# PREVIOUS *CHINA STORY YEARBOOKS*

## 2021: *Contradiction*

In the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the many facets of crisis — the theme of last year's *China Story Yearbook* — fractured into pictures of contradiction throughout Chinese society and the Chinese sphere of influence.

Contradiction: the ancient Chinese word for the concept holds within it the image of an unstoppable spear meeting an impenetrable shield. It describes a wide range of phenomena that English might express with words like conflict, clash, paradox, incongruity, disagreement, rebuttal, opposition, and negation. This year's *Yearbook* presents stories of action and reaction, of motion and resistance.

The theme of contradiction plays out in different ways across the different realms of society, culture, environment, labour, politics, and international relations. Great powers do not necessarily succeed in dominating smaller ones. The seemingly irresistible forces of authoritarianism, patriarchy, and technological control come up against energised and surprisingly resilient means of resistance or cooptation. Efforts by various authorities to establish monolithic narrative control over the past and present meet a powerful insistence on telling the story from an opposite angle. The *China Story Yearbook 2021: Contradiction* offers an accessible take on this complex and contradictory moment in the history of China and of the world.

## 2020: *Crisis*

The *China Story Yearbook 2020: Crisis* surveys the multiple crises of the year of the Metal Rat, including the catastrophic mid-year floods that sparked fears about the stability of the Three Gorges Dam. It looks at how Chinese women fared through the pandemic, from the rise in domestic violence to portraits of female sacrifice on the medical front line to the trolling of a famous dancer for being childless. It also examines the downward-spiralling Sino-Australian relationship, the difficult 'co-morbidities' of China's relations with the United States, the end of 'One Country, Two Systems' in Hong Kong, the simmering border conflict with India, and the rise of pandemic-related anti-Chinese racism. The *Yearbook* also explores the responses to crisis of, among others, Daoists, Buddhists, and humourists — because when all else fails, there's always philosophy, prayer, and laughter.

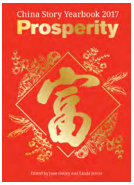
## 2019: *China Dreams*

The year 2019 marked a number of significant anniversaries for the People's Republic of China (PRC), each representing different 'Chinese dreams'. There was the centennial of the May Fourth Movement — a dream of patriotism and cultural renewal. The PRC celebrated its seventieth anniversary — a dream of revolution and national strength. It was also thirty years since the student-led protest movement of 1989 — dreams of democracy and free expression crushed by party-state dreams of unity and stability. Many of these 'dreams' recurred in new guises in 2019. Xi Jinping tightened his grip on power at home while calling for all citizens to 'defend China's honour abroad'. Escalating violence in Hong Kong, the ongoing suppression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and deteriorating Sino-US relations dominated the headlines. Alongside stories about China's advances in artificial intelligence and genetically modified babies, and

its ambitions in the Antarctic and outer space, these issues fuelled discussion about what Xi's own 'China Dream' of national rejuvenation means for Chinese citizens and the rest of the world.

## 2018: *Power*

In 2018, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was, by most measures, more powerful than at any other time in its history and had become one of the most powerful countries in the world. Its economy faced serious challenges, including from the ongoing 'trade war' with the United States, but still ranked as the world's second largest. Its Belt and Road Initiative, meanwhile, continued to carve paths of influence and economic integration across several continents. A deft combination of policy, investment, and entrepreneurship has also turned the PRC into a global 'techno-power'. It aims, with a good chance of success, at becoming a global science and technology leader by 2049 — one hundred years from the founding of the PRC.




## 2017: *Prosperity*

A 'moderately prosperous society' with no Chinese individual left behind — that's the vision for China set out by CPC general secretary Xi Jinping in a number of important speeches in 2017. 'Moderate' prosperity may seem like a modest goal for a country with more billionaires (609 at last count) than the United States. But the 'China Story' is a complex one. The *China Story Yearbook 2017: Prosperity* surveys the important events, pronouncements, and personalities that defined 2017. It also presents a range of perspectives, from the global to the individual, the official to the unofficial, from mainland China to Hong Kong and Taiwan. Together, the stories present a richly textured portrait of a nation that

in just forty years has lifted itself from universal poverty to (unequally distributed) wealth, changing itself and the world in the process.

## 2016: *Control*

'More cosmopolitan, more lively, more global' is how the *China Daily* summed up the year 2016 in China. It was also a year of more control. The Communist Party of China laid down strict new rules of conduct for its members, continued to assert its dominance over everything from the internet to the South China Sea and announced a new Five-Year Plan that Greenpeace called 'quite possibly the most important document in the world in setting the pace of acting on climate change'.

## 2015: *Pollution*

This *Yearbook* explores the broader ramifications of pollution in the People's Republic for culture, society law and social activism, as well as the internet, language, thought, and approaches to history. It looks at how it affects economic and political developments, urban change, and China's regional and global posture. The Communist Party of China, led by 'Chairman of Everything' Xi Jinping, meanwhile, has subjected mainland society to increasingly repressive control in its new determination to rid the country of Western 'spiritual pollutants' while achieving cultural purification through 'propaganda and ideological work'.

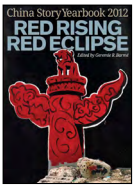
## 2014: *Shared Destiny*

The People's Republic of China under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and Xi Jinping, has declared that it shares in the destiny of the countries of the Asia and Pacific region, as well as of nations that are part of an intertwined

national self-interest. The *China Story Yearbook 2014* takes the theme of Shared Destiny 共同命运 and considers it in the context of China's current and future potential.

## 2013: *Civilising China*

As China becomes wealthier and more confident on the global stage, it also expects to be respected and accommodated as a major global force — and as a formidable civilisation. Through a survey and analysis of China's regional posture, urban change, social activism and law, mores, the internet, history, and thought — in which the concept of 'civilising' plays a prominent role — *China Story Yearbook 2013* offers insights into the country today and its dreams for the future.




## 2012: *Red Rising, Red Eclipse*

The authors of *Red Rising, Red Eclipse* survey China's regional posture, urban change, social activism and law, human rights and economics, the internet, history, and thought. This inaugural *China Story Yearbook* offers an informed perspective on recent developments in China and provides a context for understanding ongoing issues that will resonate far beyond the Dragon Year of 2012–2013.

This text is taken from *China Story Yearbook: Chains*, edited by Linda Jaivin, Esther Sunkyung Klein and Annie Luman Ren, published 2023 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.