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

2018

1 January: China prohibits the importation of twenty-four types of waste material; a further sixteen types, including motors and wire are banned from 31 December 2018, forcing other countries who had relied on China to do their recycling to look elsewhere for solutions.

9 January: Continuing a crackdown on unauthorised worship, the People’s Armed Police destroy the Golden Lampstand Church 金灯台教堂 in Linfen, Shanxi. Built with US$3 million in donations, the church served a congregation of 50,000.

20 January: China-born Swedish citizen and Hong Kong publisher Gui Minhai 桂敏海, first taken to China from Thailand in 2015 and later under house arrest in China, is detained and ‘disappeared’ a second time while travelling on a train from Shanghai to Beijing with two Swedish diplomats.

4 February: China effectively bans all cryptocurrency trading. In March, the Governor of the People’s Bank of China calls the growth of digital currency ‘technologically inevitable’.
6 February: After public outcry in China, Mercedes Benz apologises for sharing a quotation from the Dalai Lama on its Instagram feed: ‘Look at situations from all angles, and you will become more open’.

1 March: US President Donald Trump announces tariffs on China.

11 March: China’s National People’s Congress votes to remove term limits on the Chinese presidency. Xi Jinping no longer has to retire in 2022 at the end of his second term.

16 March: Trump signs the Taiwan Travel Act, which ‘encourages visits between officials of the United States and Taiwan at all levels’. Beijing accuses the Act of violating the one-China principle. Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文 visits parts of the US later in the year, inciting Beijing’s fury.

19 March: The government dissolves the Ministry of Culture and merges it with the former National Tourism Administration to create the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Also in March, the government abolishes the five-year-old State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, placing responsibility for all of these areas directly under control of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

23 March: US steel and aluminium tariffs go into effect (25 per cent on steel for countries that imported US$10.2 billion, such as China). Certain countries, such as Australia, are given temporary exemptions.

26 March: Kim Jong-un, leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, arrives by train in Beijing to meet with Xi Jinping. The pair hold further talks in Dalian (7–8 May) and again in Beijing (19 June).

2 April: China imposes tariffs on US products worth US$2.4 billion, such as aluminium waste and some primary produce.

2 April: China’s first prototype space station, launched in September 2011 as part of its plan to build a manned space station by 2022, re-enters the earth’s atmosphere above the South Pacific.

3 April: The State Council Information Office issues the white paper China’s
Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief. It clearly states the limitations of that freedom: ‘Chinese religious groups must conduct religious activities in the Chinese context, practice core socialist values, carry forward the fine traditions of the Chinese nation, and actively explore religious thought which conforms to the reality in China’.

13 April: In a surveillance-state milestone, a fugitive is identified by facial identification software at a pop concert in Zhejiang and then arrested.

1 May: The Dominican Republic switches its diplomatic alliance from Taiwan to China. On 24 May, Burkina Faso does the same, leaving Swaziland as Taiwan’s sole diplomatic ally in Africa.

19 May: An H-6K bomber, capable of carrying supersonic cruise missiles, lands at a Chinese military base in the South China Sea for the first time.

21 May: China launches the exploratory Queqiao satellite as part of its mission to land a probe on the dark side of the moon. (The Chang’e 4 ultimately completed a soft landing there on 3 January 2019).

2 June: In Singapore, US Defence Secretary James Mattis criticises China’s militarisation of the South China Sea. Mattis visits Beijing later in June, where Xi tells him: ‘We cannot lose one inch of territory passed down by our ancestors’.

8 June: Beijing awards Russian President Vladimir Putin China’s first friendship medal.

8 June: Chinese technology firm ZTE agrees to pay a US$1 billion fine and change its board and management after the US lifts its ban on it purchasing smart phone components from US suppliers. (The two-month ban was for the violation of sanctions against selling US-made products to Iran.) Trading of ZTE shares in Hong Kong recommence a week later and they promptly plunge thirty-nine per cent.

11 June: Protests in Vietnam over concern that three new Special Economic Zones to be founded with Chinese investment may lead to Chinese control over Vietnamese territory.

4 July: Australian citizen and former Rio Tinto executive Stern Hu, sentenced to ten years in prison for bribery and commercial espionage in
a case believed to have political overtones, is released for good behaviour after nine years.

**6 July:** US tariffs on US$34 billion of Chinese goods commence (as announced on 15 June), as do Chinese tariffs on US$34 billion of American goods (out of a total of US$50 billion also announced on 15 June).

**10 July:** Liu Xia, the widow of Nobel Peace Laureate Liu Xiaobo, 刘霞, who died in custody in 2017, leaves Beijing for Germany. Liu had been under effective house arrest since her late husband won the Nobel Prize in 2010.

**4 August:** Without giving any notice, authorities begin demolishing dissident artist Ai Weiwei’s famous Beijing studio. The demolition crew damages and destroys numerous artworks. Officially, the reason is to make way for urban development.

