

CONTROL

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EDITED BY
Jane Golley,
Linda Jaivin, AND Luigi Tomba

CHINA STORY
YEARBOOK 2016

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AUSTRALIAN CENTRE ON
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PRESS

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本书扼要

更国

际化、更活跃、更全球化——这是《中国日报》2016年中国的总结，事实上亦可说这一年是控制更严格的一年。中国共产党中央为全体党员制定了更加严格的行为准则，继续积极主张从互联网南海的诸多至高控制权，并且通过了被绿色和平组织称为可能是对全球气候变化步伐最具影响的重要文件的第十三个五年规划纲要。中国故事年鉴2016年：治——调查分析这一年里中国经济、人口规划、执法与改革、环境、互联网、医药、宗教、教育、历史、外交、文化及港台发展。

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INTRODUCTION

2016年1月

2月

3月

4月

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7月

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9月

Monkey King

Source: William Tung, Wikimedia



A close-up photograph of a person wearing a vibrant red and gold costume. The person is holding a red staff with a white and gold decorative element. The background is blurred, showing an outdoor setting with a blue carpet and other people. The image is overlaid with a white grid pattern.

FIFTY SHADES OF RED

Jane Golley and Linda Jaivin

**Sun Wukong**

Source: othree, Flickr

The year 2016 was the Year of the Monkey, and no monkey is more iconic in China than Sun Wukong 孙悟空, the mischievous and beloved Monkey King of Chinese mythology. A central character in the sixteenth-century classic *Journey to the West* 西游记, ‘Monkey’ was born from a stone, and enjoys tremendous powers thanks to Taoist practices and a magical staff. When he creates havoc in the Jade Emperor’s heavenly palace, the Buddha sends Monkey on a journey across the seemingly infinite expanse of his palm, finally trapping him under a mountain, where he remains for five hundred years. The Buddha promises Monkey his freedom if he agrees to protect the monk Xuanzang 玄奘 on his journey to collect the Buddhist classics from India and bring them back to China. But knowing Monkey’s capacity for mischief, the Buddha gives Xuanzang a headband that once placed on Monkey’s head can never be taken off, teaching him a magical incantation that enables the monk to painfully tighten the headband. The pain — or the threat of it — keeps Monkey under control throughout the long journey.

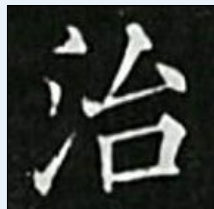
‘Control’ is the theme of the *China Story Yearbook 2016*. Each year, surveying the official and unofficial discourse from China, we choose a Chinese character that illustrates an overarching theme from that year’s political, economic, social, and cultural events. The character *zhi* 治 is our keyword for 2016. While it can be translated as control, this is only one of its many meanings. It also signifies to manage, govern, supervise, or take care of; to harness; and to arrange or put in order. It can also mean to pun-

BETWEEN ORDER AND CHAOS, by Nathan Woolley

Governing a large country is like steaming small fish.

— Laozi in *Daodejing*, 60, translated by Edmund Ryden

A dictionary of the second century AD refers to the character 治 as the name of a river in Shandong province, but puts forward no explanation for how it came to mean ‘control’, ‘bring order’, ‘govern’. The common use of this character in reference to the legendary sage ruler Yu 大禹 (c. 2200–2101 BCE), who ‘regulated’ the waters of China in an ancient time of great floods, suggests that it derives from the act of controlling water. While this ostensibly explains why the radical (the graphical component of the character that may, but doesn’t always, have some connection to the character’s meaning) of 治 is the water radical 氵, the evidence is far from solid. By the Spring and Autumn period (eighth to fifth century BC), the character 治 commonly appeared in one graphic form or another in political discourse and has done so ever since.



Character taken from a rubbing of an inscription by Tang official Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641)
Source: Sina

Curiously, the character’s supposed antonym, *luan* 亂, in very early texts is sometimes used to mean ‘bring order’, and given the gloss 治. The scholar Yang Shuda (1885–1956) explained that the character now read *luan* originally depicted two hands, one holding silk while the other spooled it — suggesting the bringing of order to a possible tangle. Yet this understanding of the character describes an act with the potential for both order and chaos. This is, perhaps, preserved in the rare character 亂, once an alternative way of writing 亂, and now read *zhi* or *luan* — that is having the meaning of either order or chaos depending on how it is read, which is probably why the character is little used. The origin of the character 治 as ‘control’ may thus be as homonym, graphic variant or some form of cognate (as suggested by a dictionary of the eleventh century AD).

ish, to cure (an illness), to exterminate (an agricultural pest or disease, for example), to research (*zhi shi* 治史, for example, is the study of history), to pacify and settle, and to stabilise. In historical times, it indicated the seat of local government. (See Information Window ‘Between Order and Chaos’ above.) Its most common antonym is the word for chaos, confusion, and disarray: *luan* 乱.

Since his ascension to the presidency and leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, Xi Jinping 习近平 has steadily expanded his personal control over the Party, the Party’s control over the state, and the state’s control over its citizens. This trend continued in 2016.

Xi has personally assumed the leadership of so many commissions and ‘central leading groups’ that in the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, founding editor Geremie R. Barmé dubbed him the ‘chairman of everything’. In April 2016, he added a powerful new role to the list: Commander-in-Chief of the People’s Liberation Army’s newly formed Joint Operations Command Centre. In October, the Sixth **Plenum** of the Eighteenth

Central Committee of the CCP conferred on him the status of ‘core leader’ 核心领导人, an official appellation he now shares with the three strongest leaders of post-1949 China — Mao Zedong 毛泽东, Deng Xiaoping 邓小平, and Jiang Zemin 江泽民.

Many observers in the media and academic circles both in China and overseas have sought the right words to describe China’s unusual meld of Communist ideology, media-savvy propaganda, quasi-free market economics, social control, and authoritarianism: a unique political and economic system to which Xi Jinping is adding his own personal, and powerful, touch. In his 2016 book, *The Perfect Dictatorship: China in the 21st Century*, Norwegian political scientist Stein Ringen coins the term ‘controlocracy’ for this system in which ‘[t]he state controls society, and the party controls the state. There is a double system of control. Control is in this state’s nature’.¹ Coinciding with our choice of ‘Control’ for this *Yearbook*’s theme, this term strikes us as being rather apt (even if Ringen’s analysis is open to criticism.)

Cure Thyself

The importance of control for the Chinese concept of governance is implicit: the word for politics in Chinese is *zhengzhi* 政治, where 政 is a character referring to the administrative aspects of government. Just as the monk Xuanzang uses incantatory words to control (manage, harness, stabilise, punish) the chaos that is Monkey, the CCP today employs *tifa* 提法, official formulations to control (manage, supervise, harness, stabilise, punish) chaotic tendencies not just in society as a whole but, as Gloria Davies writes in her



Monk Xuanzang

Source: Wikimedia Commons

chapter ‘The Language of Discipline’, within the Party itself. As she points out, the phrase ‘comprehensive and strict Party governance’ 全面从严治党, in which the character 治 is placed directly before the character for the Party, appears no less than fifteen times in the 2016 Sixth Plenum’s official communiqué.

Zhi 治 can also mean to ‘cure’. If there is one thing that threatens the Party’s legitimacy more than any other, it is the disease of corruption, which Xi Jinping has sought to cure since launching his anti-corruption campaign in 2013. Christian Sorace observes in his essay on ‘Communist Party Immunology’ that the Party ‘conceptualises itself as a living organism that is self-conscious of its own mortality’. This is reminiscent of Chairman Mao’s metaphor of ‘curing the sickness to save the patient’, used as early as 1942 to rectify problems within the Party.

Natalie Köhle takes a look at cures from a more literal perspective in ‘Cups, Needles, and Noxious Blood’, about the national and international revival of cupping, acupuncture, and humoralism, made visible by the widespread use by athletes during the Rio Olympics. The Party itself has certainly suffered from excesses of bile and blood in the past — the most emblematic of these being the ultra-left, ultra-violent Cultural Revolution incited and led by Mao Zedong from 1966–1976. Faced with two highly sensitive and uncomfortable anniversaries — the fiftieth anniversary of the launch of the Cultural Revolution on 16 May 1966 and fortieth anniversary of the death of Mao on 9 September 1976 — the Party tightened its already tight grip over history in 2016. As Lorand Laskai writes in ‘Dreaded Anniversaries’, on 16 May the *People’s Daily* issued a tight-lipped commentary describing the Cultural Revolution somewhat enigmatically as ‘a major complication in the development of our party and country’. Otherwise, the Party-state did its best to control (or rather exterminate) public discussion and to prevent alternative views from appearing on the tightly-policed Chinese Internet.

They could not exterminate that discussion altogether, however. Historian Yang Jisheng 杨继绳, author of *Tombstone: the Great Chinese Fam-*

THE OVERTHROW OF HEAVEN AND EARTH — A HISTORY OF CHINA'S GREAT PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION: FROM THE PREFACE,
by Yang Jisheng

The renowned author Wang Meng once said: 'Who is able to explain and advance our ability to sum up, from either a political or scholarly perspective, the decade of the "Cultural Revolution" that began in 1966? Chinese people ought to be taking on this task. The Communist Party of China ought to be taking on this task. Chinese academics ought to be taking on this task. The Chinese people have this responsibility to history and the world. China is duty-bound to do this. To accurately, and without the slightest bit of obfuscation, evaluate the "Cultural Revolution" from every angle — this would also be China's contribution to the history of humankind.'

The 'task' of which Wang Meng spoke has a great allure for me, and I have long been eager to tackle it. Although this is an exceedingly complex and dangerous territory, once I started I was filled with excitement. This 'task' turned out to be of monumental scale; it has taken all I can give just to lay down a small patch of brickwork.

— translated by Linda Jaivin

著名作家王蒙说过：“谁能解释与进一步从政治上从学理上总结1966年开始的十年‘文革’？中国人应该干这个活。中国共产党应该干这个活。中国学者应该干这个活。这是中国人的历史与国际责任。中国责无旁贷。正确地毫不含糊地总结‘文革’的方方面面，这也是中国对人类历史的贡献。”

王蒙说的“这个活”，对我有极大的诱惑力，我早就跃跃欲试。虽然这是一个极其复杂和危险的领域，一旦进入，我就充满激情。显然，“这个活”是一项大工程，我能够为这项工程添一小片砖瓦，也算尽力了。



*The Overthrow of Heaven and Earth —
A History of China's Great Proletarian
Cultural Revolution*

Source: cosmbooks.com.hk

ine 1958–1962 墓碑:中国六十年代大饥荒纪实, sent his latest manuscript, *The Overthrow of Heaven and Earth — A History of China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* 天地翻覆 — 中国文化大革命历史, to Hong Kong, where Cosmos Books published it towards the end of the year.

History has long been a battlefield in China, with control over the narrative being the victor's prize. In dynastic times, each dynasty rewrote the history of its predecessor to emphasise its own legitimacy. In revolutionary times, the Party has not only rewritten aspects of dynastic and republican history several times, it has also revised its own history numerous times to play down inconsistencies, and erase violent episodes and bad decisions.

In ‘Trouble with the Past’, Nathan Woolley describes a skirmish over an episode from the history of the anti-Japanese resistance, ‘The Five Heroes of Langya Mountain’. The story goes that under fierce siege from the Japanese, the five threw themselves off the mountain rather than surrender, shouting, ‘Long live the Communist Party!’ The tale has been a propaganda staple for decades. In 2016, a citizen who questioned certain aspects of the story landed in jail, while the editor of a prominent intellectual historical journal who went further in questioning the official account was publically vilified, lost his job and faced a judgement by the People’s Supreme Court that by damaging the Party’s reputation, he had also harmed the public interest.

Control and Command

The Party-state aspires to control — in the sense of eliminate — many diverse phenomena that they perceive as offensive, immoral, threatening or simply unsafe. Nick Stember’s ‘banned list’ over the last two years gives a snapshot of this diversity, ranging from American horror movies, Bon Jovi and April Fool’s Day to Muslim names, Pokémon GO, live Internet streams of women wearing stockings and suspenders eating bananas (yes, this is a thing), and some twelve thousand ‘sensitive’ words.



Banned: Eating bananas on the Internet
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Words don’t necessarily have to be sensitive to be banned. As Annie Drahos writes in ‘Ungeilievleable: Language Control in the Digital Age’, the government’s ongoing push to modernise and digitise bureaucratic documents and records has made people with rare or ancient characters in their names unable to do ordinary things such as open a bank account or sit the crucial *gaokao* 高考 exam for university admittance. The dig-



Luo Fuhe
Source: Xinhuanet

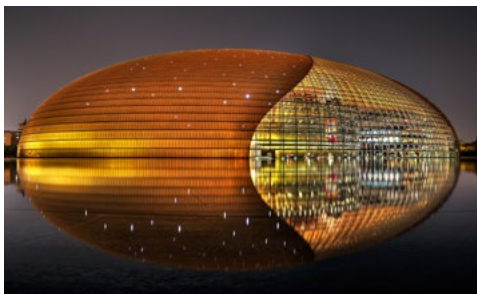
ital sphere more broadly, of course, has long been an area of active government control, with a vast army of censors constantly patrolling the Internet to exterminate everything from ‘rumours’ to cyber loan-sharking, as seen in the essays by Lorand Laskai and Nicholas Loubere in the Forum ‘Computer Says No’.

Trying to control (govern, supervise, harness) the Internet, is, as Lorand Laskai suggests (quoting a Bill Clinton phrase), like ‘nailing jello to a wall’. Yet the Chinese government is clearly managing to do this better than most.

In 2016, China earned the title of the world’s ‘worst abuser of Internet freedom’ on the independent watchdog Freedom House’s annual scorecard, while US officials labelled China’s Internet controls a ‘trade barrier’. In early 2017, Luo Fuhe 罗富和, the vice-chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, acknowledged that Internet censorship in China was impeding both economic development and scientific research. This is a high price to pay for a government intent on sustaining long-term growth and lifting the economy out of its middle-income status.

Internet control also featured in some of the biggest stories in Chinese arts and culture in 2016. In the cultural sphere, over the decades of reform, a de facto compromise has been reached. The Party implicitly acknowledges that not all artistic products must serve ideology (you can have, for example, abstract art or rom-com films). Those working in the arts, in return, understand that they are not to challenge either the Party or its ideology (at least if they want to show or sell what they are making). Xi is trying to reassert the Party’s control over cultural production. But it’s not that simple in the age of social media, commercial filmmaking, and

globalised production. As Linda Jaivin's 'Culture: In and Out of Control' illustrates, the Party-state can control the kind of films that can be made and released, but it can't control how people will react to them, on- or off-line.



The National Centre for the Performing Arts ('The Egg'), Beijing
Source: Spreng Ben, Flickr

It's a different story when it comes to outright challenges to the authority of the Party and state, however. In 2016, Xi Jinping's government, never soft on crime or dissent, went harder still. In 'Control by Law', Susan Trevaskes and Elisa Nesossi show how Xi has further elaborated the policy (enshrined in the Constitution) of 'governing the nation in accord with the law' 依法治国 to, as they write, create 'a more intimate relationship between law and politics than was the case when the phrase first came into use twenty years ago.'

On the one hand, the Party-state continued to reform the judicial process to make it more transparent, fair and efficient. On the other, official pronouncements increasingly equated the notion of the 'rule of law' with 'rule by the Party', making 'governing the nation in accordance with the law' synonymous with 'governing the nation in accordance with the Party'. Unsurprisingly, it ramped up its war on those viewed as dissenters.

Labour activists were another group of 'dissenters' who suffered a difficult year in 2016: an *annus horribilis* according to Ivan Franceschini. His forum explores the tactics employed by Chinese authorities — including the mysterious State Security, in charge of preventing infiltration by 'hostile foreign forces' — to control the activities of labour activists trying to promote workers' rights. Learning to manoeuvre between these authorities is particularly challenging during a period of economic slowdown, providing regional officials with the excuse they needed to freeze minimum wages and reduce labour protections.

According to Plan



Soviet propaganda: 'The Five-Year Plan Needs You', 1971

Source: kitchener.lord, Flickr

Following nearly four decades of economic reform, China's economy has become a unique hybrid of free market activity and state supervision and control. The Party-state still adheres to the old Soviet practice, designed for a

centralised command economy, of producing five-year plans that detail a vast number of economic objectives alongside benchmarks for social and cultural progress, although recent plans look more like guidelines than the fully fledged target-based plans in the past. In 2016, with great fanfare and promotion across social media as well as the usual channels, the government revealed its Thirteenth Five-Year-Plan. Luigi Tomba looks at the history of such plans, how some non-communist countries have adopted the practice and how China's plan has evolved over time. This latest plan has such a strong environmental emphasis, Tomba notes, that it could put China at the 'forefront of moves towards a low-carbon global economy'.

The forum 'The Environment: Control and Punishment' surveys the latest environmental disasters, along with the government's ongoing attempts to harness the potential for low-carbon growth. This involves a range of strategies beyond the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, from the Supreme People's Court's largest-ever fine for illegal waste disposal in a public interest case to the ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change, an action credited with encouraging many other countries to sign on as well. While much of the news remains grim, China looks on track to

become the world's first renewable energy superpower — and arguably faster than it would have done by adopting a *laissez-faire* approach.

Another area in which the government is attempting to produce more rational social and economic outcomes concerns China's vast population, which has long been subject to various forms of government control. On the first day of 2016, the Party-state enacted a landmark change in population policy, ending the One-Child Policy that had been in place since 1980 and replacing it with a Two-Child Policy. As Jane Golley explains in 'Population and the Economy: The Ups and Downs of One and Two', this policy shift has potentially profound implications for China's economic growth, its environment and the welfare of its citizens — but only if people actually have more babies. This will likely prove harder to control than preventing births in the past.



Urban water pollution

Source: Global Water Forum, Flickr

Borderlines



Wang Yusheng
Source: t.qq.com

On 25 December 2016, Wang Yusheng 王嵎生, a senior diplomat, published a commentary in the *Liberation Daily* 解放日报, widely reprinted in state media, under the title ‘The three big characteristics of the international situation in 2016: “chaos”, “change”, and “control”’.²

Wang described the year in foreign affairs as full of uncertainty. Chaos 乱 was everywhere, from American threats and ‘interference’ in the South China Sea to the refugee crisis in Europe, the coup in Turkey, terrorist attacks in northern Africa and elsewhere, and the impeachments of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil and of Park Geun-hye in South Korea. Change was the ‘main melody’ of 2016, including the populist movements that brought Duterte to power in the Philippines and Trump into the presidency in the US. As for control, Wang spoke of the people’s desire for stability, development, and a peaceful world, stating that the world didn’t belong to the US or China, or the two of them together.

Yet despite such public assurances, throughout 2016 China continued to assert its sovereign interests in the South China Sea, as well as to intervene in Hong Kong’s affairs in what Anthony Dapiran describes as a ‘never-ending game of whack-a-mole’. In Taiwan, the election of Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文 as President in January 2016 gave rise to new cross-strait tensions, which Mark Harrison sees as increasingly unresolvable in ‘A Year of Looking Backwards’. Tsai’s much-publicised phone call with Donald Trump in December, the first between a US president or president-elect and a Taiwanese leader since the US broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan to establish them with the People’s Republic in 1979, was generally well received in Taiwan even as it drew Beijing’s ire.

Looking further afield, Beyongo Mukete Dynamic looks at how controversies over pollution linked to Chinese mining have played out in Zambia. Gerry Groot, meanwhile, describes both the soft power initiatives and the direct interventions through which China expanded its international influence in 2016. Other stories in this *Yearbook* cover the panic over Chinese migrants' real estate investments in British Columbia and the phenomenon of recent Chinese immigrants to the US voting for Trump.

Mao and Then, Xi and Now



Mao Zedong
Source: Wikipedia

The former Chairman Mao Zedong's legacy to control is a mixed bag for the contemporary Chinese Party-state. Among the many sayings for which the former chairman was known — and a particularly iconic one at that — was 'All under heaven is in chaos, the more chaotic the better, it confuses our enemies, and toughens up our masses' 天下大乱，越乱越好，乱了敌人，锻炼了群众。 But he also said: 'From great chaos under heaven we can attain supreme control.' 天下大乱，达到天下大治。 (For more on 'all under heaven', see the *China Story Yearbook 2013*:

Civilising China, Forum 'Tianxia 天下'.) While Xi is a greater fan of control than chaos, he is well aware that his ability to control the Party (and the people) owes much to the historical legitimacy and legacy of Mao. As a result, Xi pays great homage to Mao, and the Party under him takes great

**Chinese flags**

Source: Jon Fisher, Flickr

care to control (restrict or eliminate) criticism of the Great Leader and the less glorious aspects of the Party's past.

Xi's ability to exercise control in the future will hinge on the outcome of the CCP's Nineteenth National People's Congress, to be held in the northern autumn of 2017, and at which the majority of the Politburo's powerful Standing Committee is expected to retire. The delegates to the Congress will elect new leaders for central bodies such as the Central Military Commission as well as the Party itself. Xi will almost certainly be elected to a second term as president, and continue in his other posts as well. But observers will be watching what happens to key allies of Xi, such as Wang Qishan 王岐山, who, as head of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, has been crucial to the execution of Xi's anti-corruption drive. Wang is sixty-eight and, according to Party regulations, should retire. If Xi bends the rules to let Wang continue in his post, he may possibly establish a precedent for himself to push for a third term at the helm at the next Congress, when he will be sixty-nine. If successful, he will become the most powerful leader of China since Mao. Stein Ringen's depiction of what this powerful 'controlocracy' would mean for Chinese citizens, and indeed the rest of the world, is sobering at best.

The *China Story Yearbook*

The *China Story Yearbook* is a project of the Australian Centre on China in the World (CIW) at The Australian National University (ANU). It is part of a broad undertaking aimed at understanding what we call the China Story, both as portrayed by official China, and from various other perspectives.

The Centre is dedicated to a holistic approach to the study of contemporary China: one that considers the range of forces, personalities, and ideas at work in China as a means of understanding the spectrum of China's sociopolitical and cultural realities. CIW fosters such an approach by supporting humanities-led research that engages actively with the social sciences. The resulting admixture has, we believe, academic merit, public policy relevance, and value for the engaged public. The *Yearbook* is aimed at a broad readership that includes the general public, scholars from all fields, as well as people in business and government.

Most of the scholars and writers whose work features in the *China Story Yearbook 2016: Control* are members of, or associated with CIW. They survey the China of Xi's fourth year as leader of the Party and state through chapters, forums, and information windows on topics ranging from economics, politics, and China's regional posture through urban change, social activism and law, the Internet, cultural mores, and present-day Chinese attitudes to history and thought. Their contributions, which cover the twelve-month period in 2016 with some reference to events in early 2017, offer an informed perspective on recent developments in China and what these may mean for the future.

Ganxie (Acknowledgements)

The editors would like to acknowledge the tremendous collaborative effort that each year sees the production of the *China Story Yearbook*. Lorand Laskai, of former Danwei CHK, organised the team that contributed so

many of the boxes and shorter pieces that so greatly enliven the book and expand its range; he is also responsible for the chronology. Paul Farrelly contributed the explanations to the **keywords** (which are marked in this way throughout the work, with explanations at the end of the *Yearbook*). We are deeply grateful to Lindy Allen for proofreading an early version, and to Sharon Strange for project management and typesetting. And we owe a lasting debt to the founding director of CIW and editor of the first three volumes of the *China Story Yearbook*, Professor Geremie R. Barmé.

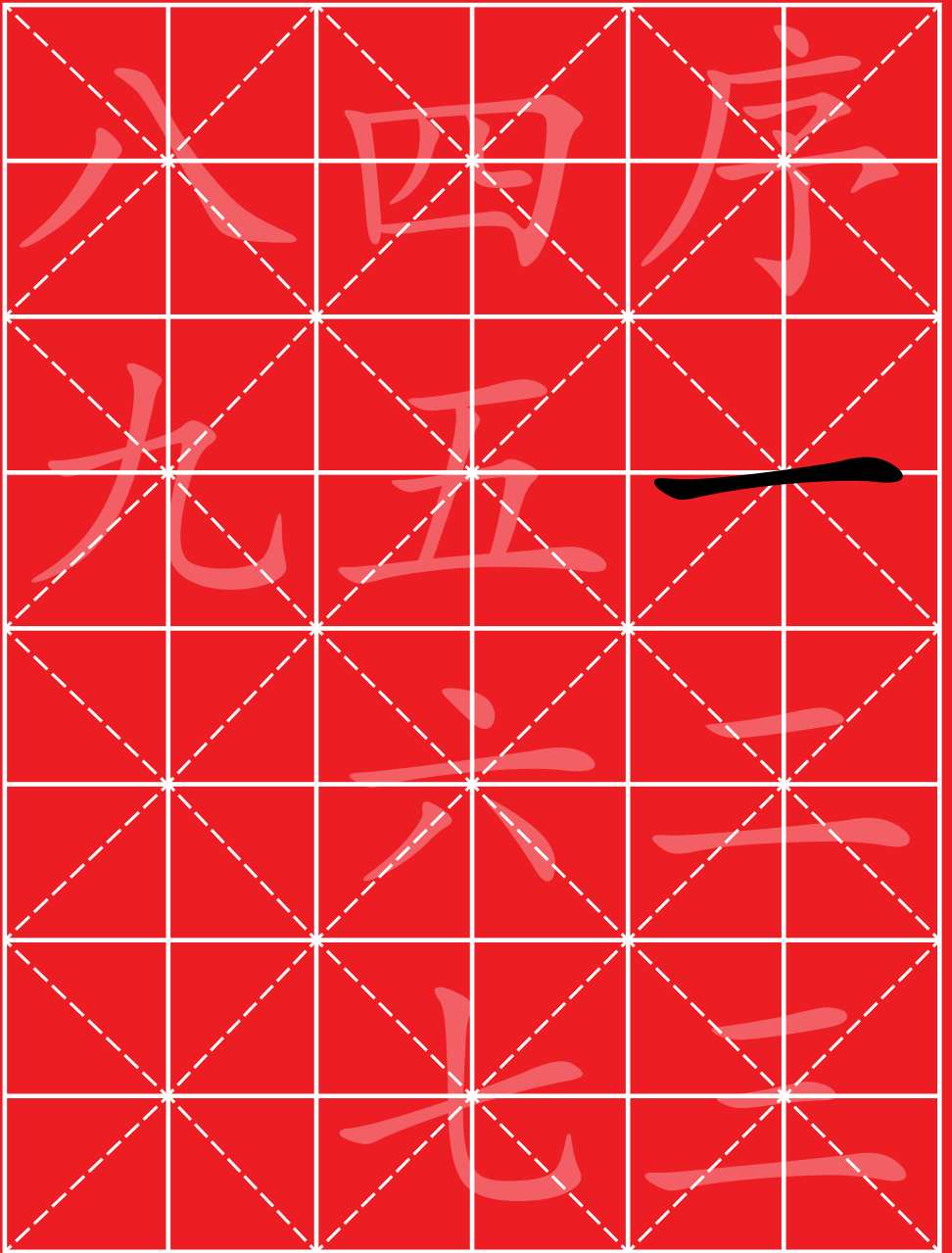
The Cover Image

The character on the cover of this *Yearbook* is *zhi* 治, ‘to control’. It is written in that form of calligraphy known as *kaishu* 楷書, or regular script. The *kai* 楷 of *kai-shu* means ‘a model’ or ‘a pattern’. It is the form of script learnt first by Chinese children, and for those who take up the brush and ink, it is the form of writing that first demands of them firm fine motor control. It is also the form of script associated with official documents and pronouncements. The *zhi* on the cover is placed in a grid that is used for calligraphy practice where the learner traces the strokes rendered in half

tone on the page. The cover image therefore connotes ideas of regulation, repetition, and order, where the character for control is repeated, reiterated, and confined.



Cover of the *China Story Yearbook 2016*
Artwork: CRE8IVE, Canberra



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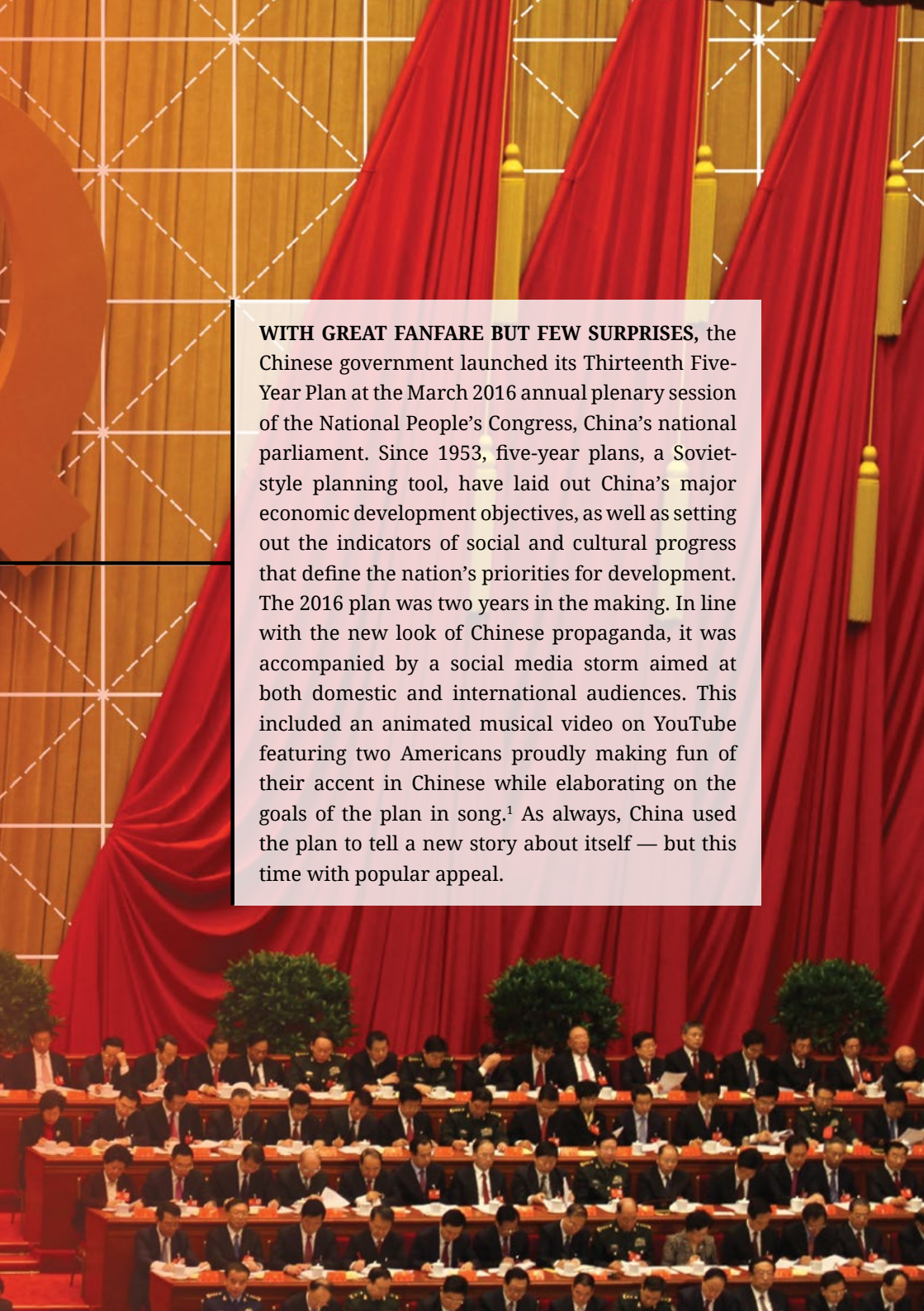
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WHAT'S THE PLAN?

