's land area is approximately 9.6 million km², making it the world's third-largest country after Russia and Canada and roughly equivalent to Europe.
- The land border stretches for 22,000 km and connects 14 countries. Our country has vast land areas.
- Our country faces the Pacific Ocean in the east, with a total coastline length of more than 32,000 km. The seas surrounding the edge of our country's mainland include the Bo Hai, Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea from north to south.
- In terms of latitude, most of our country's land area is in the temperate climatic zone, with some southern regions falling into the tropics. No part of the country is located in the polar regions, which provide optimal conditions for light and heat.
- Our country's maritime and continental position places it on the eastern part of the world's largest continent, Eurasia, and the western shore of the world's largest ocean – the Pacific Ocean, giving it both maritime and land advantages. To the west, our country extends deep into the Eurasian continent's hinterlands, bordering numerous countries. To the east, our country has a vast maritime territory with numerous islands.

II. The four extreme points of our country's territory

- [Figure 1](#) shows the four extreme points of our country's territory:
 - Northernmost: Centerline of the main channel of the Heilongjiang River north of Mohe, Heilongjiang, with a latitude and longitude of roughly 53°33'N, 123°16'E.
 - Southernmost: Zengmu Ansha in the Nansha Qundao, with a latitude and longitude of roughly 3°51'N, 112°16'E.
 - Easternmost: The confluence of the centerline of the main channel of the Heilongjiang and Wusuli River, with a latitude and longitude of roughly 48°27'N, 135°05'E.
 - Westernmost: The Pamir Plateau in Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu, with a latitude and longitude of roughly 39°15'N, 73°33'E.

Figure 1 The four extreme points of our country's territory



III. Administrative divisions in our country

- Our country's administrative divisions are characterised by a hierarchical structure established at multiple levels ([中華人民共和國中央人民政府, 2009a](#)). They can be classified into 4 main categories, namely the provincial-level administrative division, prefecture, county, and township levels ([Table 1](#)).
 - Provincial-level administrative units: This is the highest level of administrative unit in our country. There are 34 province-level administrative units, classified as 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities, and 2 Special Administrative Regions (SARs).
 - Prefecture-level administrative units: Representing the second tier in our country's administrative structure, the prefecture-level divisions are subdivisions of the province and autonomous regions. As of 2022, there are about 333 prefecture-level divisions, including prefecture-level cities, prefectures, autonomous prefectures, and leagues ([中華人民共和國民政部, 2022](#)). Prefecture-level cities are further divided into districts and counties, while autonomous prefectures are demarcated regions known for their high concentrations of minority ethnic populations.
 - County-level administrative units: This is the third level of the administrative division. As of 2022, there are 2,843 county-level divisions, including urban districts, county-level cities, counties, autonomous counties, banners, autonomous banners, special areas, and forest districts, etc. ([中華人民共和國民政部, 2022](#)).
 - Township-level administrative units: Townships are the most basic administrative units in our country. As of 2022, the township-level divisions comprise 38,602 units ([中華人民共和國民政部, 2022](#)). These include towns, townships, ethnic townships, subdistricts, sumu, ethnic sumu, and district areas. Most of these units are subdivided into smaller entities such as villages and communities.
- Autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures, and autonomous counties are ethnic autonomous areas in areas where ethnic minorities live together.

Table 1 The number of administrative units at different levels in China

Provincial-level		Prefecture-level		County-level		Township-level	
Total	Administrative unit	Total	Administrative unit	Total	Administrative unit	Total	Administrative unit
34	23 Provinces 5 Autonomous regions 4 Municipalities 2 Special Administrative Regions	333	293 Prefecture-level cities 7 Prefectures 30 Autonomous prefectures 3 Leagues	2,843	977 Urban districts	38,602	8984
					394 County-level cities		21389 Towns
					1301 Counties		7116 Townships
					117 Autonomous counties		957 Ethnic townships
					49 Banners		153 Sumu
					3 Autonomous banners		1 Ethnic sumu
					1 Special area		2 District areas
					1 Forest district		

Note: The numbers of administrative units at different levels were last updated on December 31, 2022.

