

CHRONOLOGY

The following outline chronology covers some of the key events discussed in this book.

2016

1 January: China formally abolishes the One-Child Policy, replacing it with the Two-Child Policy.

1 January: China's state media and Party websites launch an online publicity blitz to promote the book *Edited Excerpts from Discussions by Xi Jinping on Tightening Party Discipline and Rules* 习近平关于严明党的纪律和规矩论述摘编.

4 January: The China Securities Regulatory Commission introduces a circuit breaker mechanism to prevent large swings in the Chinese stock market. The hasty implementation leads to a massive sell-off on the same day.

11 January: Dalian Wanda Chairman, Wang Jianlin 王健林, announces that he will acquire leading Hollywood production company Legendary Entertainment for US\$3.5 billion, stoking fears in the US of a Chinese takeover of Hollywood.

16 January: The people of Taiwan elect Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文 as the first woman President of Taiwan, and hand a landslide victory to the Democratic Progressive Party (**DPP**) over the more China-friendly Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (**KMT**).

16 January: President Xi Jinping 习近平 and Premier Li Keqiang 李克强

preside over the founding ceremony of the Asian Infrastructure Investment bank.

17 January: Gui Minhai 桂民海, one of the missing Hong Kong booksellers abducted by mainland authorities in October, appears on **Chinese Central Television (CCTV)** and confesses that he turned himself in for a drunk-driving incident that happened thirteen years earlier, in 2003.

1 February: President Xi announces, as part of his push to reform the military, that the People's Liberation Army's will establish a joint operational command structure with five regional military command areas (down from seven) and reduced troop numbers.

6 February: A 6.4-magnitude earthquake hits Kaohsiung, Taiwan, causing widespread damage and 117 deaths.

8 February: Officers from Hong Kong's Food and Environmental Hygiene Department attempt to shut down 'fish-ball' vendors selling the popular street food in Mong Kok, leading to violent clashes between police and aggrieved stall vendors backed up by protestors. The incident is dubbed the 'Fishball Revolution'.

22 February: The State Council issues a directive prohibiting the building of 'bizarre' non-functional buildings in favour of ones that are 'economic, green, and beautiful'. The directive also called for phasing out gated communities, in part to ease urban traffic congestion.

29 February: President Xi tours state media offices and calls for the media to display 'absolutely loyalty' to the Party and represent its will to the public. After property tycoon and Party member Ren Zhiqiang 任志强 criticised Xi's media policies on his popular online blog, his post was swiftly censored. Days later, internet censors deleted Ren's blog, which had nearly thirty-eight million followers, citing in a written statement Ren's publishing of illegal material.

1 March: China's first law prohibiting domestic abuse comes into affect. The law is hailed as a major step forward, though same-sex couples and sexual violence are not covered by the law.

11 March: A procedural vote to allocate additional funds to the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) turns into a near brawl between pan-democrats and pro-mainland lawmakers in Hong Kong's Legislative Council.

14 March: The National People's Congress (NPC) approves its Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, which outlines the government's intention to push innovation, structural reform, and environmental protection.

20 March: Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg meets with China's propaganda chief Liu Yunshan 刘云山 in Beijing. Zuckerberg followed his meeting with a run through the centre of Beijing on a heavily polluted day, drawing ridicule online.

4 April: *Ten Years* 十年, a low-budget Hong Kong film that portrays a dystopian future for the territory under Chinese rule, wins top prize at the Hong Kong Film Awards; **Xinhua** and other mainland media impose blackout on reporting and CCTV is ordered to cancel its planned (and customary) broadcast of the awards ceremony.

7 April: US trade officials formally label China's extensive system of online content filters and blocks, also known as the 'Great Firewall', a 'trade barrier'.

13 April: Eight Taiwanese citizens are forcibly deported from Kenya to mainland China after being acquitted by a Kenyan court on charges of telecom-

munication fraud. The Taiwanese government demands that China return them to Taiwan but Chinese authorities insist they will be tried in China.

18 April: CCTV broadcasts a report on pollution-related illnesses at Changzhou Foreign Languages School in Jiangsu Province, igniting a public controversy over toxic dumps; abysmal environmental practices and their affect on public health, including the health of children; and lack of official responsibility.