Luigi Tomba

March 2016: The Eighteenth National People's Congress
Source: Wikimedia



WITH GREAT FANFARE BUT FEW SURPRISES, the Chinese government launched its Thirteenth Five-Year Plan at the March 2016 annual plenary session of the National People's Congress, China's national parliament. Since 1953, five-year plans, a Soviet-style planning tool, have laid out China's major economic development objectives, as well as setting out the indicators of social and cultural progress that define the nation's priorities for development. The 2016 plan was two years in the making. In line with the new look of Chinese propaganda, it was accompanied by a social media storm aimed at both domestic and international audiences. This included an animated musical video on YouTube featuring two Americans proudly making fun of their accent in Chinese while elaborating on the goals of the plan in song.¹ As always, China used the plan to tell a new story about itself — but this time with popular appeal.

Does China Need a Five-Year Plan?

Comprehensive, relentless planning is at the core of a Soviet-style socialist economy. It took the USSR a decade after the October Revolution to launch its first Five-Year Plan — a three-volume, 17,000-page document in which the central planning agency, *Gosplan*, elaborated all of its economic targets for the period between 1928 and 1933. It aimed to boost industrialisation to the point where the USSR would be able to compete with — and eventually fight — the West. This Plan produced results similar to that of China's first plan: the rapid collectivisation of agriculture, nationalisation of all industry, and even the great famine that hit Russia at the end in 1932–1933, which, like China's famine of 1958–1962, was partly as a consequence of the overzealous application of agricultural and other targets by local cadres.

Five years was considered long enough to allow for the construction of factories and other infrastructure, and to average out good and bad harvests in the agricultural cycle. At the same time, it was not so long as to endanger the state's capacity to steer the economy through unexpected turbulence, adjust targets as necessary, and introduce corrections to the structural aspects of economic development — in other words, to adapt flexibly to changing circumstances. Despite the shortening of production cycles in more recent times, the ancient Roman concept of *lustrum* (the five years between censuses) still holds its ground today as the ideal planning period. Mikhail Gorbachev oversaw the preparation of the USSR's Twelfth and Thirteenth Five-Year Plans, although the latter was rendered irrelevant by the demise of the USSR in 1991.



Soviet five-year plan propaganda
Photo: crisissome.blogspot.com.au

Non-socialist countries have also adopted such plans, particularly where economic development is taken to be crucial to nation building: India is currently seeing through its Twelfth Five-Year Plan while Turkey has enacted ten five-year plans so far. Even Adolf Hitler decided to emulate what he considered the Soviets' 'grand plan' and launched his very own Four-Year Plan in 1936, to prepare Germany for war.

China shows no sign of abandoning the practice of five-year plans. In recent years, however, the nature of the plans has changed along with China's evolving economy. Earlier plans provided rigid targets for a developing economy dominated by agriculture and industry — one which, with the nationalisation of industry in 1956 and the collectivisation of the agriculture around the same time, had become the responsibility of the state alone. With the end of the Maoist era, the expansion of the market economy, the growth of consumer and services sectors, and the opening



A still from the animated musical video explaining the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan
Photo: YouTube

of Chinese stock markets, plans necessarily became increasingly complex and long term in their conception. The Fifth Five-Year Plan (1976–1980) and the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1981–1985), for example, were bundled into one ten-year development plan; these were also the first to acknowledge that

the over-ambitious (and ideologically motivated) production targets set during the Great Leap Forward 大跃进 (1958) and the Cultural Revolution 文化大革命 (1966–1976) were unachievable.

In more recent times, five-year plans have reflected how the greater role of the market in the national economy has made it harder and less crucial for the government to set hard targets. Since 2011, moreover, the term *guihua* 规划 has unceremoniously replaced the traditional word for ‘plan’ *jihua* 计划. While both translate as planning, the original expression implied the setting of targets (*ji* also means count, compute, number), while the latter indicates the desire to guide (*gui* means regulate) and is used to indicate a more strategic and co-ordinated art of planning (as in urban planning). Yet under either name, the continued, regular recurrence of the five-year plan also reflects the lasting need for a scientific and rational way to govern or control the economy. Today, five-year plans are no longer about setting unachievable grain or steel output targets of the sort that contributed to the Great Leap Forward’s economic waste and led eventually to a nationwide famine. They are, rather, about aspirational targets: ‘innovation’, for example.

As it does with all of its major, central documents, the Party-state has woven a powerful and unequivocal narrative through the pages of this



Long live the Great Leap Forward
Photo: chinese posters.net

latest Plan. The narrative today is of a modern, green, innovative nation where increasingly well-educated young Chinese are going to transform the country from a ‘copycat nation’ into a well-funded and advanced hub for the production of the world’s most important commodity: original ideas. This narrative suggests that China is leaving behind the kind of labour-intensive self-exploitation that produced its first industrial boom. Instead, it is devoting itself to colonising a much more rewarding section of the global economy, where some of its firms are already playing a primary role (for example in e-commerce and wind energy production, where China leads the world). The innovation drive central to the new Plan could, according to McKinsey & Company, contribute up to one quarter of China’s GDP growth between now and 2025. By that time, China may, have ‘evolved from an “innovation sponge”, absorbing and adapting existing technology and knowledge from around the world, into a global innovation leader’.²

What is Planning?

Originally, the State Planning Commission 国家计划委员会 and later the State Development Planning Commission 国家发展和改革委员会 were responsible for drafting the Plan. Since 2003, the new National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) 国家发展和改革委员会 is in charge of drafting the Plan, despite the fact that its name doesn’t even include the word ‘planning’.

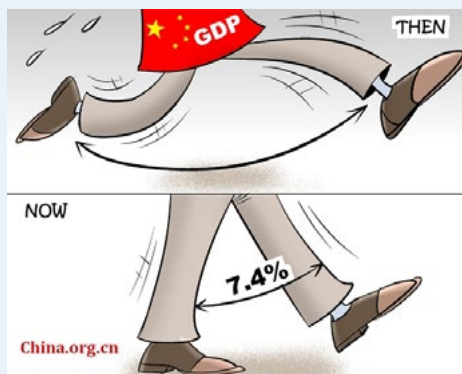


Xu Zhaoshi, incumbent Chairman of the NDRC
Photo: baike.com

The NDRC’s army of researchers typically consults with academics and scientists for two years before drafting the national blueprint. It also

THE THIRTEENTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN, by Lorand Laskai

On 15 March, China's National People's Congress adopted the country's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan 十三五规划纲要. It focuses on innovation, structural reform, environmental protection, and transitioning away from an investment-dependent growth model. Coming at a time of economic restructuring and slowing economic growth, the Plan presents the government's vision for China's 'new normal' 新常态 — which is of China as a world leader in innovation, with a 'modestly prosperous' society 小康社会, and a consumption-driven economy.



China's 'new normal'
Photo: china.org.cn

The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, which covers the period from 2016–2020, sets five major objectives:

1. Technological and informatisation: The Plan sets the most ambitious targets for technological development to date. Innovation takes first place in the Plan and takes up a whopping thirty-eight pages. The Plan lays out nine major initiatives, including 'Sci-Tech Innovation 2030 — Megaprojects' (which prioritises the development of certain technologies like new aviation engines and gas turbines, robotics in the field of manufacturing, and the development of so-called 'advanced materials'),³ 'Made in China 2025' (focusing on upgrading manufacturing technology), and 'Internet Plus' (extending the use of the Internet in industry). Together these projects will attempt to make China a global innovation leader in the fields of smart manufacturing, big data, quantum telecommunications, and robotics. Notably, the Plan marks the return of 'indigenous innovation' 自主创新 (used six times in the Plan), an expression that had been replaced by 'innovation-driven development' 创新驱动发展 in 2012 to assuage fears of foreign businesses that they would be left out of China's innovation drive.⁴ While the Plan has a long list of priority technologies the Chinese government hopes to develop, these are expressed in broad, or vague terms.

2. Environment: Environment-related targets account for half of all mandatory targets. Together, they add up to the boldest outline for environment protection and tackling pollution in a Chinese five-year plan to date. Most notably, the Plan places quotas for cleaning-up waterways (raising the number of waterways suitable for drinking and fishing to seventy percent) and reducing PM2.5 nationwide. The Plan also sets targets for increasing

the share of non-fossil fuel-based energy to fifteen percent of total supply (up from 11.4 percent).

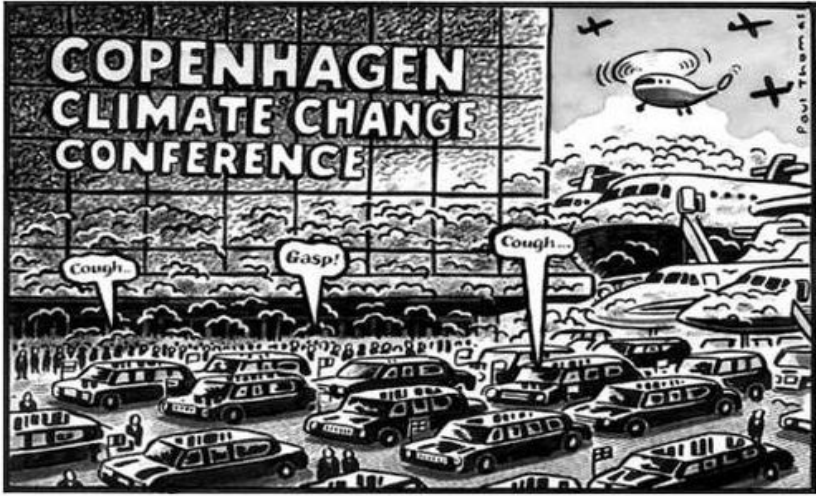
3. A mid-high target for economic growth: Despite rising debt, a slowing economy, and overcapacity in many industries — and early drafts of the Plan that had scrapped growth targets altogether — economic growth remains an important priority, reflected in the Plan's growth target of 6.5 percent. The Plan acknowledges that achieving 6.5 percent growth will require tapping into new engines of growth and efficiency.⁵ It is also the first Plan to include an annual target for labour productivity, which is to increase by 6.6 percent per year.

4. Institutional reform: One way in which the Plan will attempt to unleash greater productivity is through expanding market-oriented reform. This includes reforming interest rates and the securities market in favour of the free market, simplifying regulatory codes, easing access to credit, and so on. Unsurprisingly, the Plan outlines a major push to reform state-owned enterprises (SOEs), a centrepiece of Xi's economic reform as SOE debt and the enterprises' collective burden on the economy spirals out of control. Meaningful reform requires making SOEs more self-sufficient and responsive to market forces. Many experts doubt Beijing will be successful, because of the political complexity of this issue, which relates to longstanding ideological assumptions about the structure of the Chinese economy post-1949.

5. Poverty reduction: One of the few non-environment related mandatory quotas in the Plan is for poverty reduction. Building on the momentum of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan the government intends to raise 55.75 million people out of poverty by 2020. The Chinese government defines rural poverty as living on less than 2,300 renminbi a year (or 6.3 renminbi per day). That is still less than the World's Bank's global poverty standard of US\$1.25 a day.⁶



Air pollution at Tianjin port
Photo: Rich Luhr, Flickr



Copenhagen, 2009: United Nations Climate Change Conference
Image: Paul Thomas

solicits comments from the public, including through a forum on **WeChat**. While the capacity of individual citizens to influence the process is minuscule, the consultation allows the government to gather important information about public attitudes.

Today, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) produce around twenty-five percent of China's GDP. Most of the investment in China's economy comes from independent or semi-independent players and overseas investment, making it dependent on and responsive to market conditions in China and abroad. This raises the question: What is the point of central economic planning? Part of the answer lies in the fact that today, the stress is not on production targets but priorities for state investment. Recent plans have included both compulsory and aspirational targets and suggested ways in which they can be achieved.

The Thirteenth Plan, for example, commits to a greener China, with many of its thirty-three listed objectives relating to environmental protection and controls (see Information Window 'The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan', pp.8–9). The production of energy, which is the subject of a specific sub-plan, commits to a reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by a full forty-eight percent by 2020 from its 2005 figures — higher than the Copenhagen pledge — which would put China at the forefront of moves towards a low-carbon global economy.

Despite the ongoing rise of China's private economy, the state is still in a privileged position to activate economic levers. Not only does it exercise direct control over one quarter of the nation's economic output, but it also has the power to allocate and regulate important assets such as land. The state owns all land in China, and it also exercises significant control over the financial markets through ownership of the four major banks. The remaining SOEs are quasi-monopolistic companies with almost unlimited reach into such crucial sectors as energy, transport, and infrastructure building. It is wrong to think that just because the private economy has outgrown the public sector, the state has lost or abandoned control over the economy.

The state still also directly controls education, and funds most academic and scientific research. Through these means it is increasingly betting on the creation of an ideas- and innovation-based economy. Investment in research and development (R&D) has grown steadily, even if there is not yet a concomitant increase in high-quality patents. A recent article in the journal *Nature*⁷ showed that despite Chinese investment in R&D already reaching two percent of GDP (higher than that of the European Union and behind only the US), only five percent of that investment goes to basic science, compared to experimental and applied research. Also, while the total number of researchers in China surpasses that of the US and is second only to the total of the twenty-eight EU countries, in per capita terms China still has only two researchers per thousand people, versus eight in the US. Its scientific publications, while gaining influence in the last decade, are still under the world average in terms of impact (measured in the frequency of citations of scientific articles in a particular year).



Chinese investment in R&D has reached two percent of GDP
Photo: Cory M. Grenier, Flickr

Since the late 1990s, the government has committed to building 'world-class universities'. Much of the public funding for universities and tertiary-sector research has gone to a small group of elite schools that lobbied the government from the start. The investment paid off: in 2016, three of the best-funded Chinese universities (Tsinghua, Peking, and Fudan) entered the top fifty of the influential QS World University Rankings.

While the latest Five-Year Plan promises universities greater autonomy and internationalisation, it also allows the government to prioritise scientific disciplines or institutions in parts of the country that struggle to produce, retain, and attract academic talent, such as some of the central and western provinces. But a top-down approach to funding has proven less efficient than innovation that comes from the grassroots. The risk remains that where a notoriously inefficient and predatory bureaucratic system is in charge of directing research funding, the money will not go to the most interesting, effective or innovative projects.



Electronic billboard, Tiananmen Square: 'Build a moderately wealthy society for all'

Photo: Henry.LI, Flickr

Insofar as the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan is a narrative, it would be tempting to dismiss it as just another expensive expression of a bankrupt ideology. Yet the Plan allows the CCP to present its role as ruling in the name of rationality and science. The emphasis in the Plan on building a ‘moderately wealthy’ society 小康 — an expression first used by Deng Xiaoping — and its explicit commitment to ‘putting people first’ 以人为本 paints the image of a caring state rather than a powerful and infallible one, more interested in improving living conditions and the economy through rational means than hard targets: it is moving, you could say, from a command economy to an ‘urge’ economy.

The Plan also addresses rising collective anxiety over the state of the environment (now ahead of corruption in the ranking of public concerns). This anxiety affects the decisions of the growing middle classes, upon whose creativity and commitment the innovation economy greatly relies — will they, for example, send their children abroad or can they be persuaded to stay and invest in China’s future? The Plan responds both to a structural demand of the Chinese economy, no longer able to choose between growth and environment, and to the demands for action by Chinese citizens.

By setting the country’s economic growth target at (for post-Mao China) a relatively low 6.5 percent, the Plan signals the state’s understanding that it needs to adopt a more ‘coordinated’ and ‘inclusive’ (both buzzwords of the new Plan) path to growth.

The Best Laid Plans

Economic planning is still about governing the future, but today’s economic plan is telling a very different China story from plans of the past. In the latest Plan, a new ‘scientific’ language emerges to replace that of socialist ideology, with its declining credibility and reach. Whereas the plan for the Great Leap Forward, for example, demanded that China quadruple

industrial and agricultural production so that the country would hasten towards a utopian future of communist abundance, the new Plan tells a more sober, but no less ambitious story of equality, autonomy, modernity, and globalisation, in which the state still plays the key role. Under the new Plan, poverty will be eliminated, the air cleaned, universities globalised, officialdom cleansed of corruption, farmers professionalised, rights respected, health guaranteed, social services improved, transport rationalised, access to education increased, cities expanded and made more liveable, and defence strengthened.

These are all goals that could figure proudly in the programs of both progressive and conservative political parties around the world. Yet they are also goals that require what may well be a painful transformation of China's political process in the direction of genuine accountability, so that the supervisor and the supervised, as well as the polluter and the pollution monitor, are no longer the same entity.

Even if the planned economy is no longer with us, planning in China is here to stay. But its nature is evolving — and the way in which it is changing, as much as its specific content, provide a *once-a-lustrum* insight into the continual reshaping of the China story itself.

TENSIONS FLARE IN TOP LEADERSHIP,

by Matt Schrader

In 2016, previously rumoured tensions between the PRC President and CCP Chairman Xi Jinping 习近平 and Premier Li Keqiang 李克强 burst into the open. This marks perhaps one of the most serious rifts at the top of the Chinese Party-state since Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 replaced Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳 with Jiang Zemin 江泽民 and a cabal of Party elders during the Tiananmen crisis of 1989.

The two leaders have history. Both were mooted as candidates to succeed Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 in the run up to his 2012 retirement. A US diplomatic cable released by Wikileaks⁸ recounts a 2007 conversation between Xi — then in charge of Zhejiang province — and then-US ambassador Clark T. Randt, in which Xi goes out of his way to cast his province's situation in a positive light compared with Henan Province, where Li had only recently been governor. After Xi ascended to the posts of President and CCP Chairman, he quickly consolidated his hold over economic policy — an area that had been the domain of the premier under both Wen Jiabao 温家宝 and Zhu Rongji 朱镕基.

Once in the job, Xi reconfigured high-level power structures to an unprecedented degree. Rumblings that Li and his camp were unhappy with some of the changes popped up sporadically in both Chinese and foreign media before 2016.⁹ Then, on 9 May 2016, a front-page *People's Daily* essay by an 'authoritative person' — widely believed to be top Xi aide Liu He 刘鹤 — directly criticised the credit-heavy economic policies advanced by Li and his team, at length and in detail.

In post-1989 PRC elite politics, in which preserving the appearance of stability and consensus has been paramount, such overt airing of differences would normally constitute an unthinkable breach of protocol. But the Xi-Li feud appeared to escalate over the summer, culminating in Xi's 3 August public defenestration of the once-powerful Communist Youth League (CYL), which entailed both a halving of its budget and less powerful roles for its cadres and eighty-seven million members.

The CYL was also where Li began his political career in 1982, immediately upon graduation from Peking University. He spent the next sixteen years rising through its ranks,¹⁰ leaving the organisation in 1998 when he took up the post of governor of Henan Province. Former president Hu Jintao, his powerful former aide Ling Jihua 令计划 (who fell victim to a corruption investigation after his son's death at the wheel of a Ferrari in a wee-hours crash that also killed two college-age female passengers), and current Vice-President Li Yuanchao 李源潮 also spent large portions of their careers in the CYL. The League's role in cultivating young cadres has meant that its candidates tend to do disproportionately well in intra-Party elections — an important factor in cadre promotion.

Business as usual would see Li confirmed for an additional five-year term as premier at 2017's National Party Congress, and serve until his retirement in 2022. But speculation is rife that Li may be the first premier ousted from the role since Deng Xiaoping saw off Hua Guofeng 华国锋 in 1980. A major Party conclave in October indicated that rules around retirement age might be eased at the 2017 Party Congress, thus paving the way for sixty-nine-year-old Wang Qishan 王岐山, a key Xi ally and head of the formidable Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, to step into Li's role rather than step down into retirement.¹¹



Xi Jinping (L) and Li Keqiang (R)

Photo: zh.wikipedia.org

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THE ENVIRONMENT: CONTROL AND PUNISHMENT

Environmental Disasters

· FOREST ABBOTT-LUM

Iron-fisted Punishments?

· SIODHBHRA PARKIN

Cracking Down on Water Management

· WUQIRILETU

A Glimmer of Hope

· JANE GOLLEY

ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS

Forest Abbot-Lum

AFTER LAST YEAR'S TIANJIN mega-explosion and the Shenzhen landslide, the Chinese government assured an anxious population that it would strengthen environmental regulation and safety measures across the board. Yet China continued to experience a steady string of environmental disasters in 2016.¹

The slew of environmental incidents, which included a coal-fired power plant explosion, chemical fires, factory fires, and the destruction of a residential compound caused by improperly stored explosives, lacked the visibility and media attention of the previous year's major disasters, in large part because they occurred outside major coastal economic hubs, where public scrutiny is greatest. According to data collected by Greenpeace, China averaged twenty-nine

chemical accidents per month from January–September 2016, killing 199 and injuring 400 in total.² Many other incidents go unreported, or the news about them is swiftly censored before they gain attention.

One exception was when students at Changzhou Foreign Language School 常州外国语学校 in Jiangsu began falling sick after moving to a new campus in April. A public investigation ensued into whether the students'



Shenzhen landslide
Source: YouTube



Poisoned soil nearby Changzhou Foreign Language School

Source: news.21cn.com

failing health was connected to the fact that the campus was built on the location of a former chemical factory. **China Central Television (CCTV)** broadcast a report of the allegations, and the financial media group **Caixin** 财新 published a story claiming that toxic waste had been buried in 2010 under the current site of the school. The incident stirred public outrage. While local government and school officials continued to dispute the allegations, the central government responded by opening an official investigation. Chinese environmentalist Ma Jun 马军 compared the public response to the outrage surrounding the Love Canal disaster of 1978 in the US. Love Canal was a residential community in upstate New York that was built on top of 21,000 tons of toxic waste dumped in the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1970s, chemical waste started to leach into the community, causing a public health crisis and one of America's defining environmental tragedies. The Love Canal incident led to the adoption of Superfund, one of the major

US regulations dealing with toxic site cleanups.³

In general, public oversight of such incidents remains minimal. For example, after scores of people died in a building explosion near the city of Yulin in Shaanxi, which was likely caused by the improper storage of explosives, censors swooped in and wiped nearly all coverage of the event from the Internet.⁴ Decades of rapid economic growth combined with a national-local regulatory implementation gap have led to corner-cutting, and issues of poor oversight. Economic development has also turned China into one of the largest producers of petrochemicals in the world, as well as of other volatile chemicals used in the textile, mining, and automotive industries. The improper storage of these substances, often in densely populated urban areas, as well as the sort of budgetary practices that increase the likelihood of accidents, will most likely continue to challenge Chinese regulators in protecting environmental and human health in the years to come.

TIMELINE OF ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS IN 2016

- **12 April, Jingjiang, Jiangsu:** Improperly stored chemicals turned Jiangsu Deqiao Storage Company's warehouse into a fiery inferno that could be seen for miles. Rescue workers at the scene were evacuated before the fire was extinguished, due to strange odours and chest pains. Details on the total number dead or injured have not been published.
- **18 April, Changzhou, Jiangsu:** Scattered cases of student illness swiftly escalated into a school-wide health crisis after students at Changzhou Foreign Language School moved to a new campus, which was built on a former chemical plant. A total of 493 of 641 students were diagnosed with conditions from bronchitis and thyroid abnormalities to lymphoma and leukemia.
- **11 August, Danyang, Hubei:** At least twenty-one people died when a high-pressure steam tube ruptured in a coal-fired power station.
- **24 October, Yulin, Shaanxi:** An explosion ripped through a three-story pre-fab residential building, leaving a crater surrounded by piles of rubble. The explosion killed at least fourteen people and left more than 156 injured. Local government officials quickly blamed the explosion on the illegal storage of explosives, but did not divulge any more details. Authorities from the Municipal Committee vowed to carry out a probe into the safety standards of other facilities in the city and punish those responsible, though further details were not forthcoming.⁵
- **31 October, Jinshangou, Chongqing:** A gas explosion in a privately owned coal mine trapped thirty-three coal miners. All died before rescue workers could reach them.
- **8 October, Lu'an, Anhui:** Fifty workers at the Qinjiaqiao Munitions Factory died after an explosion. Officials refused to comment on the cause.
- **9 October, Zibo, Shandong:** The explosion of an ammonia tank at the Zhoucun Jiazhou Power Company left five dead and at least nine injured.



Explosion in Yulin

Source: YouTube

IRON-FISTED PUNISHMENTS?

Siodhbhra Parkin

IN 2016, the Chinese government struggled to build credibility in its capacity to handle serious environmental issues both at home and abroad. The past two years have seen a flurry of new laws, plans, and agreements passed with great fanfare by the government to address China's severe and growing pollution levels. However, the new enforcement mechanisms established by these policies have lacked immediately discernible impact. Instead, the signing of the Paris Agreement and promulgation of the most environmentally friendly Five-Year Plan notwithstanding, China experienced new, high-profile environmental disasters that clouded an already troubled legacy.

In November 2016, Tianjin courts announced that they would jail forty-



Explosions at Tianjin port, 2015
Source: Eristic, weibo.com

nine individuals in connection with the massive explosions that rocked the city in August 2015 and killed at least 173 people. Managers and employees of the chemical warehouse responsible for the blast were given hefty sentences alongside twenty-five government



Public signs in China reminding people that the environment is everyone's responsibility

Source: Environmental Law Prof Blog

officials accused of accepting bribes and dereliction of duty.

Public fury over the Tianjin disaster, however, appears to have had little impact in preventing similar disasters from occurring; according to government statistics, from January to August 2016, 199 people were killed and an additional 400 injured in chemical accidents. The lessons learned from the Tianjin incident have apparently made for little actual change in China's accident-plagued chemical industry.

This year also saw public fear spread beyond warehouses to somewhere less expected: China's schoolyards. In late April 2016, **CCTV** broadcast a report on the spate of pollution-related illnesses at Changzhou Foreign Languages School in Jiangsu Province, the seriousness of which lo-

cal government agencies tried to deny (see Forum 'Environmental Disasters', pp.21–23). The incident inflamed public opinion and damaged public impressions of the government's efforts to take action. This mistrust was further heightened by reports that school running tracks constructed from industrial waste were causing students across China to suffer nosebleeds, headaches, and coughs. The Ministry of Education subsequently vowed to replace all running tracks at schools in the afflicted areas. Damage to public opinion will prove more difficult to remedy.

Meanwhile, once of the most widely-lauded new mechanisms for remedying a wide array of environmental ills, environmental public interest litigation, saw only modest progress. A year after the passage of

the Environmental Protection Law in 2015, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and public prosecutors have filed nearly one hundred lawsuits. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Information Windows ‘The Rise of Public Interest Litigation’, pp. 82–83, ‘Green Good News’, p.85, and ‘The New Environmental Protection Law, p.188.) In January 2016, the Supreme People’s Court imposed the largest fine ever recorded in a public interest environmental case in China for illegal waste disposal and other actions that harmed the environment. This marked one of the very few public interest environmental cases concluded in 2016, de-

spite the rhetoric that accompanied the initial launch of the new legal mechanism.

Movement in environmental public interest cases remains sluggish in part because of a lack of financial resources. While approximately 700 NGOs are legally qualified under the new law to file such litigation, to pursue these cases is expensive, and underfunding of China’s civil society organisations remains a major hurdle to action. More fundamentally, the government is too skittish about possible civil unrest to give free reign to individuals and organisations that might use litigation more aggressively.

CRACKING DOWN ON WATER MANAGEMENT

Wuqiriletu

ON 11 APRIL 2016, a reporter for the *National Business Daily* 每日经济新闻 named Zhang Wen 张雯 wrote a worrying report titled ‘Ministry of Water Resources thoroughly investigates groundwater resources: eighty percent is not suitable for drinking’. According to statistics published by the Ministry of Land and Resources, more than 400 cities out of 657 nationwide are using groundwater for drinking water. That means seventy percent of the population is drinking groundwater, of which eighty percent is not suitable for drinking.⁶ However, soon after the report’s publication, Chen Mingzhong 陈明忠, Department Head of the Water Resource Division of the Ministry of Water Resources, responded that the reporter

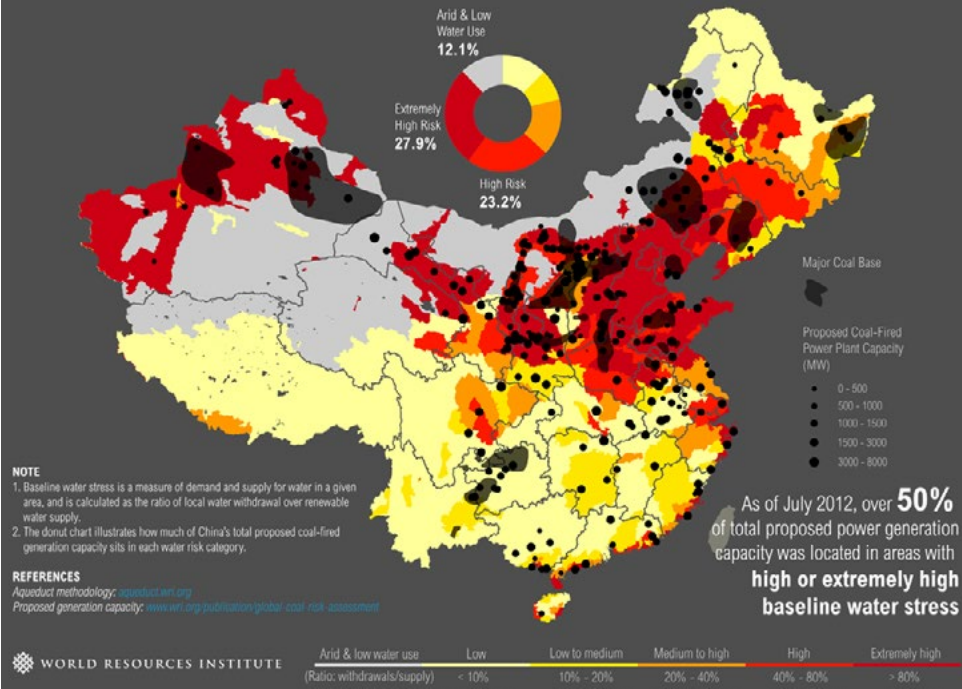
had misread the data. He said that, in fact, people in 1,817 out of 4,748 cities and towns are drinking groundwater with a water quality compliance rate of about eighty-five percent.⁷ One thing is certain, however: China is in a state of ‘water stress’, and one of the difficulties in the search for solutions to this pressing problem is that the available official data is often contradictory.