**20 August:** At a joint press conference in Beijing with Premier Li Keqiang 李克强, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed alludes to international concerns about China’s growing influence in trade: ‘You don’t want a situation where there’s a new version of colonialism happening because poor countries are unable to compete with rich countries in terms of just open, free trade’. Nevertheless, his visit concludes with a positive outlook for future collaboration.

**21 August:** El Salvador breaks diplomatic ties with Taipei to forge them with Beijing. Taiwan’s foreign minister Joseph Wu promises that ‘Taiwan will not engage in dollar nor debt-trap diplomacy with China’.

**23 August:** Both US and China impose US$6 billion of tariffs, completing the US$50 billion announced earlier in June and April, respectively.

**23 August:** Due to security concerns, the Australian government bans Huawei and ZTE from offering 5G technology in Australia. In November, New Zealand also blocks Huawei.

**27 August:** Didi Chuxing 滴滴出行, the world’s most-used ride sharing service, suspends services after a second female passenger is raped and murdered in one calendar year. The company begins re-evaluating its business model with an eye to an initial public offering in early 2019.
3 September: Fifty-three members of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation attend the group’s third meeting, in Beijing. The tone is positive, stressing further cooperation and mutually beneficial economic development.

13 September: China lends Venezuela US$5 billion, with the loan repayable in cash or oil.

22 September: The Vatican and Beijing sign an agreement to share responsibility in the appointment of bishops. Days later, the Pope claims that the agreement will allow ‘the orderly and harmonious growth of the Catholic community in China’.

23 September: The controversial Hong Kong link to China’s high-speed rail network opens. Passengers from West Kowloon station can reach Beijing in nine hours and Shenzhen in fifteen minutes. Mainland immigration officials are stationed inside a Hong Kong train station for the first time.

24 September: US tariffs of US$200 billion commence on Chinese imports. Half of the tariffs are on intermediate goods (such as industrial machinery) and nearly one quarter are for consumer goods. Chinese tariffs on US$60 billion of US imports also commence.

24 September: The US proposes to sell Taiwan US$330 million in arms, predominantly parts for fighter jets. There has been bipartisan support in the US for such sales since the US diplomatically recognised the PRC in 1979.

25 September: Meng Hongwei, the first Chinese president of Interpol, who had disappeared from his home in France, arrives back in China and texts his wife a knife emoji, indicating he was in danger.

4 October: US Vice-President Mike Pence criticises China and accuses it of attempting to influence US society and politics.

7 October: Meng Hongwei resigns as Interpol president. The Chinese government announces he is in detention and under investigation for taking bribes.

25 October: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe meets with Xi Jinping in Beijing. They renew their commitment to free trade, and agree to improve communication and work together on infrastructure projects in the region.
11 November: The annual online ‘Single’s Day’ shopping extravaganza sees US$30.6 billion in sales on the Alibaba platform, a new record.

17 November: Responding to pro-Taiwan independence sentiments expressed at the Golden Horse film awards in Taipei, the film star Fan Bingbing 范冰冰 shows her sixty-three million followers on Weibo a map of China that includes Taiwan and tells them that ‘China cannot lose an inch’. This is her second only public statement since her three-month detainment earlier in the year for tax evasion.

18 November: For the first time ever, the leaders attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, meeting in Papua New Guinea, are unable to agree on a written declaration. The US had proposed reforming the World Trade Organisation, and China objected. Neither side would compromise, reflecting the more general animosity between the two countries, and preventing leaders from reaching consensus.

23 November: Four Pakistani nationals are killed in an attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi. The Balochistan Liberation Army, which is deemed a terrorist organisation by Pakistan and the US, and objects to Chinese investments in the traditional homeland of the Baloch people in Pakistan’s west, claims responsibility.

26 November: Shenzhen-based scientist He Jiankui 贺建奎 claims to have used the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing technology to edit the genes of twin girls so that they have a lifetime protection against HIV. His experiment is roundly condemned by ethicists and scientists, including China’s National Health Commission.

26 November: Mid-term elections in Taiwan see the ruling Democratic Progressive Party lose ground to the opposition Kuomintang, which embraces a one-China policy. An associated referendum rejects same-sex marriage, complicating efforts to legalise same-sex marriage within two years of a positive ruling by the Constitutional Court in May 2017.

1 December: Meeting at the G20 summit in Argentina, Xi Jinping and Donald Trump agree to a ninety-day truce on raising tariffs.
1 December: Meng Wangzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, is arrested in Vancouver. She is wanted in the US on allegations of fraud, in particular for breaking US sanctions on Iran. A Global Times article describes Meng’s detention as ‘basically kidnapping’; she is later released on CA$10 million (US$7.4 million) bail. Within the month, China detains Canadians including former diplomat and International Crisis Group employee, Michael Kovrig, and Michael Spavor, a businessman, in what is widely seen as politically motivated tit-for-tat.

20 December: The Asian Studies Association of Australia announces that its journal, Asian Studies Review, would be excluded from arts, humanities, and social science packages sold to libraries in China ‘because some of its content is deemed inappropriate to the government’. It was one of eighty-three foreign journals to face similar censorship in just three months.