23 April: Xi Jinping gives his first extended speech on religion at a National Conference on Religious Work, and calls on religion to 'serve the overall interest of the Chinese nation'.

28 April: The NPC endorses the Seventh Five-Year Legal Law Awareness and Dissemination Campaign (2016–2021), confirming that 'governing the nation in accord with law' *yifa zhiguo* 依法治国 and the Constitution would be at the centre of the Party's propaganda work on legal issues for the next five years.

28 April: China's legislature passes the Law on Management of Foreign NGOs' Activities within mainland China, restricting international NGOs ability to

operate in China, and effectively cutting off their foreign funding in sensitive fields such as labour rights.

2 May: The death of Wei Zexi 魏则西, a twenty-one-year old college student who died after receiving treatment from a hospital with phony credentials, sparks outrage and leads to an investigation of the company behind **Baidu** — the search engine that he used to find the hospital online.

3 May: Beijing's Xicheng District suspends the Party membership of outspoken real estate mogul Ren Zhiqiang for a year. Ren ran into trouble in February for using his influential microblog, which had thirty-eight million followers, to criticise President Xi.

9 May: Rumoured tensions between Chairman Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang spill out into the open after the *People's Daily* runs a front-page commentary by an 'authoritative person' that criticises Li's credit-heavy economic policies.

16 May: On the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution, the *People's Daily* publishes a rare commentary acknowledging the dec-

ade-long movement's errors and costs. But Chinese media generally ignores the anniversary or discussions of the traumatising ten-year period of extremist rule that only ended with the death of Chairman Mao in 1976.

11 June: On his return to Hong Kong, Lam Wing-kee 林榮基, one of the territory's booksellers detained on the mainland, reveals details of his imprisonment and interrogation, against orders by the Chinese authorities who released him on the condition that he stayed silent.

16 June: Shanghai's Disneyland, billed as the 'biggest Magic Kingdom park ever made', opens to the public after multiple delays.

29 June: State media abruptly reports that Lu Wei 鲁炜 had ended his three-year tenure as the head of the Cyber Administration of China. His successor, Xu Lin 许琳, is billed as China's biggest 'political star'.

1 July: Spurred on by the Chinese Youth League, online nationalists criticise and troll critically acclaimed actor-director Vicky Zhao (Zhao Wei) 赵薇 for casting Leon Dai 戴立忍, a Taiwanese

actor, as the lead in her new film *No Other Love*, over allegations (denied by Dai) that the actor was pro-Taiwan independence. Trolls accuse Zhao of being an 'American spy' and even blame her for the attempted coup in Turkey. Other directors and eventually even the *People's Daily* call for a stop to the personal abuse.

12 July: The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea rules in favour of the Philippines against a Chinese claim in the South China Sea. China rejects the verdict, which incites popular outrage. In October, newly elected Philippines President, Rodrigo Duterte, visits China and, keen to cement relations with Beijing, downplays the importance of the ruling.

1 August: American car-hailing giant Uber ended a costly battle for the Chinese market, selling the China-arm of its service to local rival Didi Dache 滴滴打车.

4 August: The Tianjin Second People's Intermediate Court sentences rights lawyer Zhou Shifeng 周世锋 to seven years' imprisonment for subversion of state power, and hands down other sentences to rights activists in the first

trials since the 2015 'Black Friday' arrests that saw the detention of more than three hundred rights lawyers and activists.

14 August: Popular actor Wang Baoqiang 王宝强 'breaks the Internet' by using social media to out his wife, Ma Rong 马蓉, for cheating on him with his agent, Song Zhe 宋喆. The news sparks an online witch hunt for Ma Rong supporters as well as a debate on the ethics of taking a domestic quarrel onto social media. The Twitter hashtag #WangBaoQiangDivorce #王宝强离婚 attracts over five billion views within a few days.

17 August: Chinese media reports that Foxhunt 2016, the overseas arm of the government's anti-corruption drive, has successfully returned 409 suspects to China for further investigation.

22 August: *Folding Beijing* 北京折叠 by the Chinese science fiction author Hao Jingfang 郝景芳 wins the Hugo Award for Best Novelette. This is the second consecutive win by a Chinese writer of the prestigious science fiction award.