Figures on water quality in China have been in chaos for a long time. There is a discrepancy between what the media reports and the figures provided by government departments, between data provided by different government departments, and even within the same department. Scholars use the term ‘Nine Dragons Controlling

Organisation of Water Security Information in China

National Institutions	Responsible for data on:
Ministry of Water Resources	Rainfall, runoff, rivers and lakes, water for the agricultural industry, large-scale water conservancy projects
Ministry of Environmental Protection	General environmental information related to water
Bureau of Meteorology	Precipitation
Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Construction	Urban and rural water supply facilities, construction and sewage treatment facilities
Ministry of Agriculture	Irrigation and water conservation construction, water saving, nonpoint source pollution
Ministry of Land and Resources	Groundwater
State Oceanic Administration	Monitoring and evaluation of marine environmental monitoring norms and releasing information on the marine environment

CHINA'S PROPOSED COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS & BASELINE WATER STRESS



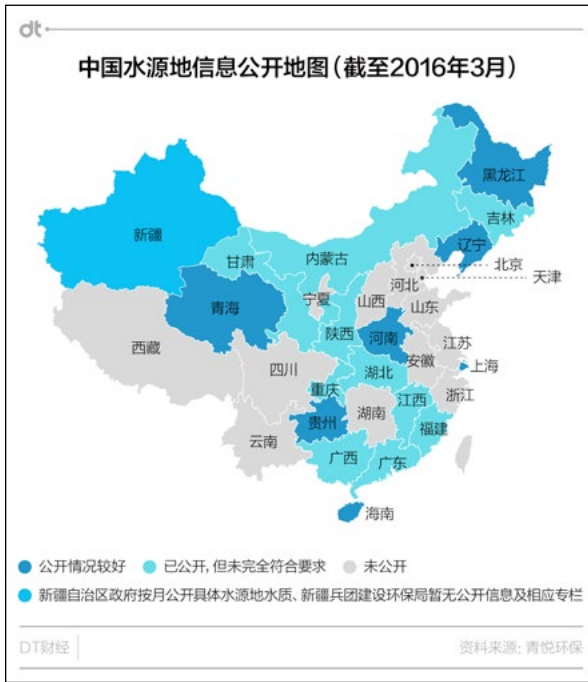
Infographic showing China's water stress
 Source: wri.org

Water’ 九龙治水 to describe China’s current chaotic water safety management system. This refers to the involvement, not always well co-ordinated, of multiple government departments in water management — a major reason for the confusing and conflicting data.

As shown in the table, water security information is fragmented and distributed across government departments, with considerable overlap. Rainfall, for example, is a concern of both the Bureau of Meteorology and the Ministry of Water Resources. These departments tend to be territorial about their data. There is no mecha-

nism to facilitate the sharing of information between or within government departments, and no commitment to share the information fully with the public, which presents problems for both the journalistic and scientific communities, not to mention interested citizens.

The Water Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan 水污染防治行动计划, also known as the Water Ten Plan 水十条, which the State Council released last year, was fully implemented in 2016. An important component of the Water Ten Plan is the requirement to publicise information



Water source quality information disclosure by local governments (the provinces in grey have not disclosed any information)
Source: dtcj.com

on water quality. In January 2016, the Ministry of Environmental Protection issued a notice requiring local governments to disclose the results of their monitoring of water source quality in accordance with the National Centralised Drinking Water Source Quality Monitoring Information Disclosure Program 全国集中式生活饮用水水源地水质监测信息公开方案. The notice mandates the timely disclosure of information, and the use of channels including the websites of the Environmental Protection Department and local environmental monitoring agencies. The notice emphasises the impor-

tance of clearly presenting the data so that the public can understand the situation with their water quality. This is a major change from past practices, and a good starting point for responsible water management. It marks the transition of China's water security information from an exclusive resource of government to one shared with the public. This is something that the media, academics, and ordinary people have looked forward to for years.

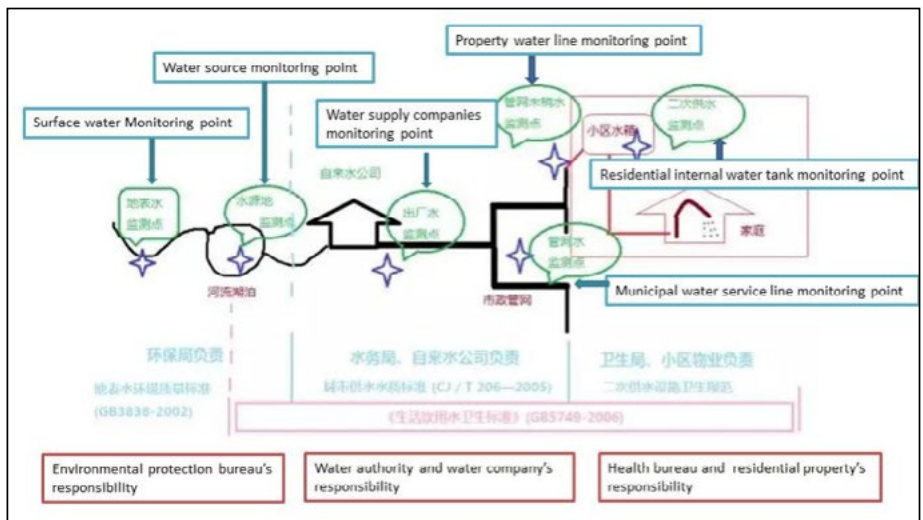
But not all local governments have reacted well to the order from above to share their data. At the end of the first quarter of 2016, the envi-

ronmental NGO Qing Yue Database on Environmental Information 青悦环保信息技术服务中心 reported on the status of information disclosure by local governments. Only fifty-four percent of provincial governments had published data on their official websites. Even where they did publish, they didn't provide all of the required information, such as the number of water sources monitored, monitoring points, monitored items, and monitoring methods. Without all this information, the public cannot fully judge the quality of their drinking water. The other forty-six percent, who have not disclosed any information at all, include the provinces of Sichuan, Anhui, Yun-

nan, Hebei, Shanxi, Ningxia, Jiangsu, Shandong, Zhejiang, and Hunan; the central cities of Tianjin and Beijing, the autonomous region of Tibet, and the Xinjiang Construction and Production Corps.⁸

The Qing Yue Database on Environmental Information is intended to convey to the public information on water quality from the source to the taps. They have been frustrated by the number of departments and enterprises involved, and the low level of information disclosure. They drew the diagram below to illustrate the problem.⁹

An even more serious issue is that, over the years, many local government departments and enterprises



Information on water quality from source to tap
Image: Qing Yue Database on Environmental Information

have deliberately recorded false data. Two years ago, Premier Li Keqiang 李克强 visited the Ministry of Water Resources. He told them that there needed to be a third-party assessment of government data on the safety of drinking water to prevent data fraud. On 1 January 2016, the Ministry of Environmental Protection finally introduced a procedure called the Determination and Treatment of Falsification of Environmental Monitoring Data.

On 14 April, the Xinhua News Agency in Beijing reported that over a twelve-month period, the Environmental Protection Department discovered 2,658 cases of environmental monitoring data fraud.¹⁰ In October, police detained a bureau chief from the Chang'an Branch of Xi'an's Environmental Protection Bureau, as well



Making 'scenery'
Source: Xu Jun, Xinhua

as the chief and a deputy chief of the Chang'an District monitoring station, on suspicion of data monitoring fraud.¹¹ This is the first case of legal sanctions against local government officials for data fraud since the implementation of the new law.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

Jane Golley

IN MY CHAPTER ‘Under the Dome’ in the *China Story Yearbook 2015*, there was plenty of cause for pessimism surrounding China’s quest for low-carbon, green growth. While the news is not all good for 2016 (see Forums ‘Environmental Disasters’, pp.21–23 and ‘Iron-Fisted Punishments’, pp.25–27), there have been some positive environmental outcomes for China and the world as well. Domestically, the release of the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan in March 2016 strengthened China’s commitment to developing a low-carbon green economy (see Chapter 1 ‘What’s the Plan?, pp.xxvi–15). There is ample evidence to suggest that this commitment is real. In May 2016, Greenpeace declared that ‘China’s Thirteenth Five-Year Plan is quite possibly the most important document in the world in

setting the pace of acting on climate change’. Greenpeace further noted that ‘2020 energy targets that would have seemed quite meaningful or even ambitious a few years ago have now become redundant’.¹² Of the many figures they provide to support their positive assessment is the share of coal in China’s total energy mix, which is expected to fall below sixty-three percent in 2016 — a one-percentage-point annual drop since 2010, and only one percentage point above the target of sixty-two percent for 2020.

In early September, China announced its ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change. By 3 October 2016, fifty-five countries, responsible for fifty-five percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, had ratified the agreement, allowing it to come into



Wind farm, Ningxia, China

Source: Land Rover Our Planet, Flickr

effect. China's decision clearly encouraged a large number of other countries to follow suit — as of 5 October 2016, eighty-one countries had signed on. On 4 November 2016, thirty days after the fifty-five-country target was reached, the Paris Agreement entered into force. Despite its lack of binding targets, it is unquestionably a step in the right direction for global environmental change.

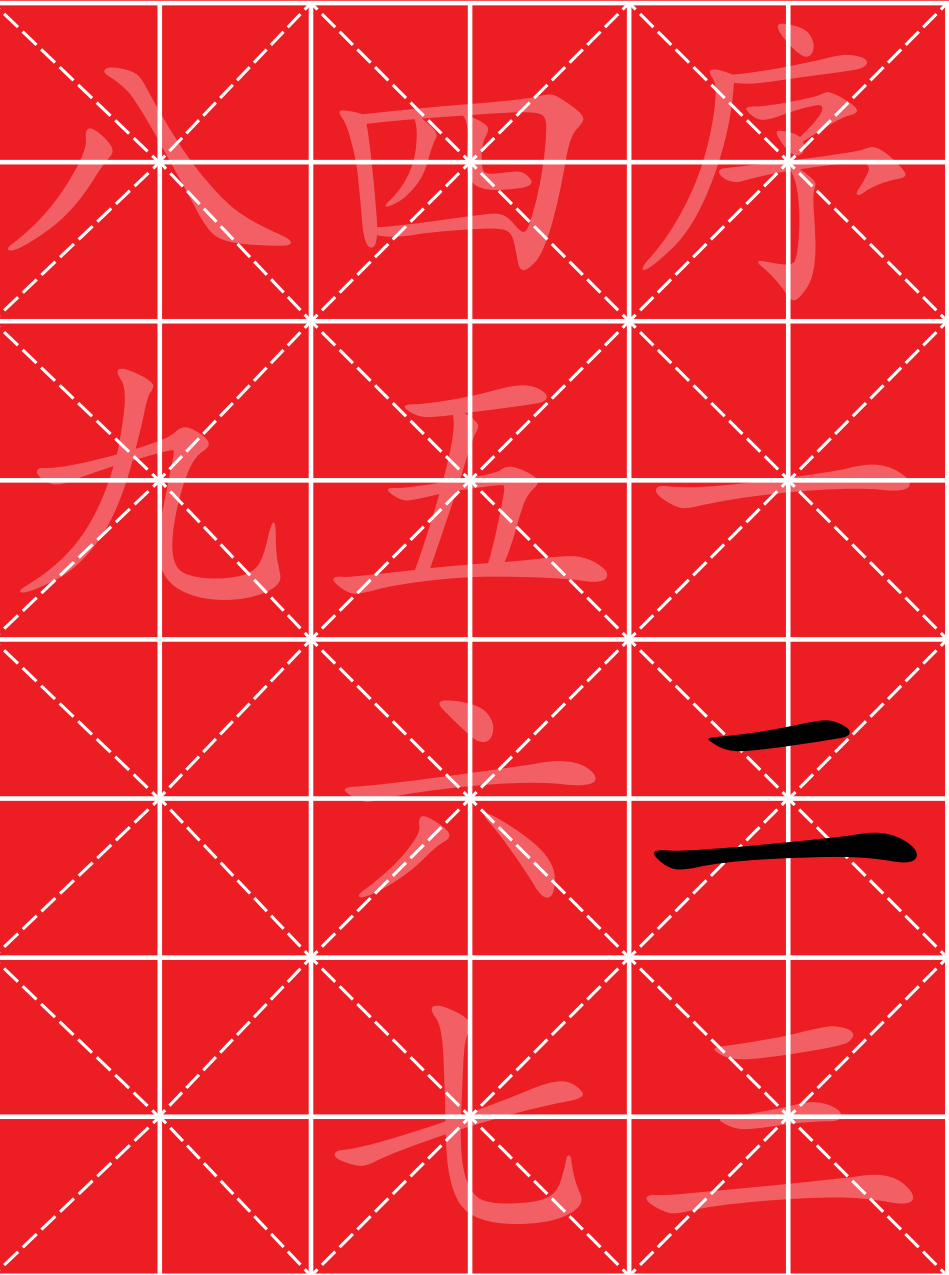
The greatest sign of hope lies in China's advances in renewable energy, what John Mathews described in a recent *Asia-Pacific Journal* article as 'China's continuing renewable energy revolution'.¹³ Building on his previous work with Hao Tan, in which they argued that China has 'overwhelming economic and energy security reasons for opting in favour of renewables, in

addition to the obvious environmental benefits', Mathews musters an impressive array of numbers to show that through 2015, China's electric power system was still 'greening faster than it [was] becoming black' in terms of electric power generation, new generating capacity, and investment. If these trends continue, he argues that China will become 'the world's undisputed renewables superpower' and could well become the world's first 'terawatt renewables powerhouse' by the early 2020s. If — and it is a large if — China can both meet its own ambitious targets and export these trends to its partner countries in the One Belt One Road initiative (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Forum 'One Belt One Road: International Development Finance with Chinese Characteristics',

pp.245–250), and beyond, the international benefits could be tremendous.

China's environmental track record over the past four decades, a period that has been broadly summarised as 'growth at all costs', has been far from perfect. Many people will argue that recent developments are too little too late. Yet the Chinese government's plans, combined with mounting evidence that positive change is occurring on the ground, demonstrate a capacity for and commitment to greening the economy that environmentalists in advanced democratic countries in-

cluding Australia and the US can only dream about. As of December 2016, I'd still place my money on the Chinese government playing a positive role in 'lifting the dome' in the decade ahead, both in China and internationally as well. Given an increasingly environmentally aware public, whose growing demand for greener living is reflected in ever-increasing numbers of environmental protests across the country, the preservation of Party power is at stake, and that's the most powerful incentive of all.



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CONTROL BY LAW

Susan Trevaskes and Elisa Nesossi

Chinese soldier on Tiananmen Square
Source: Luo Shaoyang, Wikimedia Commons



WHEN XI JINPING WAS INSTALLED as leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in late 2012, he began to develop a political platform called ‘governing the nation in accord with the Law’ — *yifa zhiguo* 依法治国. The term *yifa zhiguo* had already entered public discourse under President Jiang Zemin in 1996 and was enshrined into the Constitution in 1999. The Xi leadership has infused it with fresh ideological qualities, creating a more intimate relationship between law and politics than was the case when the phrase first came into use twenty years ago.



Chairman of Everything, Xi Jinping

Photo: Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Flickr

In Xi's *yifa zhiguo* platform, 'reform' and 'party leadership' are promoted and sold as inseparable. In a speech marking the ninety-fifth anniversary of the founding of the CCP, on 1 July 2016, Xi Jinping declared that "reform" and "rule of law" are like the two wings of a bird or two wheels of a vehicle ... The core meaning of governing the nation in accord with the law is that it organically unifies the idea of "upholding the primacy of party leadership" with "making the people the master of the nation".¹¹

Yifa zhiguo is being advanced through various judicial reforms that encourage transparency and help to give judges greater credibility in the eyes of the public. But it is also playing out through a renewed war on human rights lawyers, dissenters and NGOs as well as corrupt officials. Xi's version of *yifa zhiguo* unfolded in the justice realm in both these areas in 2016: reform through 'quality control' and repression through social control.

Holding High the *Yifa Zhiguo* Banner

Xi Jinping's vision for *yifa zhiguo* encourages Chinese citizens not just to respect the law but to actually 'worship the Constitution' 崇拜宪法.² This is different from previous calls by some independent thinkers in China to respect the Constitution, which they take to stand for the rights of the citizen. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 2 'The Fog of Law', pp.64–85.) The Constitution

here stands for the supremacy and centrality of the Party, as its preamble gives the Party authority to lead the nation. Xi wants to place leadership by the Party at the centre of governance in China and he is doing this by promoting 'party rule in accordance with the law' *yifa zhizheng* 依法执政 and *yifa zhiguo* as one and the same thing.

In late 2015, the Party's Propaganda Department 中共中央宣传部 sought to cement the association between the Constitution and *yifa zhiguo* by declaring 4 December to be both 'Constitution Day' 宪法日 and 'Rule of Law Propaganda Day' 法治宣传日. This followed a decision that month by the Ministry of Justice 司法部 to make 'the leadership of the Party over the legal system' the centerpiece of its propaganda work over the following five years. Wu Aiyong 吴爱英, the Minister of Justice, announced at the time that the promotion of *yifa zhiguo* through the justice system aimed 'to integrate legal dissemination and rule of law propaganda work into the Party's overall governance plans', with the central message being that 'the Party leads, the National People's Congress supervises, and the government implements policies'.³



4 December 2015: Zhengzhou commemorates China's second Constitution Day
Photo: Xinhua



Chief Justice Zhou Qiang
Photo: zh.wikipedia.org

‘Rule of law propaganda work’ 法治宣传工作 is a responsibility shared by courts, prosecution agencies, and police. It operates in unison with ‘law dissemination and education activities’ 普法教育活动, which are the remit of the Ministry of Justice and the Party’s Propaganda Department. On 28 April 2016, the National People’s Congress (NPC) endorsed the Seventh Five-Year Legal Law Awareness and Dissemination Campaign 普法教育活动

(2016–2021), confirming that *yifa zhiguo* and the Constitution would be at the centre of the Party’s propaganda work on legal issues for the next five years.

Aiming for ‘Fairness’ and ‘Efficiency’ in Sentencing

Xi’s *yifa zhiguo* agenda signals a change in how crimes are punished within China’s legal system. Since October 2014, judicial authorities have been trialling various ways to optimise the allocation of resources to improve efficiency in the way they handle cases of minor crimes. In September 2016, Supreme People’s Court 最高人民法院 (SPC) Chief Justice Zhou Qiang 周强 announced new pilot programs aimed at dealing with minor crimes with ‘fairness’ 公正 and ‘efficiency’ 效率.⁴

Also in September this year, the NPC formally approved the introduction of plea-bargaining pilot programs in eighteen cities across China.

When the Party abolished the notorious and much-maligned, police-run ‘Re-education Through Labour’ (RETL) 劳教 system in December 2013 (See the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny* for details), it risked lumbering an already overburdened court system with even more cases, most of them relatively minor in nature (for example, petty theft, prostitution, and possession of a small amount of illegal drugs). Plea bargaining is a sensible solution. Just as in countries with common law — for example, the US, England, Wales, and Canada — if a suspect voluntarily confesses to a crime, the prosecutor can recommend a more lenient punishment than would be the case if the suspect pleaded not guilty and the case had gone to trial.

As for more serious crimes, legal experts note an emerging trend of tougher punishments for major drug crimes, including execution, and continued use of the death penalty for homicide cases that are deemed to have had a significant impact on social order. It seems that the regime is beginning to pull back slightly on the more lenient ‘harmonious justice’ agenda of the Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 era (2002–2012) that recognised a greater variety of mitigating circumstances to consider in sentencing.

For instance, in November 2016, the SPC approved the death sentence for the rural worker Jia Jinglong 贾敬龙 found guilty of murdering a local official who had ordered the forced demolition of his family’s home. Jia had been the victim of unlawful intimidation and beatings when a team of unidentified people demolished the house. Local police observed the beatings and filmed the incident but did not step in. In the months following



Jia Jinglong: sentenced to death
Photo: hk01.com

the incident, Jia's petitions for adequate compensation were repeatedly ignored. An online uproar followed the SPC decision, with people arguing that the failures of the system to acknowledge Jia's rights or even give him a hearing had driven him to desperation.

This is a subject that resonates with people in cities and the countryside alike, as forced demolitions have for decades led to frequent conflict and abuse. High-profile Chinese legal experts waded into the debate, arguing that nowadays courts routinely accept a range of mitigating circumstances in deciding the fate of convicted murderers. His case was an obvious example of provocation that not so long ago would have resulted in a 'suspended' death sentence, which would have been converted into a life sentence after two years. Even the conservative *Global Times* argued that Jia should not be executed.⁵ As arguments against the death penalty for Jia reached fever pitch in the days leading up to his execution, the Party shut down the debate. A *People's Daily* editorial warned against online public opinion hijacking the debate, said that citizens should trust the law and their opinions should not contradict those of the authorities.⁶

It did not escape people's notice that Jia Jinglong and other ordinary citizens are rarely afforded the same opportunity for fairness or leniency in sentencing enjoyed by many corrupt officials. Since the anti-corruption campaign began three years ago, over eighty senior officials have been prosecuted but none have received the death penalty for corruption-related crimes, no matter how egregious. For instance, on 17 October, Wei Pengyuan 魏鹏远, the former deputy director of the National Energy Administration, who had embezzled over 200 million yuan from the public purse (they found the amount in cash at his house), was given a suspended death sentence.⁷ Many officials have blown the whistle on colleagues and confessed their own crimes on state television in exchange for a degree of 'fairness' that was out of reach to Jia.⁸



Wei Pengyuan: embezzled more than 200 million yuan
Source: YouTube

Reforming for Quality Control

When Xi Jinping declared in July 2016 that ‘reform’ and ‘rule of law’ are like ‘the two wings of a bird’, he also stressed: ‘It is the Party that must lead all rule of law activities including legislation, law enforcement, administration of justice and law observance’.⁹ By ‘Party’, he was referring to the central leadership with himself at the helm. Judicial power is thus shifting away from local courts and back into the hands of top judicial authorities in Beijing (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 2 ‘The Fog of Law’, pp.64–85). The centre can control the reform agenda more effectively if it limits the power of local political and judicial authorities to act independently. This is part of an effort at ‘quality control’ of lower level political and legal authorities to prevent further erosion of faith in the Party due to corruption and other failures of the system at the local level.



Shen Deyong: 'placing the trial at the centre'
Photo: china.org.cn

Since 2015, a new politico-legal catchphrase has emerged: 'placing the trial at the centre' 一审判为中心. According to SPC Deputy President Shen Deyong 沈德咏, this is intended to break the long-standing custom of 'investigation-centered-thinking' 以侦查为中心 in favour of the rigorous testing of evidence through the trial process.¹⁰ On 10 October 2016, the SPC, the Supreme People's Procuratorate 最高人民检察院, the Ministry of Public Security 公安部, the Ministry of State Security 国家安全部, and the Ministry of Justice issued a Joint Opinion summarising the importance of developing a trial-centred litigation system.¹¹ This aims to shift local functionaries' mindsets about the value of a court trial, and stresses the importance of collecting a greater variety of evidence that can be tested through cross-examination in the courtroom. These reforms are intended to 'standardise' 规范化 judicial practice across China and to prevent the kind of miscarriages of justice that were common when the focus was on the investigation itself. The goals of the reforms include:

- ensuring that evidence is untainted
- encouraging witnesses to testify in court, thus testing their evidence through cross-examination
- emphasising that the burden of proof lies with the prosecution
- giving defendants access to a lawyer and giving lawyers access to defendants' case files
- understanding that the standard of proof requires excluding reasonable doubt
- ensuring that only lawfully obtained evidence can be presented at trial
- improving the legal aid system.

The standardisation of judicial decision-making aims to bring a more unified approach to justice in China, so that ‘similar judgments are made for similar cases’ 同案同判 across the nation. One of the most successful attempts in 2016 to improve oversight mechanisms and transparency and to standardise judicial practice has been to develop online access to trials and live coverage of selected trials. The SPC is now promoting the discriminate use of cameras in Chinese courts, including in its own courtrooms in Beijing.¹² As Susan Finder reported on her influential blog Supreme People’s Court Monitor in July, provincial courts across the country are now uploading many of their cases to the Internet. Cameras and live streaming are a key component of the SPC’s ‘smart courts’ program, which itself is part of a larger e-services initiative that includes online case registration and online petitions.¹³ The latter refers to official complaints that citizens lodge against local government or court rulings.

Live streaming of (hand-picked) court cases has the additional advantage of helping lawyers, prosecutors, and judges in less-developed



Live streaming of a Chinese court hearing

Source: supremepeoplescourtmonitor.com



The State Council Information Office issued its first White Paper on human rights
Photo: Liu Jian

areas understand how to cross-examine witnesses in court and to learn about other ‘trial-centred’ processes. The SPC estimates that by 2018, around 3,500 courts will participate in the live streaming of over one million cases.¹⁴

China has approximately 200,000 judges. In 2016, they heard over seventeen million cases and their workload has been increasing.¹⁵ As part of the overall *yifa zhiguo* reform package, SPC authorities in Beijing are also removing many legal staff in local courts who hold the title of ‘judge’ but in reality only perform bureaucratic tasks, thus further overburdening remaining staff. Beijing authorities’ repeated promises to improve work conditions for the judiciary have not been enough to stop the haemorrhaging of judges from the system in recent years. According to one report, over one thousand judges have recently resigned, citing the burden of their caseloads, insufficient remuneration, lack of community respect for the profession, and lack of promotion opportunities as their main reasons.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the problem of a decreasing number of judges, this suite of reforms is part of a larger parcel of initiatives aimed at bolstering the credibility of the judicial system in the eyes of the public through increasing the perception that it is fair and efficient. This would have the additional but not incidental benefit of encouraging those with civil and economic complaints to make the courtroom, not the streets, the site of dispute resolution, thereby allowing the state to better control petitioning, dissent, and discord.

On 12 September 2016, the State Council Information Office 国务院新闻办公室 issued its first-ever White Paper on the subject of the judicial protection of human rights. Since they were first issued in 1991, China's yearly White Papers, which are primarily aimed at a foreign audience, have consisted of general descriptions of China's progress in economic, social, and cultural rights. For the first time, the 2016 White Paper created a direct and explicit link between human rights achievements and judicial guarantees, implicitly linking judicial reform with state legitimacy. It emphasises how the judiciary is being strengthened to provide human rights protections: 'the judiciary is the last line of defence to safeguard social fairness and justice, and judicial protection of human rights is an important part of human rights progress in a country ... Strengthening judicial protection of human rights will continue to be a major task in implementing the rule of law.' It is also remarkable that the White Paper devotes an entire section to the 'Legitimate Rights and Interests of Detainees', a sensitive topic not central to political priorities.¹⁷ Specifically, it urges more effective supervision over prisons and detention centres to increase the transparency of law enforcement in this area and prevent illegal interrogation and forced confessions. The White Paper also promotes the standardisation of practices regarding sentencing, commuting, parole, and the establishment of an open national freedom of information network.

Controlling Dissent Through Law

As constructive as these new developments may be, they do not signal a tectonic shift in the culture of China's justice system, given the stress put on the Party's role. Improvements and reforms sit alongside a set-in-stone politico-legal culture that relies on the supremacy of the Party and the maintenance of social and political stability. As in the past, the Party-state is using its politico-legal organs to fight against what the Party identifies as major threats to the nation, including corruption, crime, and dissent.



Gou Hongguo: the crackdown continues
Photo: china.org.cn

In 2015, (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 2 ‘The Fog of Law’, pp.64–85) we reported on the plight of Chinese human rights

lawyers who were taken into custody or ‘disappeared’ at the hands of the authorities in July and August that year. This large-scale action against lawyers, legal staff, and rights advocates seeing some arrested on charges of ‘picking quarrels and provoking troubles’ and ‘inciting subversion of state power’ is now known among international observers as the ‘709 Incident’, 709 referring to 9 July 2015, when the Party first launched the repressive crackdown. One year later, eight of the lawyers, their assistants and other activists associated with them were still detained pending trial. Six were sentenced at first trial and twenty-six have been released on bail.¹⁸ Within one week in August 2016, four of the detained lawyers and human rights activists appeared in televised trials confessing to their crimes and denouncing themselves as instruments of anti-Communist Western forces.¹⁹ A municipal court in Tianjin Second People’s Intermediate Court sentenced lawyer Zhou Shifeng 周世锋 to seven years’ imprisonment for subversion of state power, activist Hu Shigen 胡石根 to seven and a half years, activist Zhai Yanmin 翟岩民 to a suspended three-year prison term, and activist Gou Hongguo 勾洪国 to a three-year suspended sentence. Chinese domestic media gave their trials an unprecedented amount of publicity.²⁰ Convicting lawyers and activists for subversion and giving their trials such wide publicity is unprecedented. It may indicate the desire of the government to delegitimise the lawyers’ defence of their clients’ rights, in some cases, by smearing them with the charge of being under foreign influence. Presumably, this is to warn those who would use the courts to fight for their rights or those of their clients against the interests of the state that they will be considered to have done so for political purposes — and that there are grave risks to such actions.²¹

Foreign Influence on Trial



Still from five-minute video: 'If you want to change China, you need to step over our dead bodies first'

Source: YouTube

The subject of foreign influence is a very sensitive one. Over a few days at the end of July and the beginning of August, more than ten state-owned media outlets within China, including the micro-blogging networks of the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Communist Youth League, ran a video accusing the US of providing support to human rights lawyers as well as separatist movements in Tibet, Xinjiang, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The five-minute video, titled 'If you want to change China, you need to step over our dead bodies first',²² depicted the US sowing dissension and internal unrest in Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and the like, promoting the theory that it has similar intentions in China. While Chinese media has previously accused the US and other Western powers of providing aid to China's NGOs and civil society groups, this was the first time that a direct line had been drawn between China's human rights lawyers and the US government. Praising the verdicts against the four legal rights advocates, a 6 August commentary in the *People's Daily* referred to the Chinese Constitution: 'Our nation's Constitution points out in a clear-cut manner, that, "The Chinese people must carry out the struggle against domestic and foreign hostile forces and hostile elements that antagonise and damage our country's socialist system".' This 'aggressive discourse' — as China Media

Project director Qian Gang 钱钢 defines it — is a strong reminder of the way that language was used in the Maoist era at times of real or perceived vulnerability for the CCP.²³

Opposition toward perceived Western interference in Chinese affairs is also manifest in the Law on the Management of Foreign NGOs' Activities 境外非政府组织境内活动管理法 within mainland China, which the Chinese legislature passed on 28 April 2016 (and which came in force on 1 January 2017). Two previous drafts of the law had been introduced in December 2014 and in May 2015 (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 2 'The Fog of Law', pp.64–85). The law includes a number of provisions that are extremely vague and is thus — from the perspective of foreign scholars, NGOs, and civil society advocates — dangerously open to interpretation by the Chinese authorities, which may use them to criminalise a wide range of activities that they may deem politically sensitive. A particularly problematic aspect of the law is that it places foreign NGOs under the control of public security organs rather than the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which had previously been responsible for all Chinese NGOs. (See Forum 'Meet the State Security: Labour Activists and their Controllers', pp.65–72.) The law, which emphasises national security, assumes that foreign NGOs potentially threaten both security and social stability.