Source: 中華人民共和國民政部, 2022, <http://xzqh.mca.gov.cn/statistics/2022.html>

IV. Province-level administrative units

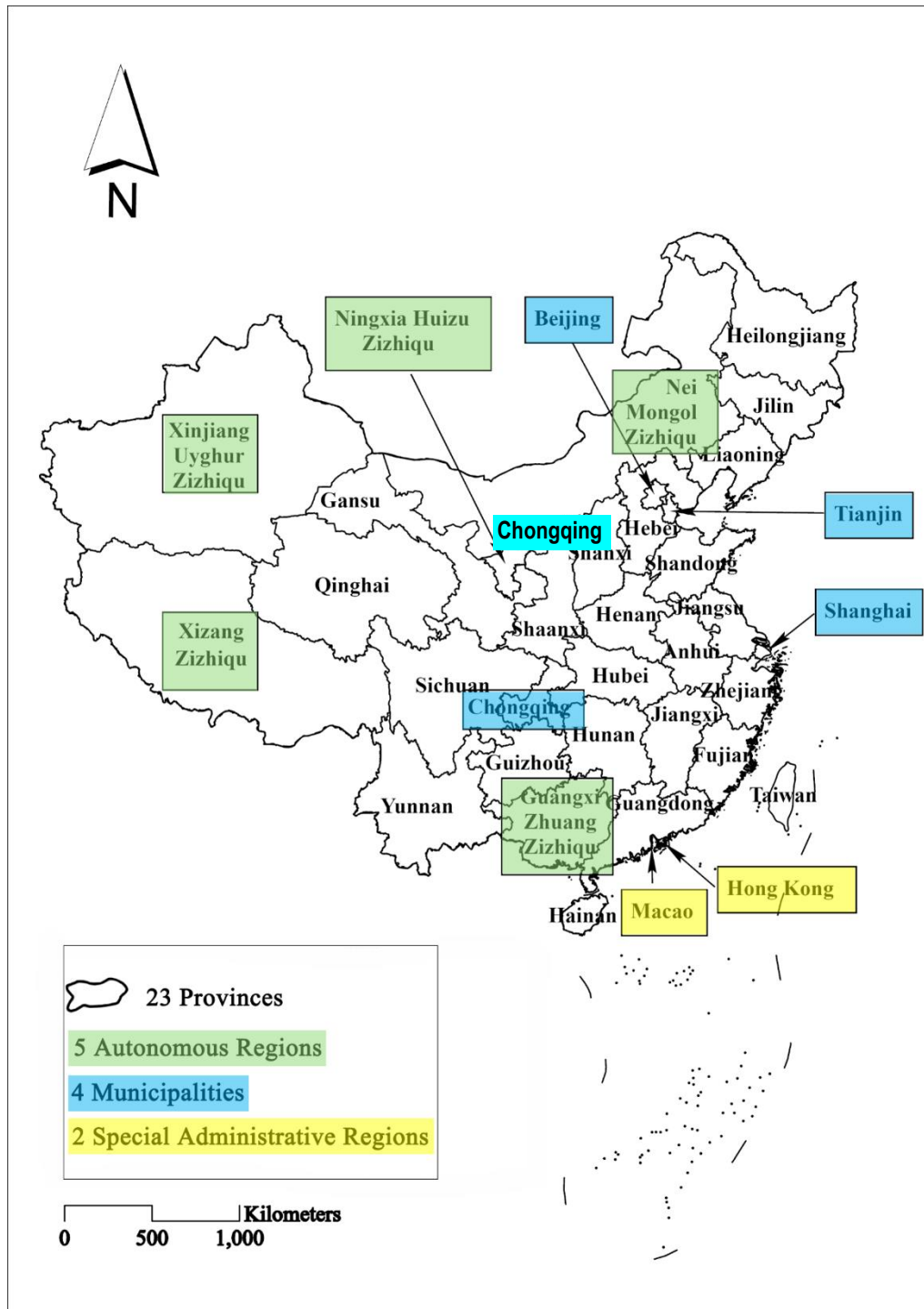
- Provincial-level administrative units in our country include 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities, and 2 SARs (Figure 2). Although they are the same-level administrative units, they have significant variations.
 - Provinces: Provinces are the highest level of administrative divisions in the country. Each province has its local government and can generally enact policies and laws relevant to its own economic, cultural, and social needs within the broad framework of the country's constitution and national laws. There are 23 provinces in China: Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guizhou,

Hainan, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Taiwan, Yunnan, and Zhejiang.

- Autonomous regions: Autonomous regions (aka zizhiqu) are specific areas with a higher population of a particular minority ethnic group. These regions are granted more legislative rights and autonomy than other province-level divisions. This system aims to acknowledge the distinct cultures and history of these groups while also promoting economic and social development in these areas. There are five autonomous regions in China: Guangxi Zhuang Zizhiqu, Nei Mongol Zizhiqu, Xizang Zizhiqu, Xinjiang Uyghur Zizhiqu, and Ningxia Hui Zizhiqu.
 - Municipalities: Municipalities (aka shi) are cities that have province-level status. They report directly to the central government, bypassing the provincial government. This status allows them more administrative independence. There are four municipalities in our country: Beijing Shi (the capital and the political, educational, and cultural centre of our country), Shanghai Shi (the largest city in our country and one of the global financial hubs), Tianjin Shi (a significant port city in North China), and Chongqing Shi (one of the largest cities in the world by area, located in the southwest).
 - SARs: SARs are regions with a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative, and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, in accordance with the provisions of their respective Basic Law. They maintain their own legal and economic systems separate from those of the Mainland, under the principle of “one country, two systems.” There are two SARs in our country: Hong Kong and Macao.
- The seat of the provincial people’s government is called the provincial capital (capital), while the seat of the central people’s government is the capital. The capital of our country is Beijing.
 - Hong Kong and Macao are part of our country’s territory. The central government resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, and established the Hong Kong SAR. On December 20, 1999, it resumed exercising sovereignty over Macao and established the Macao SAR.
 - SARs differ from provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities in that they have a high level of autonomy, which includes executive, legislative, and independent judicial power, including final adjudication. The National People’s Congress specifically granted these powers to the SARs. To facilitate administrative management and economic construction and to strengthen national unity, our country may make necessary adjustments and changes to administrative

divisions as needed (中央人民政府駐香港特別行政區聯絡辦公室, 2024).

Figure 2 Province-level administrative units in our country



V. Conclusion

- This information sheet presents some basic knowledge about the administrative divisions in our country. By reading the above information, we can better understand the characteristics of our country's territories and administrative divisions.

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