1 September: China's Charity Law comes into effect. The law formalises

and expands the operating scope of charities and nonprofit groups, and increases tax incentives for charitable giving.

4–5 September: World leaders arrive in Hangzhou under tight security for the Eleventh G20 Summit — the first hosted by China and only the second hosted by an Asian nation after the Seoul Summit in 2010.

12 September: The State Council Information Office issues its first-ever White Paper on the subject of the judicial protection of human rights.

25 September: China's State Council and Central Committee release a high-level policy document outlining the government's plan for a Social Credit System that would combine the power of big data and state control to monitor citizens, award them for good behaviour (as determined by the state), and punish them for bad, with implications for their access to everything from financial credit to overseas travel.

1 October: On National Day, Zhou Zhixing 周志兴, the founder of Consensus 共识网 — one of the last remaining

online forums for open intellectual discussion on economics, culture, and politics — announces that authorities have shut down the website.

2 October: China's renminbi joins the exclusive club of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) special drawing rights basket of reserve currencies, which determines currencies that countries can receive as part of IMF loans. The People's Bank of China hail the milestone as a move towards internationalising the renminbi.

27 October: The Party leadership elevates Xi Jinping to 'core' leader — a title held by both Mao Zedong 毛泽东 and Deng Xiaoping 邓小平. Xi's ascension signals his control over the Party before the crucial Nineteenth Party Congress to be held in 2017. The Party conclave also hints that the informal retirement age of sixty-eight might be extended at the 2017 Party Congress, thus paving the way for Xi's ally, sixty-nine-year-old Wang Qishan 王岐山, head of the formidable Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, to remain for another term.

4 November: The Paris Agreement on climate change comes into effect af-

ter China, along with fifty-four other countries, ratifies the convention.

6 November: Mass protests erupt in Hong Kong after two recently elected pro-independence politicians are barred from taking office after insulting China during their swearing-in oath.

7 November: China passes the controversial Cybersecurity Law. The law's strong data localisation requirement, and demands that foreign technology is 'secure and controllable', trouble foreign companies concerned about privacy issues and are forced to consider how far they will compromise to stay in the Chinese market.

9 November: Tianjin courts sentence forty-nine individuals to prison in connection with the massive explosions that rocked the city in August 2015 and killed at least 165 people.

10 November: Meng Hongwei 孟宏伟, a Vice-Minister of Public Security, is elected head of Interpol, giving China unprecedented influence over the international law and order body that prosecutes terrorism, transnational crime, and cybercrime.

16 November: The third World Internet Conference convenes in Wuzhen, bringing diplomats, international tech leaders, and Chinese officials together to hear the Chinese government's pitch for national sovereignty in cyberspace.

30 November: Beijing extends an olive branch to Hong Kong pan-democrats, relaxing restrictions on home visit permits for members of the opposition party previously banned from entering the mainland.

10 December: US President-elect Donald Trump receives a call from Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-wen — the first time an American president talks with a Taiwanese leader since official relations were severed in 1979. Beijing is furious, and anti-Trump invective proliferates on the Chinese Internet. China insists that Trump affirms the one-China policy of his predecessors. Trump will go from calling the policy 'negotiable' to saying, in February 2017, that he will honour it.

10 December: Hong Kong's unpopular Chief Executive, CY Leung 梁振英, announces that he will not seek reelection for a second term due to 'family reasons'. Pan-democrats gain strong

support in the vote to choose the members of the ‘election committee’, though pro-Beijing representatives still wins the vast majority of seats.

15 December: The Chinese navy seizes a US underwater drone in the South China Sea. The drone is ultimately returned to the US Navy, but not before President-elect Donald Trump fires off a series of angry tweets, including one telling the Chinese to keep it.

23 December: Hong Kong’s Chief Secretary, Carrie Lam 林鄭月娥, attracts

scorn and criticism after announcing, without public consultation, that Hong Kong’s West Kowloon Cultural District will host a permanent local branch of Beijing Palace Museum, displaying relics on loan from Beijing.

30 December: Anti-corruption officials nab another ‘tiger’, announcing that former vice minister of the Ministry of State Security, Ma Jian 马建, will be prosecuted for ‘serious violations of political discipline and the code of conduct’.

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