Control over civil society is of paramount importance to the Party under Xi. On 21 August, the **Party Central** and the State Council issued an 'Opinion on Domestic Civil Society Organisations' to accompany the Charity Law issued on 31 August, which allows for direct registration of certain types of civil society organisations without the need for an official sponsoring organisation as required in the past. The Opinion also stresses the importance of the Party's control over civil society organisations and their founders, who will be requested to undergo 'political education'. It also emphasises the need to 'strengthen and standardise' the international contacts of domestic civil society groups.

Conclusion

Xi Jinping's *yifa zhiguo* platform reframes reforms of the justice system to correspond with the Party's broader goals to: strengthen political control over legal matters, re-centralise power, standardise decision-making, and bolster credibility. The Party's interpretation of 'rule of law' is highly legalist. It works against those individuals in society who interpret values such as fairness and justice differently from the Party. We see a repressive legalism on display in the way that the Xi leadership is crushing rights lawyers and interpreting their pleas for justice as political subversion. At the same time, we are also witnessing impressive attempts to reform the justice system and make it both fairer and more efficient.

This reform–repression dualism as expressed by *yifa zhiguo* presents itself as an alternative to the dominant international understanding of the rule of law. Through *yifa zhiguo*, the Party is doing nothing less than creating its own distinct interpretation of 'justice' and 'rule of law' as 'core socialist values'.





KEY	
Obscenity	色
Violence	
Superstition & Religion	
Corruption	¥
Public Safety	
Politics	
Science & Technology	
Tibet	
Environment & Health	
Other	


2015

September


Two concerts: Bon Jovi in Shanghai and Beijing 卐

Twenty-two Muslim names in Xinjiang  



October



Ivory imports from trophy hunting  ¥ +



Golf club memberships for Communist Party Members ¥ 

The American gothic horror film *Crimson Peak* 



November

Twelve-thousand 'sensitive words' from the domain name registry .xyz  


Hundreds of third-party apps on TV streaming boxes  色 

Dozens of synthetic recreational drugs   +

One beauty pageant contestant:


Canada's Miss World  


December

One academic monograph: Qin Hui's 秦晖 *Moving Away from the Imperial Regime* 走出帝制 

One-ride hailing service (Uber) on


WeChat ¥


Cars in Beijing for one day  +



Hiring third parties to author scientific articles 

2016

January


Six online TV shows: *Go Princess Go* 太子妃升职记 色 *The Lost Tomb* 盗墓笔记 

Evil Minds 心理罪  *Wu Xin the Monster Killer* 无心法师  *Death Notify*

暗黑者  *Blind Spot* 探灵档案 

One movie: *Deadpool* 色

February

'Bizarre architecture', forbidden by new State Council urban planning guidelines that follow up on Xi Jinping's 2014 remarks: 'No more making bizarre buildings' 不要搞奇奇怪怪的建筑 

Foreign-owned media publishing online from within China  ¥ 

March

One online TV show: *Addicted* 上瘾 for its depictions of homosexuality, extramarital affairs, one night stands, underage relationships, smoking,

drinking, adultery, sexually suggestive clothing, and reincarnation 色 太极 灯笼

April

All iTunes Movies and iBooks 色 镰锤
Discussion of the Panama Papers on the Internet and TV 丫 镰锤
Children on reality TV 灯笼
One holiday: April Fools Day 灯笼

May

Live streams of women eating bananas, or wearing stockings and suspenders 色 齿轮
One Xinhua Op-Ed, for sexism: 'Tsai Ing-wen's Extremist Political Style May Be Due to Singlehood' 镰锤

June

One popstar: Lady Gaga 卐
One topic on the Internet and TV: the probity of relatives of former Politburo member and security chief Zhou Yongkang, who was convicted for bribery, abuse of power, and the intentional disclosure of state secrets in 2015 丫 镰锤

July

Production and sale of food made from state-protected wild animals 灯笼 丫 十
One American pop rock band: Maroon 5 卐
One American movie: *Ghostbusters* 太极
(though some reports suggest it wasn't banned — the distributors didn't think it would do that well as Chinese audiences hadn't seen the earlier versions)
One British singer and actor, presumably for her human rights activism: Jane Birkin 镰锤
Betting on celebrity breakups and US elections on Taobao 丫 镰锤
Pokémon GO 齿轮
Self-driving cars 齿轮

August

Two concerts: Selena Gomez in Shanghai and Guangzhou 卐
Partial ban on K-pop idol concerts in response to the deployment of the US-developed THAAD missile system in South Korea 镰锤 齿轮 色

Hoverboards and Segways on public roads in Beijing and Shanghai 齿轮

September

The Galaxy 7 phone on flights including in check-in baggage 齿轮 三角
Incandescent bulbs 齿轮 十
Two topics online: Xi Jinping G20 speech gaffe (see Chapter 4 'The Language of Discipline', pp.123–127) and live streams of the US presidential debate 镰锤 齿轮
Surfing in Shenzhen 灯笼
Religious profiteering 太极 丫

October

Reposting of Caixin's online support for lawyers 镰锤
Total ban on K-pop idols (see August) 镰锤 色
Online gaming after midnight (proposed) 灯笼 齿轮

November

Forcing minors to participate in religious (Islamic) activities in Xinjiang 太极 镰锤
Hong Kong pop star Denise Ho from online music sites for pro-independence views 镰锤
Proposed extension of the smoking ban to public spaces 十

December

Growing, processing, and selling GMO crops for the next five years 三角 十
Live streaming of unapproved games 色 刀 齿轮
Sick chicks (poultry from additional bird flu-affected countries) 三角 十
Ivory trade and processing (by the end of 2017) 十
Christmas (celebrations by protestant house churches in Zhejiang) 太极 镰锤
K-drama *Hwarang* (part of the ongoing ban on South Korean popular culture) 镰锤
Taiwanese filmmaker Wu Nien-jen, pop musicians Bobby Chen, Dwagie, and Vivian Hsu, and hardcore bands Chthonic and King Lychee (ban likely to have been put in place for some time) 色 镰锤

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DISSENT

Meet the State Security: Labour Activists and
their Controllers

· IVAN FRANCESCHINI

MEET THE STATE SECURITY: LABOUR ACTIVISTS AND THEIR CONTROLLERS

Ivan Franceschini

O'Brien was a person who could be talked to. Perhaps one did not want to be loved so much as to be understood. O'Brien had tortured him to the edge of lunacy, and in a little while, it was certain, he would send him to his death. It made no difference. In some sense that went deeper than friendship, they were intimates: somewhere or other, although the actual words might never be spoken, there was a place where they could meet and talk.

— George Orwell, 1984

The year 2016 was very difficult for labour rights in China. In order to support investments during a serious economic slowdown, local authorities in several areas froze minimum

wages and reduced the percentages of social security contributions shouldered by companies. At the same time, officials in the highest echelons of the Party-state repeatedly criticised the existing labour legislation, in particular the 2008 Labour Contract Law 劳动合同法, for harming the flexibility of the labour market and constraining productivity. All of this has translated into increased control over those Chinese labour activists who try to promote the cause of workers' rights, as well as the foreign donors who support their activities. This has been achieved through several state bodies, including the State Security *guobao* 国保 — a secretive branch of the Public Security apparatus charged with protecting the country from domestic political threats.



A candid shot of one of China's mysterious *guobao*
Photo: Jianqing Peng, Flickr

At my first meeting with an agent of the State Security in December 2010, I had gone to the office of a little-known labour NGO in the suburbs of Shenzhen to interview some activists. When I arrived, I found a plump, bespectacled guy of around forty waiting for me. Nobody thought about introducing him and he definitely did not make an effort to make himself familiar: for me, he was only ‘Mister Wang’. Sitting in silence in a corner, he wrote down on a notebook everything I was saying.

He was a very destabilising presence. Not only did I not know what I should say and what I should avoid, but I was also worried about the trouble I might be causing for my hosts. Besides, I wondered, why did he not

use a recorder? Writing down by hand all that was said was indeed a strenuous job and, perhaps as a reward for his effort, he thought it fitting to invite himself to the restaurant for a post-interview lunch — at my expense.

My second brush with the State Security came some time later and it was much more worrying. While I was back in Italy for a few weeks, some *guobao* officials tracked down one of my former collaborators and interrogated him at length about my activities and whereabouts. I heard much later that they were particularly interested in how I spent money: did I often rent expensive cars? Did I throw money around? He protested that I was so stingy that I always insisted on taking a bus, even when doing interviews in some faraway suburb — which was true — and the matter seemed to rest there.

Being a foreigner, I had little reason to fear the consequences of these encounters: at worst, they would deny me a visa or expel me from the country. But what about those Chinese labour activists who have to deal with the security forces of the Chinese state on a regular basis? How do they manage?

Sticks

As with other civil society activists, invitations to ‘have a cup of tea’ 喝茶 with State Security officials are one of the most common occurrences in the life of a Chinese labour activist. The frequency of these summonses depends on the political circumstances. It usually intensifies around the time of politically-sensitive meetings (such as the annual National People’s Congress in March every year); anniversaries (including both official ones, such as the foundation of the Communist Party and unofficial ones, such as 4 June); or major international events hosted in China. The frequency declines in more ordinary times, down to one meeting every several months.

These encounters generally do not entail physical violence. They serve a twofold purpose. On the one hand, officials seek information about the activities of labour NGOs: recent contacts with foreigners and any new sources of funding, for example. On the other, they use the meetings to warn, inform or remind activists about boundaries they must not cross if they want to avoid severe repercussions. From this point of view, these gatherings can be considered mutually ben-

eficial: the Party-state gets to remind labour activists that they are under surveillance, while activists benefit from a direct line to the authorities and are able to avoid unnecessary risks if their activities are too close to the limits of what is allowed. One labour activist in East China told me that when he set up his organisation ‘[the people from the State Security] came to me several times. First, they established a baseline and a framework, warning me to stay within these boundaries. They said that if I did that, all would be good, that I would even be helping the government and the country. If, on the contrary, I crossed that line, for instance by telling foreigners some things that I shouldn’t say about our country or our government ... that would have meant real trouble.’



Have a cup of tea
Photo: Matthew Wild, Flickr

**Zeng Feiyang**

Photo: Trong Khiem Nguyen, Flickr

Still, the messages relayed by the authorities are not always reliable. For instance, in 2015, a labour activist in a metropolis in South China decided to test the claim of the *guobao* that his activities would be tolerated so long as he did not accept any foreign funding. This is what he found out: '[They] had told me that we could work on protecting the rights of workers and that we could organise training on collective bargaining, but that we could not receive funding from abroad. They said that foreigners have a different way of thinking, that if they say something, they actually mean something else, and that they could easily manipulate me They said that if we didn't take any funding from abroad our situation would be better, that they would stop harassing me. I decided that this year [2015] I would try and see whether they were serious. In January, I sus-

ended this project [supported with foreign funding], but in these first six months I have already been forced to move [office] three times.' In light of this, he decided to resume his cooperation with foreign donors.

Whatever assurances the State Security might provide in individual meetings, these encounters do not always go smoothly, as the highest echelons of the Party-state tend to consider labour NGOs as covert agents of 'hostile foreign forces' eager to wreak havoc in China. Although largely pre-dating the latest change of leadership, this narrative has gained much more currency since Xi Jinping came to power. According to one activist whom I interviewed back in 2014 in a second-tier city in Guangdong province: 'After President Xi came to power, the management and control of NGOs has become increasingly strict.

Recently, people from Public Security came to meet with us. They asked what our political standpoint was and said that all the “coloured revolutions” abroad were instigated by NGOs and then they asked our opinion about it. I replied that we don’t pay too much attention to this [sort of thing].’

Mounting Pressures

Agents from State Security may also resort to psychological intimidation and other tactics to persuade labour activists to cease their work. In the past few years, *guobao* officials have repeatedly pressured landlords to evict NGOs from their premises. They have also liaised with other branches of the Party-state — such as those in charge of family planning, tax or social security bureaus, as well as universities, etc. — to harass the activists and their families. They have even intervened behind the scenes to freeze bank accounts or prevent people from leaving the country. As an activist in southern China told me in November 2014: ‘In the past, they didn’t provoke us, nor did we provoke them. Basically, what we had back then could not even be called repression. Usually, they just knew about the existence of our organisation and there were often peo-

ple from the government who came to talk with us But these last few years have been quite different, they have started to harass us directly.’

While life for Chinese labour activists has never been easy, 2016 has been a real *annus horribilis* for them. The latest wave of repression started in December 2015, when Chinese authorities rounded up dozens of labour activists in Guangdong and then charged five of them for ‘gathering a crowd to disrupt public order’ and ‘embezzlement’. This coincided with a systematic harassment of Chinese civil society, with the closure of many NGOs working on social issues, and the arrest or outright disappearance of several public interest lawyers. On that occasion, the Party-state targeted Zeng Feiyang 曾飞洋 — leader of a pioneering labour NGO in Guangzhou — in an unprecedented smear campaign. A series of devastating reports accused Zeng of embezzling funding illegally obtained from foreigners and of acting out of personal greed, without any regard for the interests of the workers. To further destroy his credibility, he was also accused of several instances of sexual misconduct.¹

Zeng pleaded guilty and was sentenced to three years in prison — sus-



Meng Han: twenty-one month sentence
Source: Twitter

pended for four years — for ‘gathering a crowd to disrupt public order’, while two of his colleagues received prison sentences of eighteen months — suspended for two years — for the same crime. Meng Han 孟晗, another activist in the same organisation, refused to co-operate. Only after repeated harassment of his parents did he finally capitulate and plead guilty, and was sentenced to twenty-one months in jail. Zeng’s admission of guilt at the trial was quoted in full by the Chinese media: ‘I apologise for the losses that my criminal actions have caused to companies, society, and workers, and I express deep sorrow for the enormous wounds that I have inflicted on my family. I hope that everybody will take me as a warning and that they will not be fooled by any foreign organisation,

[keeping in mind] that they must resort to legal means and channels to protect their rights and interests.’²

Carrots

The relationship between labour activists and their controllers is not always so thorny. I recall my surprise when, about five years ago, an activist I used to know quite well told me that while he was recovering from surgery, the State Security official in charge of him had visited him in the hospital. Wishing him a speedy recovery, the *guobao* had brought him flowers and they had engaged in amiable conversation. The activist explained that, since this official had been his ‘supervisor’ for quite some time, they had become almost friends, regularly exchanging greetings and wishes on all major Chinese festivals.

Such ambiguous feelings are not surprising considering that some activists are supervised by the same officials for years. The relationship may also offer some perks. As one activist in southern China recently told me: ‘We can say that they are old acquaintances... . On the surface they are friendly, but in fact we don’t really know what they think about us, we just tell

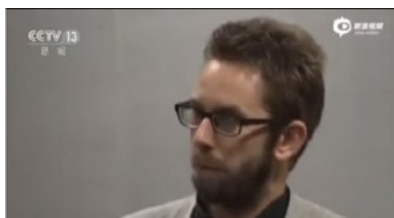
them what we have to Sometimes they also offer us some gifts [such as shopping coupons], which obviously we don't accept But it seems that in recent years they have become poorer, they don't have as much money as before.'

In some cases, less scrupulous activists have exploited their connections to the State Security as leverage in their relationship with foreign donors. In 2009 and 2010, I was working as a manager on a project in partnership with a local labour NGO that turned out to be quite notorious for its record of fake activities and inflated invoices. When I refused to reimburse an obviously dodgy expenditure, the leader of the NGO hinted that he would say something rather unpleasant about me in his next meeting with the authorities. On another occasion, someone who had been fired from the same organisation decided to seek compensation directly from the foreign donor,

threatening to talk with his 'friends' in the security apparatus if he did not get what he wanted.

What Next?

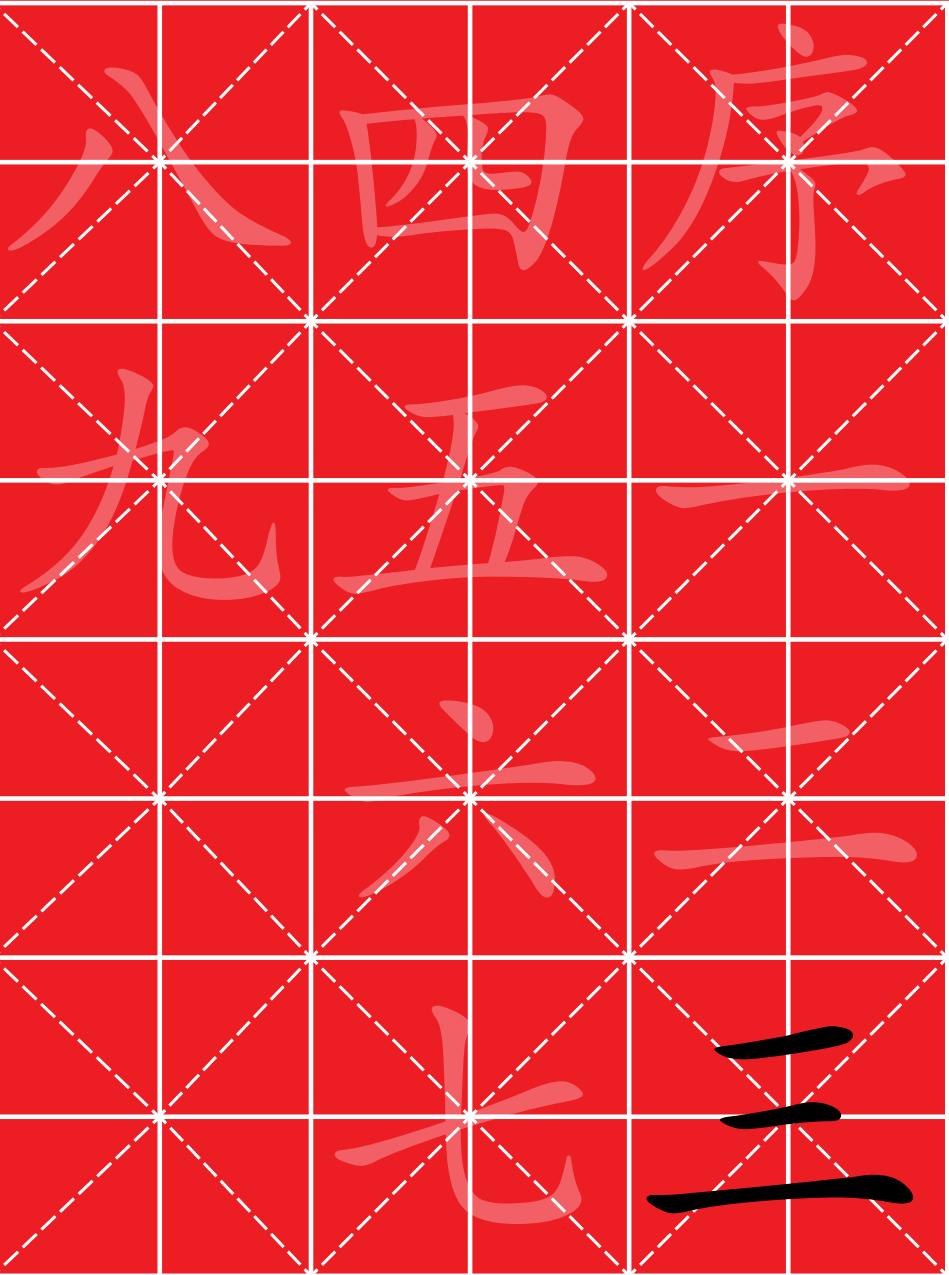
Control over NGOs is increasing, as is repression, and this extends to foreigners who are involved with them. In the past couple of years, a few expats in China with ties to foreign and local NGOs have been detained, with one of them — Peter Dahlin, a Swedish citizen — even being paraded on national television in early 2016, confessing to inciting 'opposition to the government.' But it is Chinese activists who bear the brunt of the Party-state's ire. Labour activists, as well as human rights lawyers, are among those most at risk in the current political climate. Even more worrying than brutal repression is the recent adoption of a whole series of new laws and regulations aimed at bringing civil society under control. Most notably among these is the new Law on the Management of Foreign NGOs' Activities 境外非政府组织境内活动管理法, effective from 1 January 2017, which will basically cut off any access to financial support from abroad for NGOs active in sensitive fields such as labour or human rights.



Peter Dahlin during his televised confession
Source: YouTube

Almost all the labour activists that I have encountered in the past few months say that they are willing to keep up the fight, undeterred. At the same time, however, they cannot help but wonder how they will be able to survive as their sources of financial support quickly dry up and even finding enough money to pay their staff or the office rent becomes increasingly problematic. A few months ago, for the first time in many years of regular

encounters with labour activists, I was asked by the leader of a once-prominent NGO, now in serious financial constraints, to help by sending some funding — ‘really, any amount counts’ — to an account opened under the name of one of his friends. If this is going to be the ‘new normal’ during Xi Jinping’s tenure, then activists might start reminiscing about the golden age when the most that State Security did was to invite you for a cup of tea.



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POPULATION AND THE ECONOMY: THE UPS AND DOWNS OF ONE AND TWO Jane Golley

Family time at Beihai Park, Beijing
Source: Daniel Case, Wikimedia



ON 1 JANUARY 2016, the Chinese government formally abolished the One-Child Policy, replacing it with a Two-Child Policy. This decision ended three and a half decades of the strictest form of population control the world has ever seen. It did not end population control altogether.

Many commentators were quick to denounce the new policy as ‘too little too late’. They emphasised the enormous costs of the One-Child Policy, including rapid ageing of the population, rising gender imbalances, and the emotional, physical, and material costs borne by all of the people who (willingly or unwillingly) complied with the rules, and all those who didn’t.¹ They further criticised the Chinese government for its insistence on remaining in control, rather than letting go, of family planning altogether and giving Chinese couples the full freedom to determine their own family size.

Meanwhile, the official Chinese line immediately stressed the (mainly economic) benefits that the new Two-Child Policy would bring. According to the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC), these include a predicted addition of more than thirty million people to China's labour force by 2050, and an annual increase in the rate of GDP growth of 0.5 percentage points.² Chinese newspaper articles throughout 2016 covered a variety of topics from the need for better childcare and early education systems, to the dangers of having babies in 'advanced maternal age' 高龄产妇, the surge in demand for 'postnatal attendants' 月嫂, and the expected boom that more Chinese babies would bring to the Spanish dairy industry. (See Information Window 'In the News' on the facing page.) On the various costs attributed to the One-Child Policy by others, state media (not surprisingly) had very little to say.

The links between population growth and economic performance are complex and contentious, and nowhere more so than in China. This chapter explores some of these links through the eyes of an economist, in the context of the possibility that Chinese people will respond to the Two-Child Policy by actually having two babies now that they are allowed to. Another possibility — and a more likely one, according to a string of demographic research on the topic — suggests an alternative future in which China falls into a 'low-fertility trap', consistent with other countries in the region, including Japan and Korea.³ A question in the background of what follows is: would such a 'trap' really be a bad thing?

It is worth noting that the strict One-Child Policy only applied in urban areas for most of its duration (with a nationwide relaxation in 2013 allowing urban couples to have two if either of the couple was an only child themselves). Most rural people were allowed to have a second child as long as the first was a girl, and ethnic minorities (including Tibetans and Uyghurs) were exempt altogether. Reflecting these variations, the term One-Child Policy is rarely used in China, with the less dramatic 'Birth-Plan Policy' 计划生育政策 being far more common. That said, I use the terms One- and Two-Child Policy in what follows.

IN THE NEWS, by Jane Golley

The Chinese media published a wide range of news stories relating to the Two-Child Policy in 2016. Collectively, they implied that a veritable ‘baby boom’ is already well underway. It will take time for official statistics to confirm or deny whether this is the case (and more time still to determine whether those official statistics are accurate or not). Some examples include:

- In Linyi city in Shandong province, early education centres are developing rapidly, with annual tuition fees predicted to reach up to RMB 10,000 (AU\$2,000) because of the new policy, which is expected to boost demand for children placements. The growing demand for education for children aged six and under in China’s highly competitive education system is related to parents’ desire for their young children to ‘expand their social networks’ 社交圈子大点 and to ensure that they are not ‘losing at the starting line’ 输在起跑线. More broadly, there have been numerous calls for expanded access to childcare and early education so that having a second child does not derail the parents’ career prospects.
- Numerous articles predicted that over fifteen million babies will be delivered in China in the next five years, stimulating consumption and promoting China’s economic development. (My own analysis shows the first of these claims to be true, but not the second.)
- In Shenzhen, Guangdong province, one of China’s wealthiest cities, there has been a surge in demand for ‘postnatal attendants’ (*yuesao*) following the policy change. *Yuesao* salaries are predicted to increase rapidly to RMB 20,000–30,000 per month (AU\$4,000–6,000). These *yuesao* provide services that the vast majority of Chinese mothers (and indeed most parents around the world) can only dream about: including food preparation and nutrition advice for the new mother alongside postnatal care of the baby.
- By contrast, a story from Hainan stressed how the island lacks enough gynaecologists and nursing staff to cope with the expected baby boom in 2016.
- In Jiangsu province, readers were informed of the dangers of ‘advanced maternal age’ based on two women aged thirty-four and thirty-six — not particularly ‘advanced’ in the context of developed countries these days — experiencing antenatal haemorrhaging; fortunately both mums and babies survived. From Shanghai came a related story about advanced maternal age and the increase in the number of caesareans and use of IVF.
- One article suggested that the end of the One-Child Policy would solve the problems of the Spanish dairy industry, given the Chinese appetite for foreign infant formula and milk powder. Another predicted benefits for the Australian and New Zealand dairy industries as well. (My modelling work suggests that none of these countries would be wise to rely on a Chinese baby boom alone.)



A *yuesao* looking after her ward
Photo: Nicolepeach, Flickr

Babies and Growth: Why Less Can Mean More

China's exceptional economic growth performance over the last four decades has coincided with equally remarkable demographic change. There is now plenty of evidence to suggest that the potential demographic 'dividend', 'gift' or 'bonus' associated with a country's demographic transition towards slower fertility and population growth, and, therefore, a growing share of the population engaged in — rather than depending on — the workforce, can be substantial. In China's case, according to some estimates, this demographic dividend can explain as much as one quarter of its per capita income growth since the 1980s. As the world's fastest growing economy during this period, this has amounted to a substantial gift indeed.

The idea that a slowdown in the rate of population growth boosts per capita income growth dates back to Thomas Malthus's classic *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published in 1798. This 'population pessimism' was taken up in the late 1950s by a number of development economists who asserted that the 'demographic transition' from high fertility and mortality rates to low ones, hence lower population growth, was good for economic development — in other words, that rapid population growth was not.⁴

Mao Zedong was, by contrast, a 'population optimist'. He believed that 'the more people we have, the stronger we will be' 人多力量大. Yet the first three decades of Communist Party rule saw rapid fertility decline, precipitated by improvements in health care, female education, life expectancy, and infant mortality, rather than strict family planning policies. Despite this, China's population still increased by 400 million between 1949 and 1976 (the year of Mao's death). Growing recognition, including by Mao himself, of a pending 'population problem' led to the 'later, longer, fewer' policy in 1970 that called for later marriages, longer spaces between



Thomas Malthus
Source: Wikimedia Commons

births, and fewer children per couple. Thus began the Chinese government's attempts to control the fertility decisions of its citizens.

Unlike Mao, Deng Xiaoping was a population pessimist. In February 1980, he set demographic goals including a target population of 1.2 billion by 2000, with a population growth rate of zero by that time. These were specifically intended to support his goal of quadrupling China's per capita income between 1980 and 2000. The One-Child Policy was introduced in September 1980, signalling Deng's clear commitment to achieving these goals. While Deng's demographic targets weren't quite met by 2000 (when population had reached 1.269 billion), the per capita income goal was achieved by 1996. China's present leaders readily credit the role of the One-Child Policy in achieving this goal, claiming that it averted 400 million births during its first three decades. While more careful analysis by demographers puts the figure closer to 250 million, there is no question that China's population growth has slowed substantially since 1980, and that the One-Child Policy was a significant contributor to this slowdown.

With higher per capita income has come better nutrition, rising levels of education, longer life expectancies, and higher living standards for the vast majority of Chinese people. The One-Child Policy, however controversial, deserves some credit for these outcomes. Many of those 250 million people — had they been born — might have joined the ranks of the hundreds of millions of Chinese people still living in poverty today, as well as contributing to problems of environmental degradation and food security. In fact, *The Economist* ranked the One-Child Policy as the fourth-largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emission reductions between 1989 and 2013 — with its contribution amounting to a reduction of 1.3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.⁵

This is not to deny the substantial costs of the One-Child Policy, and the challenges it has brought with it. One of these challenges is the rapid ageing of the Chinese population, with the United Nations projecting aged dependency to more than double between 2010 and 2030, and nearly double again by 2050. This, according to most analyses, will bring China's 'demographic dividend' to a sudden end. It will also place China in the unique

position of ‘growing old before growing rich’ 未富先老, in other words, of being a transitional, developing economy facing what has until now primarily been a problem for developed countries: having a population with more aged dependents and fewer workers.

Further economic costs have been shown to stem from a workforce comprised of single children who have been criticised for becoming spoiled ‘little emperors’, and have been shown to be ‘less trusting, less trustworthy, more risk averse, less competitive, more pessimistic, and less conscientious individuals.’⁶ These single Chinese children at the bottom of the ‘four-two-one’ family structure (four grandparents, two parents, and one child) themselves face a significant burden in terms of supporting their parents.

Even more consequential is the contribution of the One-Child Policy to the rapid rise in gender imbalances in China in favour of males.⁷ Other immeasurable costs result from the emotional fallout from not being allowed to determine the size of your family, forced abortions, and penalties for having an unauthorised second child, including their inability to enrol in school or to access the health care system.

Time for Two?

There is no doubt that China is confronting a relatively rapidly ageing population, as shown in Figure 1. The question is whether higher fertility rates are the best solution to this problem. Projections based on the United Nation’s Population Prospects for 2015,⁸ ‘high-’ and ‘low-’ fertility scenarios illustrate that higher fertility rates from a Two-Child Policy may have only a minimal effect on reducing aged dependency by 2050. Moreover, a



One-Child Policy propaganda
Photo: Andrea Felker, Flickr

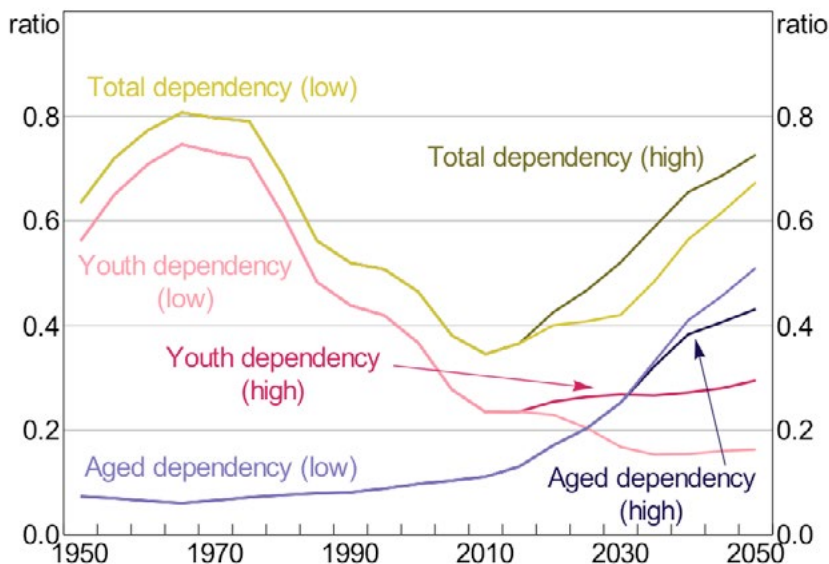


Figure 1. Age Distribution Based Dependency Ratios in China, 1950-2050
 Source: United Nations Population Prospects 2015

rise in youth dependency would ensure that total dependency (the sum of youth and aged dependency) is higher, not lower, under the high-fertility scenario.

My ongoing research with Professor Rod Tyers from the University of Western Australia demonstrates that China's demographic dividend may not all be in the past.⁹ Age-based measures for understanding the links between demographic change and economic growth are misleading, because they fail to take into account the number of actual workers in the population — as opposed to those of 'working age'. Our research shows that a more accurate measurement of total dependency may fall well into the future — and conversely,

Note

Youth and aged dependency are defined respectively as the ratio of the population under fifteen years of age and the population aged over sixty-five years to the population aged between fifteen and sixty-five. High and low refer to the United Nation's high and low fertility scenarios, on which projections from 2015 onwards are based. The labour force participation rates of each age group are not considered in the construction of these dependency ratios.



Little is likely to change in rural China
Photo: Samuel Vigier, Flickr

that the share of the working population will continue to rise — whether the fertility rate is high or low.

In our most recent paper with Yixiao Zhou of Curtin University,¹⁰ we use a dynamic global economic model that is integrated with full demographic behaviour (including the age, skill, and gender compositions of the population in each of eighteen regions, of which China is one) to project demographic and economic changes through to 2050. Our results show that fertility rates consistent with a Two-Child Policy would indeed contribute to higher rates of GDP growth, and a lower proportion of people over sixty-five in the Chinese population in the decades ahead, as well as providing a modest spur to domestic consumption (since children consume but don't save). Yet these impacts would amount to less than half a percent per year of GDP growth (close to the NHFPC's official estimate) and a reduction in aged dependency of only 0.03 percentage points. Furthermore, they would come at a significant cost in terms of per capita GDP, reducing its level by twenty-one percent in 2050 compared with the low-fertility alternative.

Changes in fertility patterns also have implications for the skill composition of the labour force. This, in turn, affects productivity and hence the level of investment, prices, and competitiveness across the economy. In China, workers from rural areas tend to be less skilled than those from urban centres. During the first three decades of reform, despite the laxer

family planning policies in most rural areas, fertility in the rural population declined dramatically, with the proportion of workers in the rural population surging as a consequence.¹¹ Were the rural population to start having more children, real unskilled wage growth would slow, due to a relative abundance of unskilled labour.

A greater supply of unskilled labour would sustain China's competitive edge in unskilled, labour-intensive manufacturing. But it would slow its journey towards a developed economy based on higher wage, technologically-based industries and a more sophisticated service sector, the direction clearly indicated in the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (see Chapter 1, 'What's the Plan?', pp.xxvi-15). China would then be in danger of falling into what economists call the 'middle-income trap', in which a developing economy sacrifices its competitive edge in manufacturing to rising wages but is unable to catch up with developed countries in the high-value-added market. This point holds broadly for higher fertility rates among the urban population as well.

Ultimately, the economic impact of the Two-Child Policy will depend on how people actually respond to it. I predict that little will change in rural China, partly because the One-Child Policy has not been strictly applied there for decades now, and also because rural incomes remain relatively low. The most often-cited reason for not wanting to have more children among rural people is that they simply can't afford them. In urban areas, anecdotal evidence suggests that time, rather than money, is the main constraint on couples contemplating a second child: the most common response I've had to the question of whether they want another is: 'No way, we don't have time'. This hunch is supported by a growing number of demographic analyses predicting that China is headed for a 'low-fertility trap', based on evidence that the most developed provinces and cities, such as Jiangsu and Shanghai, are already in one. Based on the logic presented here, this may not be such a bad thing.

Too Many Men!

In 2015, China recorded an official sex ratio at birth (SRB) of 113.51, making it well and truly the most gender-imbalanced country in the world — a rank it has held since the mid-1980s, when its SRB first moved into the ‘abnormal range’ (above 107). In some provinces, the ratio has been close to 130, and exceeds 160 for second-order births. These unpleasant statistics are compounded by China’s severely abnormal rates of excess female child mortality — eighty boys for every hundred girls died in their first year of life in 2005, compared with a global ratio of around 120. While women in China, as elsewhere, have higher life expectancies than men, the combination of high SRBs and female infant mortality has left China with the world’s most unbalanced sex ratio, at 106 males to 100 females in 2015, compared with the global average of 101 to 100.

This is a multifaceted problem, according to demographer Christopher Guilmoto.¹² Beyond a strong cultural preference for sons, three other factors, all present in China until recently, motivate deliberate sex selection. First is the ‘fertility squeeze’, brought about by parents wanting or needing to limit how many children they had — the One-Child Policy being the clearest example. Second is the ‘ability’ to limit the number of girls that are born, which came with the widespread use of ultrasound B technology to detect a baby’s gender, beginning in the mid-1980s. And third is ‘readiness’, including the social and legal circumstances that allow parents to take advantage of the options available to them: the official determination to keep birth rates down meant the authorities turned a blind eye to sex-selective abortions as well as outright female infanticide.

While Chinese officials have been reluctant to attribute the rising gender imbalances to their family planning policies, they are well aware that the problems are substantial.¹³ In 2011, the Chinese government made reducing the SRB a national priority, aiming for 115 newborn males for every one hundred females by 2015 — a target that, like virtually all such targets, they officially achieved.¹⁴ One news headline in January 2016 announced that ‘China sees drop in birth sex ratio for seventh year running’, from 119.45 in 2009 to 113.51 in 2015, crediting a crackdown on illegal



China's unbalanced sex ratio: 106 males to 100 females

Photo: Dai Junwei, Flickr

prenatal gender testing and selective abortions. The article notes that the Two-Child Policy will help to reduce China's gender imbalance, but concludes that 'the fundamental and permanent cure lies in improving women's social status and achieving gender equality'.¹⁵

Following the announcement of this new national priority in 2011, Rod Tyers and I explored some of the economic consequences of China's rising sex ratio at birth (while acknowledging the many non-economic ones as well), using a global model that projected both economic and demographic outcomes through to 2030.¹⁶ We based our modelling on three key points.

First, we looked at the work of economist Shang-jin Wei 魏尚进 and his colleagues at Columbia University. Their empirical analysis of cross-provincial Chinese data showed that close to half of the rise in China's household savings could be explained by the number of excess men in any given province. Their logic was centred around a competitive marriage market in which single men save more to increase their chance of finding a wife.



Will it become increasingly difficult for Chinese men to find a wife?
Photo: Michemma, Flickr

High saving rates, in turn, provide the funds for domestic investment and hence domestic output expansion. They also have international implications, with the excess of savings over investment fuelling China's current account surplus — basically, its excess of exports over its imports — and the US current account deficit. Indeed, Shang-jin Wei and his co-author Qingyuan Du concluded that, while 'the sex ratio imbalance is not the sole reason for global [economic] imbalances, it could be one of the significant, and yet thus far unrecognised factors'.¹⁷ The implication was that China's sex ratio imbalance played an indirect but possibly major role in the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. We wanted to know if they were right.

Second, we considered the phenomenon of hypergamy — that is, the practice of women choosing to 'marry up' — and its implication that the least 'desirable' men would end up being unmarried, or 'excess'. Our model distinguished between skilled and unskilled workers, and between genders, so we were able to separate out the unskilled men and project how many of these would remain single depending on our assumptions about who married whom. As a result, we predicted a huge gender gap by 2030:

in the range of eighteen to forty-eight million ‘excess’ Chinese men potentially wanting to marry but unable to find a wife.¹⁸

Third, we considered the work of Lena Edlund and her co-authors, also from Columbia University, which linked the increase in China’s sex ratio to a rise in property and violent crime. We took this link one step further and suggested that a rise in the sex ratio would decrease labour productivity (since you can’t very well be productive when you’re out committing crimes), especially among unskilled male workers, whose marriage rates were lowest.

To examine the future consequences of projected ongoing declines in the SRB, we ran a baseline projection for the model in which the SRB remained at current (unbalanced) levels through to 2030. We then ran simulations that projected ‘gender rebalancing’, by allowing the SRB to trend towards normal levels by 2030.

We found that lower Chinese household savings (the consequence of a falling SRB) would reduce funds available for investment, and therefore have a negative impact on both GDP and per capita income. This illustrated the point that gender rebalancing will exact a cost on the economy just as the imbalances of the past have had economic benefits.

Fortunately, this negative economic impact was offset by the positive impact of gender rebalancing on the reduction of crime and an increase in productivity among unskilled male workers. This, in turn, would boost investment, GDP, and per capita income. However, things could go the other way if, say, the impact on savings was bigger and that on productivity smaller than implied by both Wei and Edlund.

In sum, our modelling showed that gender rebalancing would have a fairly small impact on the Chinese economy over the time period studied — mainly because it takes time for changes in birth rates to lead to changes in the workforce. We found that global impacts were small too, which challenges Wei and Du’s dramatic claim above. China’s gender imbalances are nothing to be proud of, but at least we managed to show they didn’t cause the Global Financial Crisis!



Could this scene soon be a thing of the past?

Photo: Andrea Felker, Flickr

Who's in Control Now?

After three and a half decades of strictly controlling the fertility decisions of its vast population, the Chinese government has now relinquished some, albeit not all, of that control. Regardless of any possible economic implications, I applaud the non-economic benefits of this shift, including the new, if incomplete liberty it affords Chinese citizens to plan and have the kind of family they desire. However, as an economist, I believe that a Two-Child Policy is not the best option for tackling either China's slowing economic growth or its ageing population. There are better ways of increasing labour productivity and labour force participation rates — for example, by extending the retirement age to sixty for women and sixty-five for men (as has now been done), as well as more complex reforms to the education, welfare, and the *hukou* 户口 system. Combined with low fertility, such measures would boost labour productivity and hence increase China's chances of breaking the 'middle-income trap'.

At the time of my research on gender imbalances, I posited that the relaxation of the One-Child Policy (alongside numerous other factors) might contribute to a declining sex ratio at birth. Now I'm not so sure. I think it is likely that it will be the richest urban Chinese who take greatest advantage of the Two-Child Policy, particularly those whose first child was a girl. If their determination to have a son is strong enough, and laws targeting sex-selective abortion are weak enough, it is possible that the gender ratio could worsen, not improve. This is not an outcome that anyone should welcome. The government's control over highly personal decisions about family size has weakened, and that is a good thing. Its control over preventing the abortion of unwanted girls has strengthened, and so it should.

NOT QUITE GOING TO PLAN — OLDER MOTHERS AND THE TWO-CHILD POLICY,

by Siodhbhra Parkin

According to the National Health and Family Planning Commission 国家卫生和计划生育委员会, the amendment to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Population and Family Planning 中华人民共和国人口与计划生育法 encouraging married couples to have two children rather than one child will allow an additional ninety million couples in China to have a second child. Of these prospective parents, sixty percent are estimated to be older than thirty-five years, and fully half over forty. This has raised questions about how effective this policy shift will be in boosting China's fertility rate. It also raises questions about the impact it will have on the health and status of Chinese women in general and older women in particular.



Mother and daughter
Photo: Kirstin Huntley, Flickr

One year after the unveiling of the Two-Child Policy, the hoped-for baby boom has been slow to materialise. One reason is that the implementation of the Two-Child Policy has been marred by delays and uncertainty. Many parents held off on a second child until they could be sure their local- or provincial-level governments had stopped fining couples for unplanned births and that maternity leave and other benefits would be available. The official total fertility rate for 2015 was China's lowest ever: 1.05 children per woman. (For comparison, the global average total fertility rate for 2010–2015 was 2.5.) This was despite the fact that more couples than ever before were given permission to have a second child before the privilege was made universal. Many parents are wary of the high economic costs of raising a second child, or have a preference for a single-child family. Whatever the reason, at the end of 2016, Chinese media was estimating that only 950,000 additional births could be attributed to the policy change.

Then there are the concerns specific to older mothers. Compared with younger women, women aged thirty years or over are significantly more likely to experience serious health issues in pregnancy. Given widespread pressure on Chinese women to give birth before thirty, Chinese hospitals may prove ill-equipped to deal with these risks as many medical professionals have not had to deal with problems associated with older women giving birth.

In addition, China has one of the highest rates of births by caesarian section in the world. During the heyday of the One-Child Policy, close to fifty percent of Chinese women chose or were pressured into giving birth to their presumed only child by C-section, which was touted

as being safer for the child. It is also worth noting that C-sections generated more revenue for hospitals. Now, as millions of women who have delivered by C-section in the past explore the possibility of giving birth a second time, there is a shortage of medical professionals with experience handling the complications that could arise.

Many Chinese women are also wary about what a second child might mean for their professional lives. China's maternity leave policies, which permit women to take up to four months off work with full pay, already make it difficult for many women to be seen as competitive hires in a crowded marketplace. There is concern that employers will now take a potential second round of maternity leave and benefits into consideration when making decisions about hiring or promoting women of childbearing age. Relevant national and local government departments have yet to clarify whether the benefits currently extended to first-time mothers through the national insurance scheme will cover them the second time around, meaning that the Two-Child Policy might prove especially costly for employers. This directly threatens the modest successes some Chinese women have claimed in decades of struggle against gender inequality at work.

With the Two-Child Policy, Chinese women may have marginally more freedom over their reproductive choices, though only time will tell if the second-child policy will resolve some of the demographic ills it ultimately seeks to remedy. Whatever the result, however, the excesses of the One-Child Policy will continue to leave an indelible mark. Under the One-Child Policy, millions of Chinese women were persuaded or forced to be sterilised, and many more have grown older without the expectation of being permitted to have another child. The Family Planning Commission may have performed its work too well.



Three-child policy?

Photo: vhines200, Flickr

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The background of the entire page is a red grid pattern. The grid consists of solid red lines forming squares. Within each square, there are two dashed red lines that cross each other at the center, forming an 'X' shape. This pattern repeats across the entire page.

THOUGHT CONTROL

Communist Party Immunology

· CHRISTIAN SORACE

COMMUNIST PARTY IMMUNOLOGY

Christian Sorace

THE YEAR 2016 could be described as the year of ‘governing the Party strictly’ 从严治党 — a slogan and platform promoted by Xi Jinping at the Sixth **Plenum** of the Eighteenth Party Congress in October. What is both semantically and politically interesting about this phrase is the character 治, a polysemic character (one with multiple, related meanings), which means to govern, regulate, and administer, but is also etymologically associated with 治疗, meaning medical treatment, therapy, and cure. This essay explores the implications of viewing governance as a form of medical treatment.

As literary critic and translator Carlos Rojas points out, both Chinese and Western political thought have discursive traditions of ‘viewing the body as a model for the political com-

munity’ and using ‘medical metaphors ... to comment on a broad range of social phenomena’.¹ In his recent book *Homesickness: Culture, Contagion, and National Transformation in Modern China*, Rojas documents how advances in science and medicine — and the discovery of the immune system and germs in particular — influenced the



Carlos Rojas
Source: Duke University



Lu Xun

Photo: zh.wikipedia.org

language and thinking of China's early twentieth century political reformers, such as Liang Qichao 梁啟超, Lu Xun 魯迅, and Hu Shi 胡適.

Once in power, one of the core missions of the Communist Party was to heal the wounded and damaged body of the nation. According to the official narrative, national strength, territorial integrity, economic growth, and social harmony ultimately depend on the vitality of the Party 'organism' 肌體. Inverted, however, this could suggest that the Communist Party is parasitic on its host, depleting resources from society in order to nourish itself.

The CCP conceptualises itself as a living organism that is self-conscious of its own mortality. In 1949, when the

Party triumphantly seized state power, Mao soberly wrote: 'The Communist Party of China is no longer a child or a lad in his teens but has become an adult. When a man reaches old age, he will die; the same is true of a party.' Continuing in this vein, Communist Party theory is inflected by an awareness of the inexorable 'rise and decay' 興亡 of all incarnations of political power, itself included. This does not mean that the CCP is resigned to going gently into the night. It views political decay as manageable and treatable despite being stubbornly 'ineradicable' 頑疾.

Party discourse demands 'vigilance' 警惕 in order to 'guard against' 預防 any 'hidden dangers' 隱患 (also translatable as 'hidden but serious diseases') that threaten the survival of the organism. This political logic follows a traditional Chinese conception of preventative medicine that, according to François Jullien, 'invites us to attend to the slightest deviation well in advance of the crisis that will someday result from it ... we are surprised by the suddenness of an event only when we fail to perceive the silent transformation by which the malady has logically progressed.'²



Li Yunpeng and Chen Xuanchi spent their wedding night transcribing the Constitution
Photo: Sohu

Cellular Engineering

According to the Communist Party's political anatomy, each individual Party member 党员 is a 'cell' 细胞 in the 'Party organism' 党的肌体. In 2016, Xi Jinping's phrase of 'cellular engineering' 细胞工程 entered official parlance as an integral component of 'Party construction' 党的建设 — the idea that the Party is never a completed or static entity but a work-in-progress. To achieve its goal of 'cellular engineering,' the Communist Party unveiled new norms and standards for 'intra-Party political life in a new era' under the rubric of 'four speaks, four haves' 四讲四有. These new standards exhort Party members to: 'have faith when speaking about politics, have discipline when speaking about norms, have

moral conduct when speaking about morality, and have accomplishments when speaking about dedication' 讲政治，有信念；讲规矩，有纪律；讲道德，有品行；讲奉献，有作为. In Xi's vision of a healthy Communist Party, each Party member calibrates their internal thoughts, words, and actions to the standards established in the Party Constitution. Redolent of the monastic exercise of copying scripture, 2016 was also the year when the Party faithful rushed to hand-copy the Constitution, including one couple who spent their wedding night in the ecstasies of transcription.

The Party's cells comprise of three basic typologies: Party member 党员, cadre 干部, and leading cadre 领导 with a vast number of different func-

tions, ranks, and sub-types. Although the basic cellular unit is the Party member, it is the Party cadre who is responsible for day-to-day governance, policy implementation, economic development, and social control. Due to their structural importance, cadres also pose the greatest risk to the Party organism. When cadres pursue private interests and indulge their appetites with arrant disregard for the health of the organism, they can become rogue, cancerous cells. The demand that ‘each cell of the Party becomes healthy’ 党的每一个细胞都健康起来 implicitly acknowledges a pervasive sickness. The scrutiny of individual cells doubles as a form of medical monitoring for abnormal behaviours and patterns.

Since Xi Jinping’s rise to power, the CCP has funded research institutes to study the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to Beijing’s autopsy of the Soviet Union, the cause of death began with ‘necrosis of the underlying cellular structure of the Party’ 党的基层细胞坏死了 and ‘loss of [cellular] functionality’ 失去功能了, which resulted in systemic ‘pathological changes’ 病变 and, ultimately, death. It would seem that Xi Jinping is convinced that the CCP must govern/treat its own malignant cells before

they metastasise and spread throughout the Party.

I suggest that Beijing is currently pursuing three different kinds of treatment. The first is preventative — strengthening cadres’ political ‘ideals and convictions’ 理想信念. Here too, Xi Jinping relies heavily on medical metaphors: in 2013, he stated that: ‘ideals and convictions are the *spiritual calcium* of Communist Party members’ 理想信念就是共产党人的精神上的钙; without them, a cadre is ‘calcium deficient’ 缺钙 and will be afflicted by ‘chondropathy’ 软骨病 (a general term for diseases of the cartilage, such as osteoarthritis; in Chinese, the characters literally mean ‘soft bone’ disease).

Xi’s ‘calcium’ 钙 metaphor continues to be repeated, circulated, and elaborated in Party writing. In an article published in the theory section of the *People’s Daily* in December 2013, Wang Xiangkun 王相坤 expounds on the different properties and uses of ‘calcium’ in the body and in the external environment. Underscoring the important ‘contribution’ 功劳 (a character with a political connotation of meritorious service) of guaranteeing physical health, Wang identifies the essential role calcium plays in the creation of ‘flesh, nerves, bodily



Liu Shaoqi

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

fluids, and the protein in bones’ 肌肉，神经，体液，骨骼中的蛋白质。‘Faith in Marxism’ and ‘conviction in socialism and communism,’ he argues, act similarly to ‘calcium in the body.’

The second form of treatment requires self-examination 检查 of one’s thoughts for engrained and emerging harmful ideas, stubborn habits, and unruly desires. In the early stages of Party history, it was plausibly assumed that most cadres were contaminated with unhealthy patterns of thinking and behaviour inherited from the old, pre-revolutionary society. Mao believed that it was possible to ‘treat the disease in order save the patient’ 治病救人. In his 1945 treatise *On the Party*, the future president Liu Shaoqi further developed this notion, writing:

‘as comrade Mao Zedong puts it, we must constantly “sweep the floor and wash our faces” so as to prevent political dust and germs from clouding the minds of our comrades and decaying the body of our Party.’ These tropes are permanent features of Party discourse. In a speech at a Politburo Meeting on 18 April 2013, Xi Jinping exhorted cadres to ‘look into a mirror, neaten their dress, take a bath, and have their illnesses treated.’ The Party’s organic composition has evolved since the Mao era (for example, in 2001, the Party began granting membership to ‘capitalists’). But the health of the Party organism remains dependent on the maintenance of a hygienic political environment and the practice of penetrating self-examination.

For any examination to be effective, the patient must not hide even the tiniest, most innocuous symptom. Mao also frequently quoted the saying to ‘hide a sickness for fear of treatment’ 讳疾忌医 from the classical legal text *Han Feizi* to make the point that cadres ought to be brave and sincere when confronting and admitting their faults. There is also a striking similarity between Maoist discourse and Michel Foucault’s explanation of the role that avowal played in Christianity, which



Yang Jiang

Source: Wikimedia Commons

has ‘bound the individual to the obligation to search for a secret deep within himself and in spite of everything that might hide this truth — a certain secret that, when brought into the light of day and manifested, must play a decisive role in his path toward salvation’.³ In both conceptual universes, an individual is merely the vessel of a greater truth.

In Maoist China, one of the main instruments to obtain self-knowledge of the secrets (one may not know one kept) lodged deep within was the written ‘self-criticism’ 自我批评. It is still used today. In 2013, Xi Jinping warned that the Party ‘must not discard the weapons of self-criticism and criti-

cism to protect itself and treat its own illnesses’ 不能把我们防身治病的武器给丢掉了. Under the knife of the self-criticism session, the daily routine of self-examination is elevated to a highly invasive, fraught, and often risky process of ‘self-dissection’ 自我剖析.

On 25 May 2016, the novelist Yang Jiang passed away at the age of 104. Her novel *Baptism* 洗澡 (literally, to bathe), translated into English by Judith M. Amory and Yaohua Shi, contains a vivid literary account of self-criticism and ideological disease (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 3 ‘Intellectual Hygiene/*Mens Sana*’, pp.108–112). The story is set at a literary institute in Beijing in the early years of the People’s Republic of China. Its main characters are intellectuals who must perform self-criticisms of their indiscretions and insincerities in order to ‘wash off’ the dirt from the old society. In the novel, the Party cadre Fan Ertan stipulates the guidelines for self-criticism: ‘The first priority is not to fear the shame of revealing those hidden, dirty parts. The second is not to fear the pain of scrubbing those parts clean, or of digging or cutting them out’. One character describes her attitude as a process of ‘cutting my heart open, to encounter the masses sincerely’. An-

other flinches from the pain of seeing ‘the true nature of his rotten flesh’.⁴ As Yang Jiang’s novel suggests, such searing political vivisections left behind permanent somatic and psychic scars.

In the Mao era, self-criticisms were frequently read aloud before an audience of the masses 群众, which could range in size from a few co-workers to a packed stadium. The assembled masses judged the ‘sincerity’ of the confession and would often prescribe a deeper investigation, involving another ritual of humiliation and control. These days, high-level cadres found guilty of corruption may have to recant their political sins and recite their written repentances in public — before a television camera. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, Forum ‘Orange as the New Black’, pp.317–321.)



Li Chuncheng’s televised confession
Source: Sina Video

Toward the end of 2016, the Communist Party’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) 中国共产党纪律检查委员会 and **CCTV** co-produced an eight-part reality TV series called *Always on the Road* 永远在路上, showing cadre confessions spliced with gritty biographical details. Mediated and disseminated via networked technologies, self-criticisms are now recorded as performances without an audience, such as in TV studio green rooms, courts, and jail cells. The unstable element — the masses — has been removed from the picture. No longer passionately engaged actors in the pageant of revolutionary history, ‘the people’ have been reduced to passive audiences.

In 2016, the phenomenon of choreographed contrition continued to spread to include ‘troublesome’ journalists, human rights lawyers, and foreign citizens. On a certain level, whether or not these confessions were coerced or voluntary is beside the point; they are intended as demonstrations of Party control and examples of normatively desirable behaviour.

The third form of treatment is amputation. Party leaders must be willing to ‘sacrifice the local [necrotic tissue] in order to protect the whole [organ-



Screen shot from a video showing Xi Jinping taking on 'tigers' (corrupt government officials)
Source: Tencent Video

ism]’ 牺牲局部，照顾全部。In 2014, Xi argued that the Party needed to ‘scrape the bone of poison’ 刮骨疗毒 and even resemble the ‘warrior who severed his [poisoned] wrist’ 壮士断腕。Both of these phrases originate from classic stories in which a warrior severs a limb to prevent poison from spreading throughout his entire body.

Harsh Medicine

Official media have described Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption campaign as a prescription of ‘harsh medicine’ 猛药 to cure the Communist Party of its mortal ailments. But it comes with side effects. The ‘cells’ being targeted by this ‘medicine’ might react negatively to it. In March 2016, an anonymous let-

ter signed by ‘loyal Communist members’ called for Xi Jinping to resign from power ‘out of consideration for [his] personal safety and that of [his family]’. People believed to be associated with the letter were, in turn, detained by the State Security apparatus.

There is a significant risk that the Party’s immune system 免疫系统 will begin to act in an auto-immune manner. Auto-immune disorders occur when the immune system goes into over-drive and begins to attack the body’s healthy cells and tissues. According to Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito, ‘what is certain is that in all these cases [of auto-immunity], an “overactive defence” of the body in seeking to strike at the enemy also

causes harm to itself'.⁵ In both political and medical worlds, the drive to protect life may end up destroying it.

At the end of 2016, the CCP was still undergoing treatment, and had yet to enter a period of remission and recovery. If Xi's anti-corruption campaign continues at such high dosages, it might revitalise the Party organism or substantially weaken it. From an

external vantage point, delivering a prognosis would be unreliable at best and irresponsible at worst. There is already enough quack medicine in circulation. What we can do, though, is listen to the words the Party uses to diagnose itself, for they reveal much about the health of China's political world and how those who govern it are feeling.

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THE LANGUAGE OF DISCIPLINE

Gloria Davies

Xi Jinping's *The Governance of China*
Source: foreignpolicy.com





‘STRICT ENFORCEMENT OF PARTY DISCIPLINE’

严明党的纪律 has been a catchcry of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since Xi Jinping became its General Secretary in November 2012. In speeches and articles, Xi, other Party leaders, and Party theorists have repeatedly stressed the urgent importance of strengthening Party discipline for the Party’s future. Articles appearing in the state media call it an essential corollary to the Anti-Corruption Campaign that Xi’s administration has been vigorously prosecuting since 2013.

‘Party discipline’ is shorthand for enforcing the Party’s internal rules and regulations and eliminating corruption and other types of wrongdoing. In 2016, Party discipline came to play a major role in Xi’s efforts to secure his control over the CCP and all its members. At several provincial-level Party meetings in early-to-mid-January 2016, local leaders further pledged ‘to resolutely safeguard General Secretary Xi Jinping as the core’ 坚决维护习近平总书记这个核心 — implicitly identifying Xi’s personal authority with Party discipline. These local leaders also cited a new and complementary slogan — ‘Four

Types of Consciousness’ 四种意识: Party officials are to strengthen their ‘political consciousness, consciousness of the big picture, consciousness of the core, and consciousness of the need to keep in line’ 增强政治意识、大局意识、核心意识、看齐意识.¹ These new expressions surfaced from time to time in the state media and on Party websites. Then, in October, their authority as new official formulations, *tifa* 提法, became clear. (For more on *tifa*, see the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, Chapter 4 ‘Destiny’s Mixed Metaphors’, p.150.)

At the Sixth **Plenum** of the CCP’s Eighteenth Central Committee, held from 24–27 October 2016, the Party leadership confirmed ‘Xi Jinping as the core’ and the ‘four types of consciousness’ as key features of Party governance. The focus of the three-day meeting was the question of how to achieve ‘comprehensive and strict Party governance’ 全面从严治党. This phrase appeared no less than fifteen times in the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, which was also published as an editorial in the *People’s Daily*. The phrase is synonymous with ‘strict enforcement of



‘Special Promotion’: Xi Jinping’s Edited Excerpts on Discipline
Image: ccdi.gov.cn

Party discipline’. The Sixth Plenum’s declaration that ‘The Party’s Central Committee takes Comrade Xi Jinping as its core’ meant that the content of Party discipline would henceforth be determined by what Xi had to say, or had previously said, on the subject.²

In fact, by then Party members were already engaged in mandatory, systematic study of Xi’s views on Party discipline. On 1 January 2016, China’s state media and Party websites launched 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 (hereafter *Edited Excerpts on Discipline*). Published by the Party’s Central Documents Press, it appeared without fanfare in mainland bookstores about two weeks earlier.³ It comprised no less than 200 extracts from over forty of Xi’s speeches and essays from the period 16 November 2012 – 29 October 2015.

Xi Jinping on Party Discipline

To use Xi’s favourite adjective, the book provided ‘comprehensive’ 全面 coverage of his views on Party discipline. He has spoken to different audiences about different aspects of discipline. On one occasion in 2014, for example, he urged his audience of county-level leaders to ‘strengthen their capacity for self-inspection and self-purification’ 必须加强自我监督、自我净化能力。They were to also ‘increase their efforts in supervising institutional operations at all levels’ 在体制机制层面加大监督力度。 On 13 January 2015, he told the Party’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) that ‘deepening the work of discipline inspection’ was crucial for ‘strengthening the Party’s capacity



Xi Jinping: Party whip
Image: Wikimedia Commons

RECKLESS AND AUDACIOUS, by Gloria Davies

Zhou Yongkang 周永康 had previously headed China's formidable state security system. Bo Xilai 薄熙来 was the former party secretary of China's most populous city, Chongqing. Xu Caihou 徐才厚 had been a general in the People's Liberation Army. Ling Jihua 令计划, the former head of the United Front Work Department, was a key advisor to Xi's predecessor, former party general secretary Hu Jintao 胡锦涛. And Su Rong 苏荣 had served as deputy head of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. These men were among the first 'tigers' to be arrested for corruption from 2012 to 2014. In early 2013, while still president-in-waiting, Xi vowed to crack down on both 'tigers' and 'flies'. 'Flies' denoted lowly bureaucrats. 'Tigers' referred to officials in senior positions, ranked at the deputy provincial level, deputy ministry level, or higher. In Xi's January 2015 speech, he described these particular 'tigers' as having flouted 'party discipline and political rules, to the point of recklessness and audaciousness!'

**Tigers and Flies**

Image: Sinking Stone @Chenshimanhua

for institutional innovation' 加强制度创新. Speaking to a Collective Study Session of the **Politburo** on 26 June 2015, he spoke of the urgency of 'strengthening the development of anti-corruption laws and regulations' 加强反腐倡廉法规制度建设. And at the 119th Conference of the Eighth Central Committee **Politburo Standing Committee** on 8 October 2015, he stated that accurate identification of the main problems standing in the way of stronger Party discipline was an important priority.

Edited Excerpts on Discipline was the first general publication of these 'internal speeches' 内部讲话.⁴ One extract from Xi's speech at the CCDI meeting on 13 January 2015 attracted international media interest. In it, Xi described the enormous damage that Zhou Yongkang 周永康, Bo Xilai 薄熙来, Xu Caihou 徐才厚, Ling Jihua 令计划, and Su Rong 苏荣 had caused the Party, labelling them as reckless and audacious. (See box above.)

In an article for *The New York Times*, the Beijing-based journalist Didi Kirsten Tatlow called the publication of the extract tantamount to:

The first public and official declaration by President Xi Jinping of ‘political plot activities’ by senior Communist Party officials ‘to wreck and split the party’ — code words for a coup attempt, several Chinese analysts said. Its release was a signal, they said, that the challenge was over, that the party had agreed on what happened and that Mr. Xi wanted people to know that he had overcome his adversaries.⁵

The timing of the official release of *Edited Excerpts on Discipline* on New Year’s Day signalled that ‘comprehensive and strict Party governance’ would be the guiding topic of the Party’s ‘political thought work’ in 2016. As of 5 December 2016, the book remains at the top of the official list of recommended works on Party theory — a list dominated by works written by Xi Jinping.⁶

More than any Chinese leader since Mao Zedong, Xi has sought to shape official discourse around his own pronouncements. The 2016 book on Party discipline is just one of fourteen anthologies of quotations and speeches by him that have appeared since 2013. As the new exemplars of correct Party diction and prosody, Xi’s ‘sayings’ feature prominently in different types of official discourse: in the speeches of other Party leaders, party policies, government work reports, and compulsory political studies curriculum at universities, as well as articles and editorials published in the state-run media. To quote Xi correctly constitutes, after all, a display of discipline in the form of rhetorical accord with ‘comprehensive and strict Party governance’.

At the heart of any discipline is a set of instructions. On an individual level, to discipline one’s mind or body is to subject oneself to a prescribed set of mental or physical exercises, or trials, to achieve a desired goal. Whatever the goal, whether an improved attitude to life, greater under-

standing of an area of knowledge, improved skills in an art or sport, or simply a better-looking body, the discipline must promise results for one to want to be subjected to it. The disciplinary measures of large organisations have a different purpose. Rules of conduct and punishments for transgressors predominate, for what matters is the wellbeing of the organisation. The individuals who belong to or work for it must accommodate their own needs and interests to the greater good. To go against the rules is to risk expulsion or worse. As Xi remarked to senior Party officials in Lankao county in May 2014:

As we are such a big political party, what can we rely on to govern our troops? What can we count on to overcome risks and challenges? The answer is, in addition to adopting the correct theory and the correct line, principles and policies, we must also rely on strictly following regulations and exercising strict discipline. We make so many demands. We want a multi-pronged approach to solve both the symptoms and the root cause of our problems. Relying on a full understanding of the situation is not enough. We must have strict constraints that can be forcefully implemented. This is what discipline means.⁷

Marketing Discipline

When addressing Party members and state officials, Xi is candid yet didactic. He combines forthright speech with formulaic language — for instance, the word-order for the phrase ‘the correct line, principles and policies’ is unalterable. China’s official discourse reflects the authoritarian nature of its one-party system. Rigid formulations and verbose descriptions abound because Party leaders and theorists believe that the preservation of the ‘correct’ forms of words reflect a clear sense of order and disciplined unity — and this includes the laboriously long titles of official meetings such as ‘The 119th Conference of the Eighth Central Committee Political Bureau Standing Committee’.



The animated English-language video explaining China's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan
Source: YouTube

The language of the top leader influences official discourse. When Xi's ineloquent predecessor Hu Jintao was in office, people used the slogan 'Speak like a real human' to mock the kind of contrived and wooden official discourse that he represented. (See *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilizing China*, Chapter 7 'Fitting Words', pp.380–407.) Nonetheless, Hu's final year as Party Secretary in 2012 saw China's state media begin to experiment with an upbeat and colloquial tone. On 22 July 2012, when Beijing's heaviest rainstorm in sixty years led to massive flooding and the deaths of thirty-seven people, the *People's Daily* launched its **Weibo** account with the message:

No one's getting any sleep tonight while the storm engulfs Beijing. The official Weibo account of the *People's Daily* is keeping a vigil with everyone. We're saying a prayer for every person who hasn't yet reached home safely. We pay tribute to every person who is on the frontline of the battle to save lives! Go Beijing!⁸

This warm and friendly tone has become far more prominent in the Party's 'external discourse' 外部讲话 under Xi and presents a striking contrast to the austere language used in 'internal' Party speeches. Cartoons and music videos are now frequently used to promote Party and state policies not only to the mainland public but globally. In 2015, China's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan was publicised, among other things, via an animated English-language music video with Chinese subtitles. (See Chapter 1 'What's the Plan?', pp.xxvi–15, and the *China Story Yearbook 2015*:

Pollution, Forum ‘The Road to Rejuvenation: The Animated Xi Jinping’, pp.5–8.) When interviewed, official spokespersons praised the video but denied that the government had played any part in its production.

Then, on 2 February, *Xinhua* launched an animated Chinese-language music video about the ‘Four Comprehensives’ 四个全面战略布局 on its online video website. A fortnight later, on 20 February, it re-released the video dubbed and subtitled into eight other languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, German, Korean, and Japanese) on various domestic and foreign social media platforms, including Facebook. But while official spokespersons had denied any government involvement in the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan video, in this case the government publicised its involvement from the outset.

THE ‘FOUR COMPREHENSIVES’, by Gloria Davies

Xi first used the ‘Four Comprehensives’ 四个全面战略布局 in mid-December 2014. The term became an official slogan two months later. It stands for: comprehensively building a ‘moderately prosperous 小康 society, deepening reform, governing the nation in accordance with law, and strictly governing the CCP’. The first three tasks are continuations of post-Maoist national goals promoted by previous administrations. The fourth is Xi’s defining initiative.



Still from the ‘Four Comprehensives’ video
Source: YouTube

Party slogans appear to be fixed, eternal formulations even though they are, in fact, improvisational and contingent in nature. Throughout the first eleven months of 2014, Xi had spoken only of ‘Three Comprehensives’ (the first three). As Chris Buckley pointed out in a *New York Times* article of 1 March 2015, it was only in November 2014 that Xi and his advisers ‘decided that leaving out fighting corruption might send the wrong message’,⁹ hence the addition of a ‘fourth comprehensive’ in his speeches in mid-December 2014. Party propagandists leapt to the task of providing justification for the sudden change. Buckley quotes one official commentator as praising the ‘profound implications’ of this ‘even more complete and even more mature overall framework for governance and wise rule’.

'DIVINE TUNE' 神曲, by Gloria Davies

The term means a 'viral hit' — a catchy song that 'mesmerises' or, literally, brainwashes 洗脑 and sticks in people's heads for some inexplicable 'divine' reason. It is also the standard Chinese translation for Dante Alighieri's epic poem *The Divine Comedy*.



The Divine Comedy
Source: barnesandnoble.com

The video opens with a rhyme inspired by geometry 一个那是点, 两个那是线, 三个那是面, 四个是全面. The official English translation is 'One is just a point, Two can form a line, Three become a plane, Four will do all fine!' More literally, the last line means 'four's what makes them comprehensive'. This implies that the 'fourth comprehensive' ('strict Party governance') is key to integrating the first three. The three-minute video quotes the 'Four Comprehensives' and several of Xi's other catchphrases. Xinhua's Weibo account invited viewers to post comments. On 3 February, Xinhua published an article explaining the visually busy video's different elements and cited some of the more enthusiastic responses it had received.¹⁰

The same day, Hong Kong-based Radio Free Asia reported that, in fact, the video had attracted more negative than positive responses and that Xinhua's original proclamation 'It's here! Xinhua Agency's "Divine Tune"! 来了! 新华社'神曲'!' had inspired noticeable ridicule.¹¹ One netizen called it 'new generation "Divine Tune" brainwashing'. Another suggested that Xinhua used the word 'divine' because the subtext was redolent of the Maoist chant: 'ten thousand years, ten thousand years, a hundred million years to the ruler!' 皇上一万岁万万岁. Yet another marvelled at the persistent obsession of China's top Party leaders with theorising by numbers, listing just a few predecessors to Xi's 'Four Comprehensives': Mao's 'Ten

Major Relationships’ 十大关系; Deng Xiaoping’s ‘Four Cardinal Principles’ 四项基本原则, Jiang Zemin’s ‘Three Represents’ 三个代表, and Hu Jintao’s ‘Eight Honours and Eight Disgraces’ 八个为荣、八个为耻. Xinhua published a number of mildly mocking posts about the video on its Weibo account.

Less than three weeks after the launch of Xinhua’s ‘Divine Tune’, on 19 February, Xi delivered a speech at the Party’s News and Public Opinion Work Conference in Beijing, in which he stressed the importance of Party and state media ‘cleaving fundamentally to the Party’s leadership’ so that they can serve as ‘propaganda battlefronts of the Party and the government’ 党和政府的宣传阵地. He quipped that the media ‘must bear the Party’s surname’ 必须姓党 in every aspect of their work.¹²

The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan and Four Comprehensives videos clearly set out to satisfy all of Xi’s criteria as described in that speech: they sought to ‘embody the will of the Party’; ‘mirror the views of the Party’; ‘preserve the authority of the Party, preserve the unity of the Party, and achieve love of the Party, protection of the Party and act for the Party’.¹³

Media reports describe the musical style of the two videos as ‘rap’ *shuochang* 说唱; as spoken word set to generic pop tunes, they are more akin to commercial jingles.¹⁴ This form of ideological marketing draws some attention, in and outside China, to the Party-state’s medium, if not its message. Xinhua claimed on 20 February that ‘the Chinese version [of the ‘Four Comprehensives’ video] went viral both home and abroad, with *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *The Guardian*, among many news providers across the world posting the video’.¹⁵ In reality, international media outlets simply published articles reporting that the Chinese Party-state was making animated musical cartoons to convey its propagandistic messages.



Dancing women during a traffic jam in north China
Source: Weibo

Neither has gone viral in the manner of, say, the January 2016 video of a ‘Mr Li’ from Changchun playing guitar while undergoing brain surgery or that of women dancing on the highway during an hour-long traffic jam in north China in November 2016. This points at the very least to general indifference to the ideas and slogans being promoted. Party propagandists have yet to work out how to get most Party members — let alone average citizens — excited about such exemplars of ‘Party thinking’ as the Four Comprehensives.

The ‘Spirit of the Craftsman’

Slogans promoting cultural and economic development such as Premier Li Keqiang’s ‘Spirit of the Craftsman’ 工匠精神, which encourages innovation, gain more traction in the popular sphere but they receive nothing close to the publicity given to Xi’s pronouncements on Party building and discipline. Li first used the expression Spirit of the Craftsman in an address to the National People’s Congress in Beijing on 5 March 2016. After outlining the challenges presented by slowing economic growth, Li spoke of the government’s commitment to innovation-driven economic development. In order for Chinese-made goods to become globally competitive, he encouraged enterprises to adopt ‘flexible and custom-tailored production processes and foster the spirit of the craftsman, of striving for the best, so that more types of products, products of a higher quality, and [recognisable] brand products will be made’.¹⁶

Li returned to the topic on 29 March 2016 at a speech at the China Quality Award Presentations ceremony in Beijing. He urged people working in China’s goods and services sector to aspire to international standards of excellence, exemplified by ‘English tailored suits, Royal Dutch Companies, Germany’s vocational education and Japan’s millennium-old sword-smithing art’. The saying struck a chord with academics and media commentators, who offered their thoughts on the type of self-discipline required to cultivate the Spirit of the Craftsman.¹⁷

Xu Jilin 许纪霖, the eminent Shanghai-based historian and public intellectual, presented a lecture on the Spirit of the Craftsman in Shenzhen on

**Max Weber**

Source: Wikimedia Commons

18 June 2016.¹⁸ Xu pointed out that craftsmanship required not only professional excellence but an ethical attitude as well. It implied devoting oneself to one's art, craft or profession in a disciplined manner for the sake of excelling at it, not just because it might lead to financial profit.

To illustrate, Xu quoted Max Weber's views on the ideal or genuine 'politician'. In 'Politics as a Vocation', Weber had argued that 'three pre-eminent qualities are decisive for the politician: passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion'.¹⁹ Xu said that craftsmanship required: 'value rationality — total commitment and dedication to the value objectives one has adopted', 'a real sense of mission and the sense of responsibility needed to realise one's mission' and 'the detached judgement that comes of seeing reality without being swayed by feelings, and the insight derived from thoroughgoing reasoning'.

Xu's verbose rewording of Weber's succinct statement is a typical example of oblique commentary in the highly censored realm of mainland intellectual discourse. Obliqueness indicates that there is more than meets the eye, that the author cannot speak freely. Xu presented his argument as academic, that is, non-political, by using specialist, discipline-based terms (such as 'value rationality' and 'value objectives') and by attributing the view being expressed to Weber rather than himself. That Xu did not explain why he chose to quote Weber on the qualities of a true politician (as opposed to on any other topic) is par for the course. Oblique commentary assumes that the sympathetic reader 'gets' what is being implied. The problem is that there is no chance to elaborate, and this is detrimental to intellectual inquiry in mainland China.

Weber had been the Western thinker of choice for most Chinese intellectuals in the mid- to late 1980s, in the heyday of the 'liberal' or 'New

Enlightenment' thinking that preceded and, in many ways, inspired the student-led democracy movement at Tiananmen Square in 1989. After listing his three Weberian definitions of the Spirit of the Craftsman, Xu lamented the lack of this spirit among 'the large numbers of intellectuals today who have become experts, who do research and write books purely to make a living and who don't have the slightest personal interest in their area of expertise'. Conversely, a true craftsman 'pursues his profession as an amateur. He can't tell between work time and leisure time as he's simply doing what he enjoys.'

Undisciplined Words

Craftsmanship and discipline were spectacularly evident at the evening gala concert held on 4 September 2016 to mark the start of the Eleventh G20 Summit in Hangzhou. There were no less than ten full-dress rehearsals before the show.²⁰ However, even as China's best dancers, musicians, and singers were entertaining

world leaders with their flawless performances, China's cyber-censors were busy deleting satirical comments about a gaffe made by Xi Jinping the previous day. In the course of delivering a speech to global business leaders, he quoted a line from the fourth-century BCE Chinese classic *Discourses of the States* 国语: 'Allow freer passage across borders and create safe roads, promote commerce, and ease the pressure on the peasants' 轻关易道, 通商宽农. However, what he said was: 'Allow freer passage across borders and create safe roads, promote commerce, and loosen ['ease'] your clothes' 宽衣. Whether the text from which he was



G20 Hangzhou Summit
Source: Wikimedia Commons



Xi speaking at the G20 Hangzhou Summit

Source: CCTV

reading had used the wrong character, substituting ‘clothing’ 衣 *yi* for ‘peasants’ 农 *nong* — the two characters look similar — or whether Xi had misread the character, remains a mystery. At any rate, he did not appear to notice he had misquoted the line.

As soon as Xi’s speech was aired, cryptic comments began appearing on the mainland Chinese Internet about the necessity of ‘disrobing’ 宽衣 when ‘doing business’ 通商. On Twitter, which remains blocked in China, Chinese speakers openly made fun of Xi’s blunder and cast doubts on his vaunted knowledge of classical Chinese.

The Beijing-based historian and public intellectual Zhang Lifan 章立凡 composed a pair of eight-line heptasyllabic ‘regulated verses’ 律诗 (the character for ‘regulated’ 律 forms part of the modern Chinese word for ‘discipline’ 纪律) in critical commemoration of the G20 Summit. Outside China, the two poems circulated widely online. Zhang based one of the poems on the famous quatrain, ‘At the Inn in Hangzhou’ 题临安邸 by the Song dynasty *littérateur*, Lin Sheng 林升 (1106–1170), celebrating the beauty of Hangzhou’s West Lake. Zhang included a reference to Xi’s gaffe in the last line of this poem (titled ‘Two Stanzas on Flaying’ 剥皮二首):²¹

Beyond the skies the stratosphere
the mansion of mansions,
When will the imperial household
awaken from its springtime dream?
The praise of the world’s barbarian
tribes intoxicates the brilliant sage-ruler,

天外云天楼上楼，
帝家春梦几时休？
四夷捧得明君醉，

LIN SHENG'S 'AT THE INN IN HANGZHOU'

Beyond the hills blue hills, beyond the mansions —
To song and dance on the West lake when will there be an end?
Idlers fuddled on the fumes of the warm breeze
Will turn Hangzhou that rises into Kaifeng that fell.

山外青山楼外楼
西湖歌舞几时休？
暖风熏得游人醉
直把杭州作汴州。

(Translated by A.C. Graham in *Poems of the West Lake: Translations from the Chinese*, London: Wellsweep, 1990)

As if to rule the earth while
seated in Hangzhou.
The arriving guests drove the
host to empty the town,
The singing and dancing in the
deserted city was truly spectacular.
But just as ugly Dong Shi played
at being beautiful Xi Shi,
The result was too much make-up
and dishevelled undress.

坐在杭州管地球，
客来驱主人烟少，
歌舞空城景独奇。
欲扮东施作西子，
艳妆浓抹乱宽衣。

Zhang's poem reflects a disciplined ease in the use of literary and colloquial Chinese. Rich in quotidian references, literary allusions, and fragments of quotations familiar to educated Chinese, it embodies the Spirit of the Craftsman. The 'mansion of mansions' 楼上楼 in the first line is a popular name for Chinese restaurants in China and abroad, including a famous one by Hangzhou's West Lake. The 'deserted city' in the original alludes to a ruse employed by the famous military strategist Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮 (181–234 BCE). Zhang used the phrase 'deserted city' to highlight the state's closure of large sectors of Hangzhou, greatly inconveniencing the city's residents, more than one-third of whom were made to leave town during the week of the summit.



Du Daozheng
Source: Baike

The expression ‘to rule the earth’ 管地球 was used by Mao Zedong in 1955 to describe the mission of the new nation’s leading news agency, Xinhua, which was to send correspondents overseas to spread the CCP’s message abroad. The expression also featured in the title of a widely-read essay on the history of Xinhua’s overseas bureaus, ‘How

Xinhua sought to rule the earth’ 新华社要把地球管起来 published in the July 2013 issue of the influential monthly *Yanhuang Chunqiu* 炎黄春秋.²²

As discussed in ‘Intellectual Hygiene/*Mens Sana*’ in the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, *Yanhuang Chunqiu* had previously enjoyed certain privileges because most of the people who worked on and contributed to the magazine were retired senior Party officials. These Party veterans sought to publish candid accounts of their experiences of the Party-state’s workings, the turbulence of the Maoist period, and the Party leaders they had served. Under Xi’s administration, they faced increased pressure to exercise self-censorship. The pressure intensified in 2016 when the magazine sought to publish reflections on the fiftieth anniversary of the launch of the Cultural Revolution in May.

In July, without warning or consultation, *Yanhuang Chunqiu*’s supervisory body, the Chinese National Academy of Arts, dismissed the magazine’s publisher Du Daozheng 杜导正 and replaced the entire editorial committee with its own appointees. Senior Academy officials deployed staff to occupy the magazine’s premises and changed the operational password for the magazine’s website. The new administrators clearly intended to capitalise on the magazine’s enviable reputation, while turning it into a ‘comprehensively and strictly Party governed’ vehicle. In response, on 18 July 2016, Du announced that *Yanhuang Chunqiu* was no more: ‘From now on, anyone who publishes in the name of *Yanhuang Chunqiu* [is] unrelated to this journal’.²³

ZHANG LIFAN'S 'TWO STANZAS ON THE PROSPEROUS AGE', translated by Gloria Davies

Gaudy and extravagant, a glittering appearance,
A splendid banquet keeps Chinese and barbarian taste buds busy.
Grass-like commoners exert themselves, their blood and toil,
Becoming the detritus that forms a palace ditch.
When will we stop seeing clones everywhere?
The same tired martial arts routines lack artistry*.
With half a basinful of West Lake's feet-washing water,
Official Zhang, his talent spent, arrives in Hangzhou.

艳俗穷奢表面光，
华夷盛宴舌尖忙。
草民膏血洪荒力，
化为御沟一段翔。
克隆印象几时休？
套路湖乏艺谋。
西子半盆洗脚水，
张郎才尽到杭州。

* *wu yimou* — a play on Zhang Yimou's name. 'Feet-washing water' refers to the outdoor concert stage on which the performances took place. To create an impression of performers dancing and walking on water, the stage, completed in 2007, was built three centimetres below the water surface.

Zhang Lifan, who had previously contributed numerous essays to the magazine, remarked that the magazine had sought 'to save the Party, but the Party doesn't want to be helped'.²⁴ Zhang's dismay at the magazine's demise was undoubtedly also behind the barbed wit he displayed in his two G20 Summit poems. (The other poem mocks the evening gala concert on West Lake and the concert's director Zhang Yimou 张艺谋.)

Conflicting Vernaculars

Under Xi, intellectual life in mainland China has eroded dramatically. By 2015, there were arguably only two influential and popular outlets for independent debate. *Yanhuang Chunqiu* was one. On 1 October, National Day, the founder of the other, the Consensus website, 共识网, Zhou Zhixing 周志兴, posted this announcement on **WeChat**: 'Notice is given herewith that the authorities want us to shut Consensus down. They see it as a platform that disseminates the wrong type of ideas. We have no choice but to comply' 当局希望我们关闭共识网, 认为是传递错误思想的平台. 我们无奈准备关闭. 特此报告.²⁵

Before the elevation of Xi Jinping to 'the core' of the Politburo and Party in 2016, *Yanhuang Chunqiu* and Consensus had survived thanks to extensive connections with and experience in elite Party circles. Back in 1987 Zhou Zhixing had even established the Party's Central Documents

**Zhang Lifan**

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Press that published Xi Jinping's *Edited Excerpts on Discipline* in 2016 under instruction from the Party's Central Committee. Zhou served as the Press's vice-president until 1996.

On the Chinese-language Internet outside China, the closure of these two publications in 2016 elicited scathing criticisms of Xi's comprehensive and strict Party governance. At a roundtable discussion organised by the Voice of America's Chinese Branch in Washington DC on 7 October, Gao Wenqian 高文谦, a senior policy advisor at the New York-based NGO Human Rights in China, remarked that with the demise of *Yanhuang Chunqiu* and *Consensus*, 'China has entered an age in which people's mouths are comprehensively sealed. This is the mark that the Xi Jinping era will leave on history.' Yang Jianli 杨建利, president of the Washington-based NGO Initiatives for China, commented that "Obey the rules" is the type of language secret societies use. To discipline Party cadres using this language shows that the CCP conducts itself like a secret society ... However, Xi Jinping's word isn't law in the way that Mao Zedong's and Deng Xiaoping's were, which is why he keeps resorting to Party rectification and shock and awe tactics in his bid to gain absolute control.' Cheng Xiaonong 程晓农, chief editor of the Princeton University-based Chinese-language journal *Modern China Studies* 当代中国研究, observed that Xi's efforts at strength-

ening Party discipline by getting ‘the people lower down to closely follow those higher up’, would at best be limited to controlling high-ranking officials at the provincial or ministerial level. He would have enormous difficulty controlling the Party base because of the hidden rules 潜规则 of patron-client relationships (between officials of different ranks) that have defined the post-Maoist bureaucracy for more than two decades. Moreover, ‘while it’s easy to spout rhetoric about “closely following [the higher ups]”, it’s highly unlikely that the temptation to be corrupt among officials will be eradicated’.²⁶

That Xi and his fellow Politburo members have chosen to push Party discipline in 2016 indicates both an extreme resistance to political reform and an abject reliance on control. When the modern Chinese written vernacular, *baihuawen* 白话文, was first promoted in the 1910s, it was extolled as a vehicle for free speech and egalitarian communication. Yet from the outset there was also a desire to ‘guide and instruct’ 引导 among many of *baihuawen*’s advocates. The CCP’s language, which developed out of this incipient vernacular from the 1920s onwards, turned *baihuawen* into an instrument of propaganda and control. However, to imagine that people can be permanently disciplined into using prescribed formulations is a totalitarian folly. This is all the more evident when we compare the Party’s disciplined language, which abounds with such statements as ‘By his actions in this great new struggle, General Secretary Xi Jinping has already become the core of the Party’s Central Committee and the core of the whole Party’²⁷ with the expressive diversity of China’s netizens, Xu Jilin’s oblique commentary, Zhang Lifan’s satirical ‘regulated verse’, and the unfettered eloquence of Chinese commentators overseas.

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DREADED ANNIVERSARIES: THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND MAO ZEDONG

Lorand Laskai

ON 16 MAY, the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution, the *People's Daily* 人民日报, the mouthpiece of the CCP, published a rare commentary acknowledging the decade-long movement's errors and costs. Putting quotation marks around the phrase 'Cultural Revolution' (a longstanding practice since at least the 1980s), it described the period as 'a major complication in the development of our Party and country'. The commentary concluded that 'We must certainly fix in our memories the historic lessons of the "Cultural Revolution"'.¹ Yet attempts online to deliberate those historic lessons, or examine the legacy of the period's terror and violence — it swept up an entire generation in ideological-driven turmoil, scarring communities, and creating deep rifts in

society — met with swift censorship. A **Baidu** keyword search for 'Cultural Revolution' 文革 in May turned up the odd slideshow or piece on historical nostalgia, but no critical discussions or detailed histories of what transpired. The silencing of discussion has affected historical memory — which is, surely, one of the objectives, given the Party's culpability in the abuses of the period.

In a *vox pop* clip aired on the history channel of Hong Kong's Phoenix Television 凤凰历史, a reporter asked student-aged Chinese citizens some basic questions about the Cultural Revolution — how they might describe it in one word, for example — and received a dizzying array of contradictory answers.² One young interviewee told the reporter: 'I don't understand



Cultural Revolution political study session

Source: klarititemplateshop.com

ancient times'. Another thought the Cultural Revolution was connected to the Nanjing Massacre of 1937–1938, when occupying Japanese soldiers raped and/or murdered hundreds of thousands of civilians. Some, thanks to family stories for example, knew more than others, but in general interviewees blamed their ignorance on the lack of public discussion and incomplete history texts. Not surprisingly, when Phoenix Television's posted an account of the exercise on **Weibo**, the authorities quickly deleted it.

The CCP's reticence about the Cultural Revolution's anniversary reflects its approach to handling inconvenient aspects of its history in general: first, by distancing itself, and then by blocking any further probing. On the fortieth anniversary of Mao Zedong's death on 9 September, the Party followed a similar strategy. While state-run media issued conditional praise for the 'Great Helmsman', President Xi Jinping made no mention of the anniversary, nor was there any official tribute.

Slideshows of the leader on **Sohu** 搜狐 and **Sina** 新浪, blocked the ‘user comments’ option to prevent controversial comments.

China’s burgeoning online neo-Maoist communities, however, took advantage of the official silence to discuss both the Cultural Revolution and Mao in favourable terms. According to the **Global Times**, on 9 September over two million online users participated in a virtual flower-laying campaign on

WeChat in remembrance of Mao.³ A commentary that ran on the neo-Maoist website Utopia 乌有之乡 proclaimed, ‘Mao was a great Chinese leader who changed the country and the world. This is a fact that even Mao’s enemies have to admit.’ But the title of the piece was even more revealing: ‘All errors originate from the assessment that Mao made errors’ 一切错误源于认定毛主席有错误.⁴

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CHINA STORY YEARBOOK | Regulating Old Towns: The Battle for the Tourist Yuan
2016 | Zhu Yijie

REGULATING OLD TOWNS: THE BATTLE FOR THE TOURIST YUAN

Zhu Yujie

FOR LIJIANG OLD TOWN 丽江古城, 1 June 2016 was not a happy day. More than 800 hostels, guesthouses, and shops refused to open their doors. They had made a collective decision to protest against the local government's insistence that they collect an eighty-yuan 'conservation fee' 维护费 from foreign and domestic tourists. The shop owners, mainly migrants from other parts of China, complained

that the seemingly arbitrary nature of the request was hurting business. The three-day protest resulted in a dramatic decrease in tourist numbers — transforming this popular vacation spot into a ghost town.

Lijiang was not the only case of unrest in the tourist industry in 2016. On 31 May, business owners staged a similar protest in the old town of Dukezong 独克宗古城 — a Tibetan town



Lijiang Old Town

Source: Wikimedia Commons



In June 2006, businesses in Lijiang Old Town closed their doors to protest against the implementation of the admission fee

Source: china.org.cn

that in 2001 successfully changed its name to Shangri-La 香格里拉 to attract tourists and investments. That these protests took place in ‘old towns’ 古城 was not a coincidence. In recent years, city and provincial governments have developed a number of ‘old towns’ to invigorate the tourism and heritage industry. Old towns, like those of Lijiang and Shangri-La, both in Yunnan province, have since become playgrounds for business investors from other Chinese cities. The resulting tensions between local authorities and shop owners reflect a long-term battle for control over profits and regulation.

After being listed as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1997, the old town of Lijiang became one of China’s most popular destinations for both international and domestic tourists. Since then, the Lijiang government has

gone through a series of institutional reforms. In 2005, the government established the Lijiang Old Town Conservation and Management Bureau (LCMB). This new agency has become an exclusive authority with responsibility for heritage governance in Lijiang. According to the Regulation on the Protection of Lijiang 丽江保护条例, the LCMB is in charge of implementing the conservation law, preserving cultural relics, enhancing infrastructure and public utilities, and facilitating marketing and business development. The heritage office is authorised to impose a fine on any individual or organisation that disobeys the Regulation on the Protection of Lijiang.

As a key player in redistributing heritage resources and establishing related regulations, the local heritage agency can organise social, cultural, and economic activities without strictly following national directives. In other words, the powers and policy discretion of the LCMB means it can implement policies in its own interests. Since the central government has not categorised the old town as a scenic area or national park, according to national law, the local government should not charge an admission fee to tourists. To generate income for the conservation and development of the

old town, the LCMB introduced a ‘conservation fee’ in 2001 — a local administrative charge allegedly to support heritage conservation. The conservation fee did not bother most tourists in the beginning, as there were no strict enforcement measures in place. Things have changed since July 2015, when the LCMB established more than a hundred stations in the old town to check if tourists had paid the conservation fees. This policy suddenly made waves — a number of tourists chose not to visit the old town during the daytime, as they were reluctant to pay the fees. This had driven down profits for most local businesses, eventually leading to the 2016 protest.

The confrontation was not only about profits. It is also part of a battle for power over local cultural resources between the bureaucracy and businesses. In China, governments at all levels implement top-down policies and solutions, whether or not they effectively ‘serve the people’. Decades of economic development and a flood of migrants and capital have changed the social and economic ecology of Lijiang Old Town. Local business owners, the majority of whom are from coastal areas, have started to fight the regulatory framework that they see as impinging on their freedom and profits. The

conservation fee came to be regarded as symbolic of the local government’s claim over the right to regulate and speak for local interests, including culture. The questions of who should profit from and ‘own’ the culture have become the key issues in the heritage management and governance of places such as Lijiang.

Where is the local community in this picture? Most of the value added in the tourism industry tends to be appropriated by the local government and outsiders, whose wealth, education, business skills, and networks make them the predominant force in the market. In Lijiang, the Naxi people — the original residents — find it difficult to keep up with the rapid changes in the tourism-dominated environment. As a result, an increasing number of local residents rent their houses to business people and move outside the old town. Places like Lijiang easily become stereotyped ‘theme parks’ in which local communities play a marginal role, entangled in the battle between local bureaucracies and business. It is in this struggle that old towns lose the very core of their cultural value.

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CHINA STORY YEARBOOK | Trouble with the Past
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TROUBLE WITH THE PAST

Nathan Woolley

IN LATE SEPTEMBER 1941, Japanese forces in Hebei surrounded a detachment of the Eighth Route Army and thousands of local inhabitants on Langya Mountain 狼牙山. One company was tasked with drawing enemy attention to allow the main force to slip away along with the civilians. They left a single squad to defend the peak. In the end, five men gallantly held their position to the last bullet, and when the bullets ran out, they threw stones. When they were sure the others had gotten away safely, they chose to leap off the mountain rather than surrender. Three perished, but two survived and made good their escape.

Official histories, children's textbooks, and artworks celebrate the

story of the 'Five Heroes of Langya Mountain', which was also made into a film in 1958. The shooting of a new 3D feature began in 2015 to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the iconic battle. In 2016, it was also the subject of a court ruling protecting the reputation of the soldiers involved.



Still from the film, *Five Heroes of Langya Mountain*
Source: Xinhuanet

The issue goes back to August 2013. The Guangzhou Public Security Bureau 广州市公安局 detained Zhang Guanghong 张广红, a resident of Guangzhou, for posting remarks on Sina **Weibo** that questioned the accuracy of the official account. He suggested that the soldiers involved had bullied local inhabitants. Following reports of the case in state media, Hong Zhenkuai 洪振快, then executive editor with the scholarly journal *Yanhuang Chunqiu* (see Chapter 4, ‘The Language of Discipline’, pp.108–129), published articles raising further doubts about what actually happened on Langya Mountain, both on the website of Caijing in September and in *Yanhuang Chunqiu* in November. Drawing on contemporary reports, later accounts, and personal diaries, Hong questioned the location,



Hong Zhenkuai: questioned official accounts
Source: Baiké

the nature of the action, the means of escape, the number of casualties, and whether the soldiers stole local radishes.

In November 2013, Mei Xinyu 梅新育, an economist at the Institute of International Trade and Economic Co-operation of the Ministry of Commerce 商务部, used his Weibo account to call Hong and his editor at *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, Huang Zhong 黄钟, ‘sons of bitches’ 狗娘养的. Reposting Mei’s comments, Guo Songmin 郭松民, former air force pilot and now leftist commentator, repeated the epithet in his diatribe against ‘historical nihilists’ on Weibo. In March 2014, Hong and Huang sued them both for defamation. Zhang Guanghong’s appeal against his detention was rejected in May 2015. Hong and Huang lost their cases against Mei and Guo in December 2015 as well as their subsequent appeals.

In another case, Ge Changsheng 葛长生 and Song Fubao 宋福宝, sons of the two soldiers who escaped, sued Hong in August 2015 for defaming their fathers. Hong lost this case too in June 2016; he has stated he will continue to appeal.

In October 2016, the Supreme People’s Court issued a statement

calling these rulings ‘model cases’ (by Hong and Huang against Mei and Guo, and by Ge and Song against Hong). The court argued that by defaming the five soldiers who opposed foreign aggression, Hong had harmed not only the reputation and honour of heroic figures, but also the public interest. In rejecting Hong’s arguments, it stated that the interests of the CCP cannot be divided from the interests of the Chinese state or the Chinese people. It also questioned his use of sources.

Hong Zhenkuai and Huang Zhong lost their positions as editors at *Yanhuang Chunqiu*. The new editors invited both Mei Xinyu and Guo Songmin to a meeting addressing the future of the journal.

The arguments might seem pedantic in nature, but in the eyes of the Party-state, they amount to nothing less than questioning the historical justification for the Party’s right to rule. The actions of Communist forces in the War of Resistance Against Japan (also known as the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945), and the stories told about them, are a block in the foundations of the historical legitimacy of Communist Party rule. As such, the Party does not see them as a suitable topic for debate.



Ge Changsheng and Song Fubao at a ceremony in Beijing for ‘protecting the reputation of the heroes of Langya Mountain’
Source: wuzxwk.com

Investigation of recent history may be sensitive, but these are still exciting times for historians of China. Chinese research institutions now have access to an unprecedented range of resources, including online materials. This has led to rapid growth in the field of historical enquiry, widening the scope of research and demanding greater rigour in the application of historical method and the integration of foreign scholarship, notably from Japan and the West. But new opportunities bring new challenges.

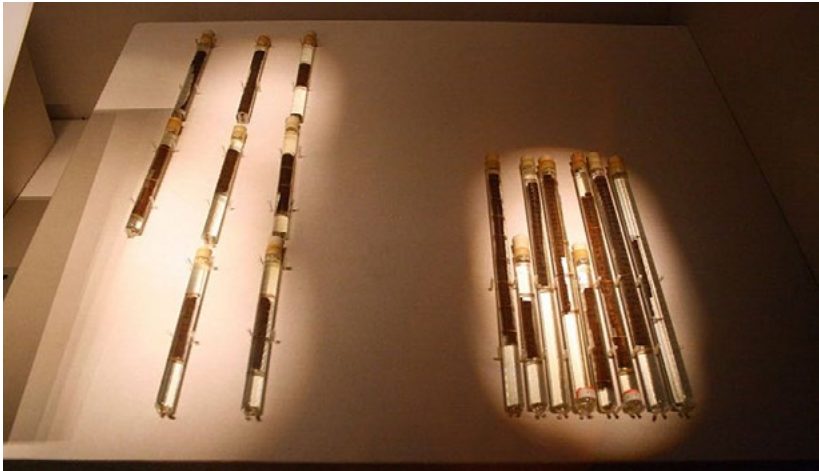
The discovery in modern times of bamboo manuscripts dating from the centuries before the Common Era have revolutionised understanding of this formative period of Chinese history. Celebrated finds from the 1970s to the 1990s unearthed from tombs in documented digs, have challenged many assumptions about the nature of early Chinese history. Unfortunately, in recent years, collections of bamboo slips have appeared on the antiques market without provenance, presumably looted. Such undocumented collections have now been acquired by a number of significant museums

and universities in China, prompting unease in the academic community. By acquiring them, are institutions supporting theft and damage? Are academics engaged in their study in any way culpable? And are all these collections, purchased at significant sums, even authentic and not just forgeries? A spirited exchange of views on these matters occurs in private conversations, but published concerns remain few due to the reputational damage that may ensue.

Scholars working on other periods are also adjusting to the appearance of new sources. For medieval times, tomb inscriptions unearthed in large numbers, often unwittingly in

the process of urban and rural development, provide a wealth of information on individual lives in the remote past. Ongoing efforts to marshal and analyse their content are likely to last for years.

Historians of the Qing and the Republican period, meanwhile, are turning their attention to hitherto unexamined materials preserved in official archives and elsewhere. Some require sensitivity to the rights of people alive today: families don't always appreciate the examination of diaries or documents involving deceased relatives, while religious communities might not benefit from published studies of texts describing their antecedents.



Inscribed bamboo slips of *The Art of War*, unearthed on Yinque Mountain, Linyi, Shandong in 1972
Source: Wikimedia Commons

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CULTURE: IN AND OUT OF CONTROL

Linda Jaivin

A cinema in Shanghai

Source: SimonQ 錫濠 譚, Flickr



FIFTY YEARS AGO, Mao launched the decade-long, ultra-violent Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution 无产阶级文化大革命. (See Forum 'Dreaded Anniversaries: The Cultural Revolution and Mao Zedong', pp.135-137.) The Cultural Revolution gave extreme expression to his view, first articulated in Yan'an in 1942, that the arts must take ideological direction from the Party and that artists must devote themselves to advancing its policies.

More than any post-Mao leader before him, Xi Jinping has modelled his cultural policies on those of Mao, from the clampdown on the expression of dissent and on ‘Western values’ in the classroom to his insistence that filmmakers and others spend a month each year in the countryside, at mines, or in other impoverished areas.

Yet ever since Deng Xiaoping introduced market-based reforms, beginning in the 1980s and accelerating in the 1990s, the Party has been slashing the subsidies that once made every theatre and film studio a state enterprise and every artist and writer a state employee. The introduction of market forces into the cultural economy had the unintended effect of limiting the Party’s ability to force art to serve as a conduit for propaganda. It also enabled the growth of independent theatre, and commercial and artistic filmmaking, as well as the contemporary art scene. This hasn’t ended the Party’s attempts to control the direction of culture, including through censorship, but it has limited its efficacy. Over the years, a de facto compromise was reached: the Party implicitly acknowledged that not all artistic practice had to serve ideology, while those working in the arts understood that they were not to directly challenge it either. But Xi appears determined to put the arts under control once more.



Mao Zedong (sixth from right in the first row) at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art
Source: Wikipedia

In November 2016, the National People's Congress passed a new law to regulate China's film industry. The Film Industry Promotion Law 电影产业促进法 is China's first 'film law', and it proscribes the fraudulent reporting of box office takings



The Film Industry Promotion Law was passed in November 2016
Source: Chinanews.com

and other cons particular to the industry, and introduces measures to improve the access of the rural population to film. But it also demands that filmmakers 'serve the people and serve socialism', and pledges government support for films that champion 'socialist core values'. It bars cooperation with foreign individuals and entities deemed to have damaged China's 'national dignity, honour and interests' or 'hurt the feelings of the Chinese people', and stipulates that actors be 'excellent in both moral integrity and film art'. Finally, while streamlining some of the red tape around project approvals, it also strengthens state supervision and censorship.

Yet, as any good Marxist would know, the theory of historical materialism — in which, simply put, politics does not exist independently of a society's modes of production — means that short of returning to a situation in which the Party fully funds the arts, it cannot control them in any absolute sense. The reality is that the Party today must compete for control over culture with the market — or to put it another way, with popular taste, which it can attempt to guide, but cannot always command. It still tries. But a number of incidents in 2016 illustrate that the results are not entirely predictable.



Still from the promotional trailer for *My War*

Source: YouTube

Their War Too

One of the state-owned China Film Group's big films for 2016 was *My War* 我的战争 — an historical drama about the Korean War, inspired by the 1961 novel *Reunion* 团圆 by the late novelist Ba Jin 巴金, and directed by the Hong Kong filmmaker Oxide Pang 彭順. The story is about the Chinese 'volunteers' who fought the Americans on the side of the North Koreans.

A promotional trailer for *My War* premiered online in advance of the film's September release. It starred a literal busload of famous old Chinese actors playing the grandparents of the film's stars on a sightseeing trip to Seoul. When the enthusiastic young South Korean tour guide starts telling them about her city, the old people interrupt. 'Miss,' says one with a grin, 'we've been here before.' She is surprised, saying that according to their passports, they'd never been to Korea. 'We didn't use passports back then,' one responds cheerfully. The tour guide is confused. Another explains: 'We came carrying the Red Flag'. She still doesn't get it, so the old people tell her to check out the film *My War* — she'll understand then, they assure her.

The Chinese Internet exploded with commentary, much of it highly critical of the trailer. After all, the war ended with the Korean peninsula divided, and China's North Korean allies went on to found one of the world's most repressive regimes — which, in recent years, has been both

a worry and an embarrassment for China, its sole, if teeth-gritting ally. Many Chinese treat North Korea as a joke, or as a reflection on how far China has come since the days of the Cultural Revolution. They refer to Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un by the disrespectful nicknames ‘Fatty Number One’ 一胖, ‘Two’ 二胖, and ‘Three’ 三胖. By contrast, the Chinese public is fond of South Korean television series, film stars, and singers. South Korea itself has become an important trading partner, and the largest expatriate population in Beijing is made up of South Koreans.

The trailers’ producers clearly expected to tap into Internet patriotism. Instead it incited widespread fury and contempt. Internet commentators called the trailer disgusting and insensitive both to the suffering of the South Koreans in the war and the brutality of war in general. ‘If Japanese people who travel to Nanjing boasted that they’d been there before, carrying the Rising Sun flag, how would Chinese people feel about it?’, one person asked on **Weibo**. Some called for a boycott of the film even though Oxide Pang protested that he had had nothing to do with the trailer.

My War debuted on the day of the Mid-Autumn Festival (usually a good day for the box office) at number six, with a national box office take of RMB 9.25 million. To put that in perspective, the top-grossing film that day was *A Chinese Odyssey: Part 3* 大话西游3 — a Hong Kong-Chinese ‘fantasy comedy drama’, which raked in RMB 84.9 million. Ahead of *My War* at number five was *Star Trek Beyond*, already out in China for a full two weeks but still able to take in RMB 12.12 million on the day.

No Other China

No Other Love 没有别的爱 — the second film by popular and respected actor-director Vicki Zhao 赵薇 — was also set to be one of China’s biggest films in 2016. Instead it became the source of one of the year’s biggest controversies. *No Other Love* was heading into post-production in June when the Communist Youth League 共青团 (CYL) launched a social media campaign against one of its stars, Leon Dai 戴立忍. Dai is a popular Taiwan actor-director who has previously starred in such films as *Assassin* 刺

客轟隱娘, for which Taiwanese filmmaker Hou Hsiao-hsien 侯孝賢 won Best Director at Cannes in 2015.

Accusing Dai of supporting both Taiwan's independence and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement for democracy 雨傘運動, the CYL proclaimed a 'universal boycott [of the film] by internet users'. Dai stated in response that he supported gay rights and was against nuclear power and oppression in general but said that it wasn't accurate to describe him as supporting Taiwan's independence. The somewhat ambiguous denial didn't satisfy the CYL and what had become a fired-up Internet army of critics. After several months of inaction, Zhao — who herself was viciously trolled on social media — dropped Dai from the film, which then had to be largely re-shot. Zhao publically affirmed, on behalf of her whole team, her 'whole-hearted' dedication to the one-China policy, stating, 'Our country's interests are our top priorities'.

But the ideologues and patriots of the Internet soon had another of Zhao's actors in their sights: Audrie Kiko Daniel, aka Kiko Mizuhara 水原希子, a Japanese-American. They accused her of being a young woman who was photographed from behind while visiting Japan's controversial



Leon Dai
Source: zh.wikipedia.org

Yasukuni Shrine, which honours Class-A war criminals among other Japanese war dead. They also claimed she was the young woman in another photo, her face partly covered by a mask, posing in front of the Rising Sun flag that is symbolic of Japan's militaristic past, and that was in use when the country invaded China in 1937. In a sombre video, speaking Mandarin, Mizuhara denied that she was the woman in either of the photos, but nonetheless apologised to the Chi-

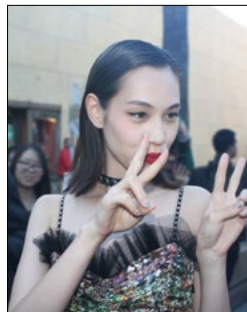


Vicki Zhao
Source: zh.wikipedia.org

nese people for any offence or hurt caused. As a bonus, she expressed regret at having ‘liked’ on social media Ai Weiwei’s 艾未未 famous photograph of himself raising his middle finger to Tiananmen.

It wasn’t the year’s first arts-related public apology. Back in January, sixteen-year-old Taiwan K-Pop singer Chou Tzu-yu 周子瑜 was ordered by her management to apologise to the people of mainland China (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Information Window ‘Huang An’s Witch Hunt for Taiwanese Independence Supporters’, pp.256–257). Her crime was waving a flag of the Republic of China (Taiwan’s flag) on South Korean TV — an act that sparked expressions of outrage across the Chinese Internet on the presumption that she advocated Taiwan’s independence. Mainland promoters and sponsors cancelled shows and contracts. ‘There’s only one China’, she said on the video. ‘The two sides of the Taiwan Strait are one. I will always consider myself as a Chinese person and feel proud of this.’ Her apology sparked great indignation in Taiwan, however, and the popular satirical news animation website To-moNews lampooned it as a ‘lame, ISIS-esque forced apology video’. Facebook users in Hong Kong and Taiwan launched a First Annual Apologies to China Contest.¹

The contest was a joke, but had it been real, it would conceivably have no lack of future contestants, especially as the careers of filmmakers, actors, singers, and other artists from the greater Chinese world become ever more dependent on the mainland market. A subsequent report in the Hong Kong tabloid *Apple Daily* 苹果日报 claimed that the Chinese government was forcing actors and other performers to pledge not to undermine the ‘one China’ policy before being allowed to work in the mainland. The panic stirred by the report was such that the State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office felt compelled to issue a formal statement of denial.



Kiko Mizuhara
Source: Wikipedia

By mid-July, **Xinhua** News Agency, the *People's Daily*, and other important state media had begun to criticise what it called the 'recent outpouring of "irrational patriotism" on social media'. An article in the *Global Times* condemned online calls for Chinese consumers to boycott foreign products and defended Vicki Zhao from the increasingly insidious attacks on her character and reputation that followed the Leon Dai scandal. The paper quoted a commentator on the *People's Daily's* official **WeChat** account cautioning Internet users not to 'use the name of patriotism falsely against our own people'.

Digital Boom

The government strictly controls standard (paper) publishing in China: publishers must be licensed, and books are subject to censorship. Beginning in the late 1990s, however, the Internet became a place where many writers — especially younger, unpublished ones — posted stories, poems, and even novels. While there is still censorship, the sheer volume of Internet publishing is such that it has become a space that is so difficult to police that it enjoys relatively free expression, albeit one that is generally used for non-politically challenging genre fiction. By 2013, Internet literature had become such a phenomenon that the managing director of Penguin China, Jo Lusby, was confident in declaring that, 'There are no authors under the age of thirty-five who were not discovered on the Internet'.²

Today, despite some problems with piracy, the most popular Internet authors are making a good living, including from the sale of rights to makers of cartoons, films, and television shows. The digital sphere is also revolutionising the ways in which musicians and singers can earn an income from their music. As elsewhere, the availability of free online music has driven the incomes of many Chinese musicians down to the point of unsustainability. But a concerted drive to crack down on illegal downloads together with clever marketing platforms (including that of **Alibaba** Music, which may offer fans who place enough album orders the chance to have

a photo taken with their idol, for example) have led to a significant rise in digital sales. According to statistica.com, Chinese music fans spent the equivalent of US\$390 million on digital purchases and paid streaming in 2016; digital sales are predicted to rise 22.2 percent annually for the next five years.

Exporting Culture

South Korean television series have long been popular in China. By 2016, Chinese serials were able to claim growing numbers of fans among South Korean audiences as well. The trend kicked off in late 2015 with the tremendous success of *Nirvana in Fire* 琅琊榜 on South Korean cable TV. *Nirvana in Fire* reached number six in the ratings — a rare achievement for a non-Korean show. Russia and Tanzania are among other newly enthusiastic markets for Chinese television serials; lecturers in audio visual translation from Communications University of China visited Tanzania in 2016 to help train local subtitle translators (who render the Chinese dialogue into Swahili).

The introduction of new markets is good news for the Chinese television industry. As the *Global Times* reported in September, there is so much over-production of television drama in China that of 15,000–19,000 episodes filmed over



Nirvana in Fire
Source: Wikipedia



First Chinese film festival in Milan

Source: news.cn

the last five years, only 9,000 were ever broadcast. One reason for overproduction is corruption: station executives accepting bribes in exchange for buying surplus programs. In 2015, the former president and Party secretary of the Anhui Broadcasting Corporation 安徽电视台 stood trial for spending RMB 2.4 billion on programs he couldn't possibly hope to broadcast while taking RMB 11.4 million in kickbacks from producers, advertisers, singers, and actors.³

In 2016, Chinese cinema, which has enjoyed a presence on the international festival and art-house circuit for three decades, had an exceptional year abroad. Italy's first Chinese Film Festival opened in September in Milan (home to Italy's oldest and largest Chinese community) with some forty films and forums, and there were satellite events in Venice, Rome, Florence, and Turin. That same month, filmmaker Jia Zhangke's 贾樟柯 company Fabula Entertainment announced a film development, production, and international distribution deal with the Paris-based Mk2 — a production and distribution company associated with such art-house stars as Xavier Dolan and Olivier Assayas as well as Jia, himself a two-time Palme d'Or nominee. The Toronto Film Festival, meanwhile, named its new world cinema section 'Platform' in honour of Jia's 2000 film by the same name.

Feng Xiaogang's 冯小刚 2016 film *I am Not Madame Bovary* 我不是潘金莲, which collected more than RMB 340 million at the box office in China, went on to win two awards including Best Film at the San Sebastian Film Festival in Spain's Basque Country, the International Critics Award in Toronto, and a stack of gongs including Best Film, Best Director, and Audience Choice at Taiwan's Golden Horse Awards.

Exporting Censorship

In January 2016, the independent, low-budget Hong Kong film *Ten Years* 十年 unexpectedly became a local sensation. The film offers a grim, dystopian view of Hong Kong in 2025, in which Cantonese can't be spoken, houses are bulldozed, and a protester in favour of Hong Kong independence self-immolates before the British consulate. It screened to packed houses, outselling even *Star Wars* in at least one Hong Kong megaplex cinema. Then, suddenly, its distributors, the Broadway Circuit cinema chain, pulled it from the screens. A spokesperson said that 'they had too many other films to show' — but the explanation fooled no one.

The *Global Times* had called *Ten Years* a 'virus of the mind'. Defiant, the jury for the thirty-fifth annual Hong Kong Film Awards in April gave *Ten Years* the prize for Best Film. **CCTV** immediately cancelled plans to broadcast the awards ceremony and blocked the signals from Hong Kong television stations when they began their own broadcasts. The film continued to play to full houses at universities in Hong Kong and privately organised screenings. It also packed out the Walter Reade Theater at New York's Lincoln Center for a screening in July as part of the city's Asian Film Festival.

By the time Chan Tsz-woon's 陳梓桓 documentary on Hong Kong's pro-democracy Umbrella Movement, *Yellowing* 亂世備忘, premiered in Hong Kong in September, it was unable to get any commercial distribution and screened only at 'guerrilla screenings'. Even the Asia Society cancelled a planned screening, saying that it was a 'non-partisan' organisation and only pro-democracy speakers had accepted invitations to speak at an as-



Still from the film *Ten Years*
Source: YouTube

sociated panel — Chan told *The New York Times* that he had tried to invite people with a pro-Beijing viewpoint to speak, but had no success. As with *Ten Years*, no-one admitted to direct pressure from mainland authorities to deny the film distribution.

The long hand of Chinese censorship extends beyond the film world. Bangladesh formally joined China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Forum 'One Belt One Road: International Development Finance with Chinese Characteristics', pp.245–250) in October. Bangladesh's leaders see OBOR as a golden opportunity for the country to achieve its goal of becoming a 'middle income' country by 2021. But when the Chinese ambassador visited the pan-Asian Dhaka Art Summit back in February, he reportedly 'exploded' at the discovery of an artwork called *Last Words*, which consisted of letters written by five of around 150 Tibetans who have self-immolated in protest against Chinese rule since 2009. According to the Dharamshala-based artists Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin, he demanded that the artwork 'be removed immediately or [the organisers] would face the consequences'. In the end, they agreed to cover the letters — which the artists noted remained available online — with white sheets of paper. Sarin called it an incident of 'bullying'. Sonam told *The Indian Express* that the public response to the incident had been 'wonderful', and it had raised awareness in Dhaka of Tibet's situation. They issued a statement saying, 'The fact that the Chinese government continues to dictate its terms on other nations with arrogance and impunity and tries to shut down every avenue of expression for us in exile to raise our voices on behalf of our beleaguered compatriots in Tibet, will only make us redouble our efforts.'

Back in China, the first Yinchuan 银川 Biennale, in the northwestern Ningxia Hui autonomous region, opened in September. The curator, Mumbai-based artist Bose Krishnamachari, had invited the artist-provocateur Ai Weiwei to take part. Ai Weiwei, who had been allowed to stage a solo exhibition in 2015, would have been one of more than seventy artists from thirty-three countries including China to exhibit.



The artwork *Last Words*

Source: Wisfa Nazreen, Flickr

Ai Weiwei promptly declared the architecture of the Yinchuan Museum that was hosting the biennale ‘horrible’ and said he wanted to exhibit outside instead. When the organisers drew a red line on a photo of the museum to indicate where he could show his work, he decided to call it *Redline*. It would reprise his early work *Hanging Man* (a coat hanger bent into the silhouette of the artist Marcel Duchamp), but on a larger scale and constructed with steel rods collected from the rubble of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. He told *The New York Times*, ‘It’s not political and it is political at the same time’. (The earthquake is a politically sensitive topic.) Just weeks before the biennale’s opening, the museum’s artistic director, Suchen Hsieh, wrote to Ai Weiwei: ‘The autumn wind is blowing around us’. She rescinded the invitation with her ‘deep apologies’.

The prominent British-Indian artist Anish Kapoor, who had marched hand in hand with Ai Weiwei in London in support of migrants and refugees,

declared the censorship unacceptable and contemplated withdrawing from the show, saying that to stay in meant being ‘on the side of the authorities’. In the end, he stayed. Ai Weiwei’s response on Twitter: ‘No artist has reacted to the political victimization of a fellow artist. Unsurprising for the Chinese art market.’

Out of Control

Chinese authorities may keep a lid on discussion of the Cultural Revolution at home, but they were surely blindsided by the shortlisting for the prestigious Man Booker Prize of Canadian-Chinese writer Madeleine Thien’s novel, *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*. The novel is set against decades of revolutionary turbulence in China, including the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen protests, putting these events firmly in the minds of English language readers around the world. It subsequently won other major awards in Canada.

In November, *The Wall Street Journal* asked Thien if she thought her book would ever be published in mainland China. She answered:

A few publishers have been in touch. They’ve talked about it in different ways — like if we took out the last third [involving Tiananmen], we could publish. But nobody wants to publish it that way. The only person who’s actually open to it is me. It fits in with the book, with the idea that the ‘Book of Records’ exists in fragments, that there’s going to be one record here and another there and that it’s ongoing. I almost wish they’d publish it and let it end mid-sentence.



Man Booker Prize shortlisted novel, *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*
Source: goodreads.com

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MIND, BODY, AND SOUL

**Govern the Country and Bring Peace to All:
The Crisis in New Confucian Education**

· CRAIG A. SMITH

Cups, Needles, and Noxious Blood

· NATALIE KÖHLE

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GOVERN THE COUNTRY AND BRING PEACE TO ALL: THE CRISIS IN NEW CONFUCIAN EDUCATION

Craig A. Smith

ON 31 DECEMBER 2015, Xi Jinping and members of the Politburo held a ‘group study session’ to end the year. They invited Tsinghua University professor Chen Lai 陈来, one of China’s best-known ‘New Confucian’ 新儒家 scholars, to lead the group in a study of the concept of patriotism. Confucianism and patriotism have become deeply intertwined as Chinese elite search for a Chinese path in the twenty-first century.

While condemned during the Cultural Revolution, over the last twenty years Confucianism has returned with a vengeance. The revival has extended from the academy, where it is championed by scholars such as Chen Lai

and Kang Xiaoguang 康晓光 of Renmin University, to the realm of popular culture. Various Communist Party leaders in recent years have spoken of the importance of Confucian values. But not everyone welcomes back the sage. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilising China*, Chapter 7 ‘Fitting Words’, p.396.) Among those who do, opinion is divided between those who emphasise Confucianism as a philosophy integral to Chinese culture and national identity; those who emphasise that its lessons are crucial for the re-inspiring of the Chinese body politic; and those who emphasise it as a religion, with Confucius turned into an object of worship.



The Wenli Academy

Source: wenli.ac.cn

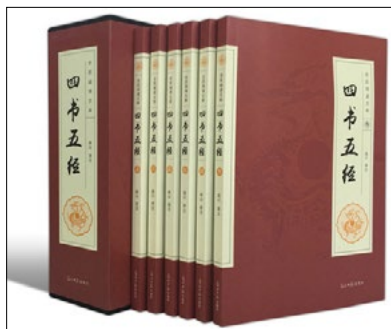
In 2016, the discourse around Confucius became particularly divisive. The reasons for this go back to the National Studies Fever 国学热 of the 1990s. National Studies Fever had swept the country as a new generation of Chinese searched for an approach to modern life beyond the dichotomy of liberalism and Marxism. The 1980s had ended on an ominous note for advocates of liberalism with the violent suppression of the democracy protests of 1989. In 1990, the government launched a massive, concerted Patriotic Education 国情教育 campaign in schools and across the media. Whether motivated by altruism, a belief that patriotism and Confucianism were intertwined, the chance to make money, or all three, private schools for the study of the Confucian Classics began to spring up.

Believing that mastery of the Confucian texts would ensure a good future for their children, or just frustrated with the dominant system of public education, some parents enrolled their children in private Confucian academies for the study of the Classics 读经学校. There are now around 2,000 of these schools in China, although the vast majority are small in scale; few have more than a hundred students.

These schools have adopted a system designed by the Taiwanese Confucian scholar Wang Caigui 王财贵, who also heads China's largest institute for the study of Confucian Classics, the Wenli Academy 文礼书院 in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. The Wenli Academy has become the school that students aspire to attend after they have memorised the fundamental texts at schools for younger Confucians. Stu-

dents at these priming schools must spend their first ten years memorising the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics* 四书五经. They also study some Buddhist texts, as well as important works of philosophy and literature from China, India, and the West, including Shakespeare in the original English. It is not until after ten years of rote learning that students can apply to the Wenli Academy. If they can pass the entrance exam, which requires the flawless recitation of texts totalling 300,000 characters, they can then begin interpreting and discussing the texts. The broader goal extends beyond philosophical education: it aims for nothing less than the promotion of sagely leaders for a much more 'Chinese' China.

On 29 August 2016, the *Beijing News* 新京报 published an article titled 'Broken Dreams of Sageliness for a Youth Reading the Classics' 读经少年圣贤梦碎. Luo Ting 罗亭, one of the authors of the article, met with many students, parents, and former students from these schools. She found that after ten years of reading and re-reading these texts, the students were often left feeling frustrated by the lack of practical applications for their skills, disappointed by their failure to fully grasp the texts they were reading, and



Four Books and Five Classics: the basis of traditional learning since ancient times

Source: AliExpress.com

desperate to escape this alternative system of education. What's more, after years of what is often mockingly termed 'sagely education' 圣贤教育, they found themselves lacking the basic educational requirements for the notoriously difficult *gaokao* 高考 university entrance examinations.

Wang Caigui, as the founder of this system, felt the ire of the Chinese Internet after the article trended on **WeChat**. But the *Beijing News* article had not been the first to criticise Wang's model of Confucian education. On 7 May, Tongji University Professor of Humanities Ke Xiaogang 柯小刚, a scholar of the New Confucian school, made a presentation to the Shanghai Confucianism Association 上海儒学大会, titled 'Contemporary Confucian Education' 当代的儒学教育. The Con-

fucian Net 儒家网 — a website with a reputation for being at the heart of Confucian discourse in China — posted the text of his talk that evening.

Ke argued that the ‘anti-systemic movement to read the Classics’ 反体制读经运动 represented by Wang’s Wenli Academy and schools was as much an organised system as the official education system that it proposed to replace. He criticised its focus on recitation over interpretation, stressing that Confucianism, properly understood, had a critical nature. Academics discussed his critique, but the general public took little notice of it until the issue became a matter of popular debate following publication of the article in the *Beijing News* in August.

Ke Xiaogang responded to that article only days after it was published, on 2 September, with a piece of his own in *The Paper* 澎湃, one of China’s most popular websites for intellectuals since its creation in 2014, despite considerable sustained control by the Party: ‘We don’t want to attack the reading of the Classics, we want to assist the reading of the Classics’ 不是要打到读经, 而是帮助读经. The article simply rebranded his speech from four months earlier for a broader audience. Although there was little new in what he said, Ke suc-



Ke Xiaogang
Source: thepaper.cn

cessfully took hold of the debate. As public interest in the problems with Confucian education was at a high, Ke was asked to do a public web chat through *The Paper*’s website.

During the web chat, Ke Xiaogang was much more forthright in his criticism of the movement and of Wang Caigui himself. *The Paper* called the discussion ‘Prevent the religionisation of the movement to read the Classics’ 防止民间读经走向宗教化. Although Wang and Ke had never met, they were now the de facto leaders of the movements for and against what Wang regularly refers to as ‘the conscientious and extensive pure reading of the Classics’ 老实大量纯读经.

As time passed, Ke became more vociferous in his denunciations of

Wang and his ideas, even accusing those aligned with him of being interested only in financial gain. But Wang's Wenli Academy openly and prophylactically posts all information related to the school's finances each month. The situation is more complex than the feud between Ke and Wang might seem to imply: the Wenli Academy also enjoys support from some figures in the mainland New Confucian 大陆新儒家 community. In mid-2016, the school announced plans for expansion. Whereas the original academy can accommodate less than one hundred students, it plans to build a huge

complex in Taishun County 泰顺县 — a remote area of Zhejiang, that will accommodate thousands of students by 2020. It remains to be seen whether the backlash from the *Beijing News* report and subsequent furore will affect those plans. From the school's perspective, the very future of China is what is at stake. As one of its teachers, Pei Zhiguang 裴志广 explained with a popular quote from the Confucian Classic *The Great Learning* 大学: 'These students are not being trained to be mere teachers! They will govern the country and bring peace to all!'

CUPS, NEEDLES, AND NOXIOUS BLOOD

Natalie Köhle

WHEN AMERICAN SWIMMER Michael Phelps won a gold medal at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, news of the strange, purplish polka dots across his shoulders raced around the world. International press featured reports on the medical treatment of cupping, increasingly popular among Olympians to aid their recovery from strenuous training. The media discussed the resemblance of these spots to love bites (both are created by suction), their value as a fashion statement (celebrities such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Victoria Beckham have been sporting them as well), and the pros and cons of cupping as medicine. Advocates of alternative medicine claim that, among other things, it detoxes the body, improves blood circulation, cures skin conditions and respiratory ailments, and boosts autoimmune response. David Colquhoun, professor of pharmacol-

ogy at University College London, has described such claims as ‘desperately implausible’, though. He told *The Independent*: ‘There’s no science behind it whatsoever. There’s some vague conceptual connection with acupuncture, and is often sold by the same people. But how could it possibly do anything? It’s nonsense.’¹



US swimmer Michael Phelps, Rio Olympics 2016
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Meanwhile in China, cupping was at the centre of one of 2016's biggest medical controversies, which was spurred by the death on 7 September of the popular twenty-six-year-old film and television actress and blogger Kitty Xu Ting 徐婷. Xu had T-cell lymphoma, but chose to forego chemotherapy for a course of cupping and other traditional medicinal treatments. Her death spurred a lively and anguished debate on Chinese social media about the relative advantages of and the relationship between Chinese and Western therapies.²

Cupping is a part of traditional Chinese medicine. It is ubiquitous in China; you can find 'The art of the pulling cup' 拔罐疗法 practiced at medical clinics 诊所, 国医堂, in the small medicine shops of the bonesetters 国术馆, and massage parlours 按摩院, 美容院 or even by curbside folk healers. As a delightful result of cross-cultural fertilisation, traditional Chinese cupping services are now also offered as part of a 'Roman bath' 罗马浴场. Practitioners use it to alleviate an array of disparate conditions ranging from muscular strains to migraines to indigestion, to name a few. In fact, it was not so long ago that Western doctors also practiced cupping. Yet that memory has van-



Curbside cupping with bamboo pipes in Haikou, China
Source: china.org.cn

ished so completely that people today speak of it as a novel introduction from the 'East'.

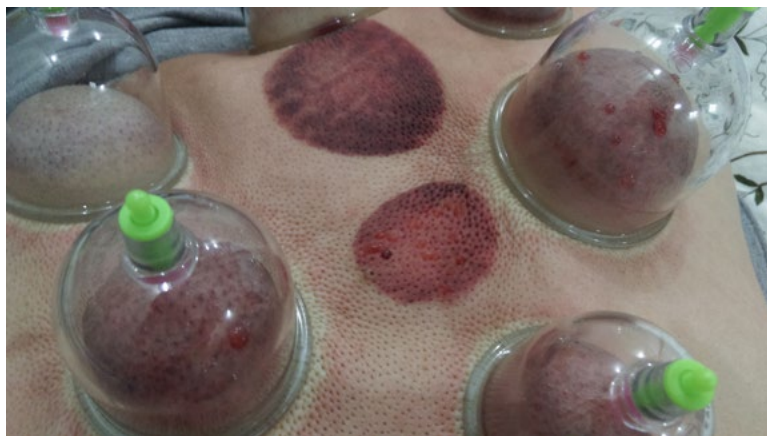
Both Eastern and Western traditions of cupping use similar techniques, and practice both dry and wet cupping (termed 'static' 留观法, 坐观法 and 'blood pricking' 刺血拔罐法 in Chinese). In dry cupping, heat or an air pump is used to create suction inside the cup, which pulls the skin up and away from the underlying muscles for five to fifteen minutes. The suction breaks some of the blood vessels, which causes the tell-tale circular bruises to appear. In the case of wet cupping, skin and underlying capillaries are perforated with a small lancet first, and thus a small amount of blood is let. In China, a further variant, 'moving cupping' 走罐法, 推观法, where suction cups are slid along anointed skin, and which is more closely relat-

ed to traditional Chinese massage 推拿, is also used. Historically, cupping was done with gourds (*cucurbita*) 南瓜, clay cups, animal horns 角法 or bamboo pipes 吸筒法. The latter are still used by some cuppers in China today.³

According to traditional Chinese medicine, cupping drains blood and *qi* stagnations 瘀血, 氣結 and flushes out external pathogens 邪, 寒, 風 that may have invaded the body. Experienced cuppers locate the places of stagnation with precision and draw from them livid blood. Western humoralism was based on the conception of a fluid body that is composed of humours — phlegm, bile, black bile, and blood — that threatened to putrefy when they

were in excess or ceased to flow and needed constant vigilance and manipulation to preserve the body's health. In this tradition, the practice of cupping is held to purge the body of putrid humors and *plethora* (excess blood), thought to cause such ailments as fevers, infections, gout or arthritic pain. In both traditions, cupping functions as mild evacuation therapy — that is, a gentle form of letting blood, comparable to the once widespread practice of leeching.

Early descriptions of bloodletting in Chinese medicine are found in the *Plain Questions* 素問 part of the foundational Classic of Chinese medicine, the *Classic of the Yellow Emperor* 皇帝內經 (first century BC). They pre-

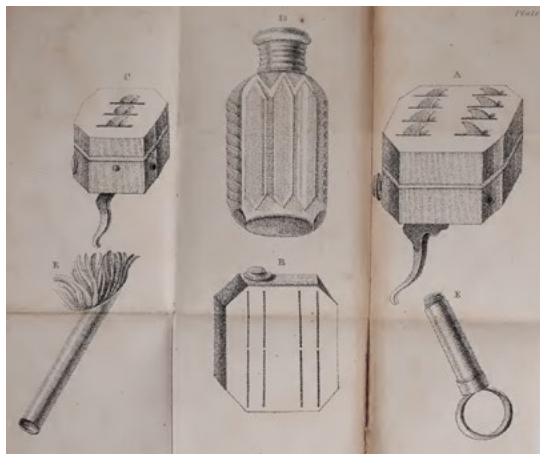


Wet cupping in a clinical setting
Source: Wikimedia Commons

scribed draining the blood from specific pain-related sites with lancets made from stone. Intriguingly, the *Hippocratic Treatises* (fifth-to-fourth century BCE) describe comparable site-specific bloodletting. In both traditions, these sites were located along isolated pathways that did not map onto later conceptions of *qi* meridians in China, or anatomical locations of the arteries in Greece. They could be quite far from the locus of the pain itself, such that Galen of Pergamon (129–c.210AD), for example, bled the inside of the ankles to relieve testicular pain.⁴

In both traditions, site-specific bloodletting largely disappeared after the classical period. In Greco-Roman medicine, it diverged into general and topical bleeding — that is, phlebotomy, or the practice of dis-localised bleeding by means of venesection, and superficial bleeding, such as cupping, leeching, or scarification. In Chinese medicine, site-specific bleeding evolved into acupuncture, in which fine needles are inserted into precisely defined points along the pathways (脉, 经络) of *qi*. This practice involves draining *qi* rather than blood.⁵

Yet cupping persisted in both China and the West. In China, it was mostly a folk practice, outside the scope of the written tradition, though learned



A) Full-sized scarificator; B) ditto for the perineum; C) small temple scarificator; D) spirit bottle; E) torch tube, unscrewing in the middle; Western medicine
Source: Hill, *A treatise on the operation of cupping* (London, 1839)

physicians from the Tang to the Yuan dynasties occasionally recommended ‘pricking veins’ 刺络 or ‘releasing blood’ 放血, and Qing dynasty compendia, such as the *Supplement to the Outline of Materia Medica* 本草綱目拾遺, document the technique of ‘fire cupping’ 火罐气 in greater detail. In Western medicine, topical bleeding and phlebotomy declined over the nineteenth century, despite the publication in the early part of that century of quite a number of learned treatises on the art of cupping, as well as technical innovations such as the ‘mechanical scarificator’, which made incisions more precise and less painful.⁶ The

rise of an energetic conception of body in conjunction with the discovery of medicinal chemical compounds led to the gradual demise of humoralism and provided powerful alternatives to the practice of evacuation therapies. But cupping was still being applied for pneumonia into the twentieth century. In 'How the Poor Die', George Orwell described a personal experience of the practice in the public ward of a Paris hospital in 1929:

First the doctor produced from his black bag a dozen small glasses like wine glasses, then the student burned a match inside each glass to exhaust the air, then the glass was popped on to the man's back or chest and the vacuum drew up a huge yellow blister. Only after some moments did I realize what they were doing to him. It was something called cupping, a treatment which you can read about in old medical text-books but which till then I had vaguely thought of as one of those things they do to horses. The cold air outside had probably lowered my temperature, and I watched this barbarous remedy with detachment and even a certain amount of amusement.

The next moment, however, the doctor and the student came across to my bed, hoisted me upright and without a word began applying the same set of glasses, which had not been sterilized in any way.⁷

The current cupping hype — along with enthusiasm for other evacuation therapies, such as leeching or colonic irrigation — suggests that ancient fears of festering humours and the compulsion to purge are making a come back in thinly disguised form of 'toxins' and 'detoxification'. Yet Western amnesia of the most basic practices of European medical heritage and the mystique of Chinese medicine are such that not only medical doctors like David Colquhoun, but even aficionados such as Gwyneth



Gwyneth Paltrow's cupping bruises
Source: Weibo

Paltrow — who has been using cupping for at least ten years — ignore the fact that less than one hundred years ago, it was still practiced in Europe. As Paltrow states: 'Eastern medicine has a different approach than [sic] Western medicine — it's more holistic'.⁸ While she would likely cringe at the thought of undergoing phlebotomy, she seems blissfully unaware that her therapy of

choice is precisely that: a mild form of bloodletting. Granting efficacy to humoral therapies seems ludicrous to most, but many seem willing to allow for their effectiveness as long as they perceive them as Chinese medicine. Yet history shows that cupping is a revival of Western humoralism as much as it is an alluring tradition from the East.



Historical illustration of a cupping session in a German bathhouse

Source: Wellcome Library, London. Engraving by C. Luyken (?)



Seventeenth-century buttock
cupping, taken from
*Exercitationes practicae
circa medendi methodum,
auctoritate, ratione,
observationibus plurimis
confirmatae ac figuris
illustratae*

Source: Wellcome Library, London.
Engraving by Frederik Dekkers

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CHINA STORY YEARBOOK | Reining in Religion
2016 | Benjamin Penny

REINING IN RELIGION

Benjamin Penny

WHEN XI JINPING came to power, some observers optimistically believed that the Party-state would loosen its control over religion. In particular, they speculated that Xi might relax restrictions on Tibetan Buddhists. There was reason for hope: as secretary general of the State Council, Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋, had overseen the last visits of the nineteen-year-old Dalai Lama and of the Panchen Lama to Beijing, and reportedly wore the watch the Tibetan spiritual leader had given him into his old age. In a 2012 interview that the Dalai Lama gave to Reuters, he remembered Xi Zhongxun as 'very friendly, comparatively more open-minded,

very nice'.⁹ Xi Jinping's wife, Peng Liyuan 彭丽媛, is a follower of Tibetan Buddhism and his own mother was buried with the full rites of that religion.¹⁰

By the end of 2016, these hopes had evaporated. A speech by Wu Yingjie 吴英杰, the Communist Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, reported in the *Tibet Daily* in December, left no doubt about the Party's stance. Speaking of the 'sinister intentions' of the Dalai Lama, Wu concluded that, 'the Party's leadership work over religion can only strengthen and not weaken'.¹¹ These developments come at the end of a year that began with the Religious Affairs Bureau 宗教事务局



Sanjiang Church, Wenzhou, before demolition
Source: Tom Phillips, Twitter



The demolition of Sanjiang Church
Source: Guo Baosheng, Twitter

launching what **Xinhua** called ‘an on-line system to check the authenticity of living buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism’,¹² and saw the progressive demolition of vast numbers of buildings belonging to what had become the biggest Tibetan Buddhist institute in the world, Larung Gar, in Sertar, eastern Tibet. The authorities’ stated goal was to reduce the population of the institute from more than 10,000 to 5,000 by October.¹³ As far as we know, they succeeded.

While these actions concerned Tibetan Buddhism — which has always been one of most sensitive areas of Chinese religious policy and administration — they are completely in step with other aspects of religious governance in 2016. In April, at a National Conference on Religious Work, Xi Jinping gave his first extended speech on religion. He insisted that religions should play a constructive social role, while working in a manner approved by the

Party and striving towards an ideal society as defined by the Party. Thus religions must ‘abide by Chinese laws and regulations, and devote themselves to China’s Reform and Opening Up drive and socialist modernisation in order to contribute to the realisation of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation.’ (See the *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilising China*, Forum ‘Chinese Dreams’, pp.4–13.) Another of Xi’s major themes, echoed in documents and reports from the so-called Patriotic Religious Organisations that administer each of the permitted religions in China, is that religions should adapt their teachings and practices to Chinese culture — essentially become ‘religions with Chinese characteristics’. Religious groups, Xi said, should ‘interpret religious doctrines in a way that is conducive to modern China’s progress and in line with our excellent traditional culture’.¹⁴ These instructions are aimed at

Protestant and Catholic Christianity, and especially Islam. At a conference on Islam in August, Guo Chengzhen 郭承真, Secretary-General of the Islamic Association of China 中国伊斯兰教协会, expressed particular concern over the influence of ‘Dawa missionary groups’ and ‘international Salafism’, which he claimed ‘have come to our country, to “purify” Islam.’¹⁵ He also maintained that Muslims who make their lives more ‘Islamic’ would not be abiding with the policy of Sinicisation.

The second major religious policy document of 2016 was the list of Draft Revisions to the 2005 Regulations on Religious Affairs, released in September. Comments on the Revisions closed in October but the final version is yet to be published. In broad terms, these Revisions maintain all the current state controls over religion, while strengthening the powers of the patriotic associations and the national-level State Administration for Religious Affairs.¹⁶ Some new provisions express concerns such as those voiced by Guo Chengzhen in more general terms, warning against the use of religion to harm national security, spread extremism, incite ethnic separatism, and inspire terrorism. Some measures appear to be directed specifical-

ly at Roman Catholicism. The Chinese authorities have always refused to accept the appointment of bishops by the Vatican. The Revisions specify that religious officials who ‘accept domination by external forces’ or ‘accept nomination for a religious office from a foreign religious organisation or institution without authorisation’ will become subject to legal action. Other parts of the Revisions simply reflect how changes in the world since 2005 have prompted a widening of the ambit of state control. One new provision, for example, extends existing controls over religious publishing to include online publishing.

A more intriguing addition to the Draft Revisions are the measures regulating ‘religious sites’. Once the Revisions are in force, approval or rejection of applications for ‘religious activity sites’ will be in the hands of municipal-level governments, which must take into account the ‘needs of urban planning’. This appears to reflect uncertainty over the legality of the extraordinary proliferation of all kinds of religious buildings across the country. As discussed in the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Xia Baolong 夏宝龙, the Party Secretary of Zhejiang province, had no hesitation

about this when he directed the demolition of some of Wenzhou city's larger churches and the removal of crosses from many others.

The Draft Revisions also state that it will be 'forbidden to build large-scale outdoor religious statues outside religious sites'. The specificity of this regulation indicates two concerns. One, as in Wenzhou, is with the increased visibility of religious symbols. The second pertains to the physical or geographical boundaries of religious sites. One of the best known of many new, huge, religious statues in China is the 108-metre high Guanyin of the South Sea 南山海上观音圣像 at Sanya in Hainan, completed in 2005. This gold and white colossus (the world's tallest statue of Guanyin and larger

than the Statue of Liberty) stands on an artificial island looking out to the South China Sea linked to the mainland by a long pier. The pier forms part of a promenade leading out from the vast, 40,000-square-metre Nanshan Temple 南山寺 complex, itself only completed in 1998. Is the statue part of this religious site? Or has its construction extended the boundaries of a religious site? What makes this even more interesting is that the whole area — statue and temple grounds — has been designated the Nanshan Buddhism Cultural Zone, which the China National Tourism Administration has classified as an AAAAA scenic area — the highest designation awarded to a tourism site. As a Priority Project of China Tourism Development, it is slated for even more



Larung Gar

Source: Wikimedia Commons

development. Will religious groups in future be able to use tourism development as an excuse for the erection of religious monuments?

When the revised regulations are implemented, these boundaries may become clear, or they may become a fresh site of struggle for control by competing agencies within the Party-state. Given that the Chinese authorities recently authorised the demolition of a thirty-six-metre gold-plated statue of a seated Mao Zedong in rural Henan in January, it will be interesting to see how many more traditionally religious giant statues will survive.¹⁷



July 2016: The demolition of Larung Gar
Source: Free Tibet, Flickr



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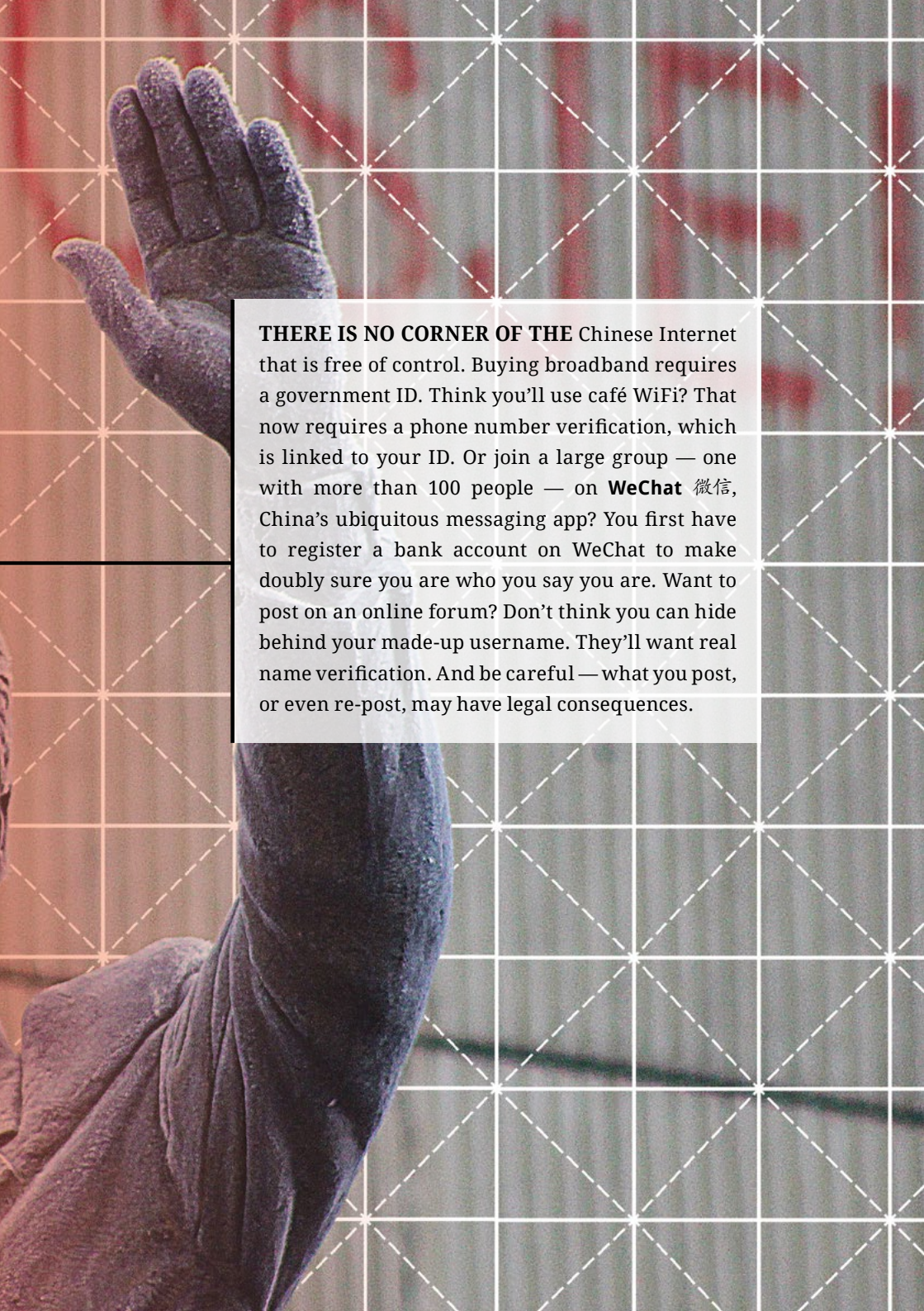
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'NAILING JELLO TO A WALL'

Lorand Laskai

Frozen statue of Bill Clinton in Pristina, Kosovo
Source: Agron Beqiri, Wikimedia Commons



A bronze statue of a hand reaching upwards, positioned on the left side of the frame. The background features a white grid pattern overlaid on a blurred image of a red and white sign with Chinese characters. A white text box is centered on the right side of the image.

THERE IS NO CORNER OF THE Chinese Internet that is free of control. Buying broadband requires a government ID. Think you'll use café WiFi? That now requires a phone number verification, which is linked to your ID. Or join a large group — one with more than 100 people — on **WeChat** 微信, China's ubiquitous messaging app? You first have to register a bank account on WeChat to make doubly sure you are who you say you are. Want to post on an online forum? Don't think you can hide behind your made-up username. They'll want real name verification. And be careful — what you post, or even re-post, may have legal consequences.

Back in 2014, Lu Wei 鲁炜, until recently the head of the Cyber Administration of China 国家互联网信息办公室 (CAC), said, ‘The Internet is like a car. If it has no brakes ... once it gets on the highway you can imagine what the end result will be. And so, no matter how advanced, all cars must have brakes.’ As China’s Internet gatekeeper, Lu was prone to metaphor about the need for order in cyberspace: in those same remarks, he described ‘freedom and order’ as ‘twin sisters’ that ‘must live together’.¹ The Chinese Internet of 2016 has more than just brakes — it is subject to a regime of ever-stricter control and supervision. A Chinese individual in 2016 has a better chance of anonymity offline than online, away from the thousand prying eyes of China’s army of censors.

In the early days of the Internet, many people globally assumed that cyberspace would elude the state’s effort to control it. US President Bill Clinton famously quipped in 2000 that controlling the Internet would be like ‘nailing jello to a wall’. ‘Liberty will spread by cell phone and phone modem’, he proclaimed. ‘Imagine how much it could change China.’²

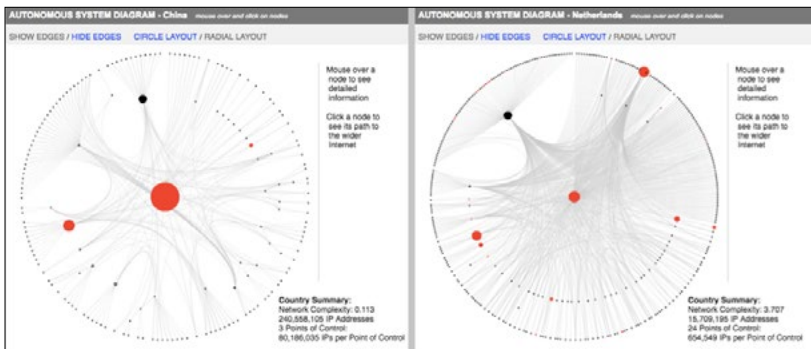
Chinese officials imagined just this — and then took steps to stop it. In the mid-1990s, China’s Ministry of Public Security 公安部 (MPS) kicked off its ‘Golden Shield Project’ 金盾工程 — a far-ranging attempt to harness emerging information technologies for policing.³ Officials envisioned the integration of citizens’ official files into a nationwide registry and the inception of data-driven surveillance. Yet they were also aware that developments in informational technology could outpace the speed at which the Party could control it. As the number of Internet users skyrocketed (from 22 million in 2000 to 721 million by 2016), the MPS focused on the more immediate task of stemming the virtual flow of unfiltered information into the country. They set up a series of filters and blocks at Internet



Lu Wei, the man who ‘nailed jello to a wall’
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

‘choke points’ where fibre-optic cables entered the country. The Internet in the US and other places is designed specifically to be porous and lack ‘choke points’, but for China these access points served as digital borders that needed to be controlled. With the help of the American technology conglomerate Cisco, they installed mirroring routers — the same filtering technology used by companies or schools, just on a much larger scale — that reflect the pulsating light of incoming traffic into government servers, creating an effective digital veto by which the authorities could keep unwanted websites or keywords from entering the country.

Today, the ‘Great Firewall’ — a name given to China’s multifaceted system of Internet censorship by Geremie R. Barmé and Sang Ye in an article they wrote for *Wired* magazine in 1997 — is a sophisticated, finely tuned machine. The Great Firewall not only involves blocking external information, but also finding and proscribing politically-sensitive content generated from within China. It is not only capable of censoring content across the Chinese Internet, but also promotes a culture of self-censorship and control. International observers supposed that such control would stifle the ingenuity that led to the rise of IT hubs like Silicon Valley elsewhere in the world. Instead, China’s regime of online control has spurred its own form of domestic technological innovation and entrepreneurship, creating mini-Silicon Valleys across the country.



Mappings of comparative routes to the outside web shows the vast difference between China, where two IPs (Internet Protocol address) filter a majority of traffic, and the Netherlands, which has 24 points of control
 Source: cyber.harvard.edu/netmaps/geo_map_home.php



Apple 'appears' to have made special accommodations in China by putting user data on government servers and installing a government-required WiFi protocol on phones, the US Justice Department have said

Photo: Baetho, Flickr

In April 2016, US trade officials formally accused China's Great Firewall of being what the executives at foreign Internet companies have been calling it for years: a 'trade barrier'.⁴ Chinese Internet regulators demand that companies surrender a much higher degree of control over software and user

data than foreign companies can reasonably provide. Not only are China's Internet regulations and censorship cumbersome and hard to navigate, but technology companies, including Apple, that have broken into the Chinese market risk endangering their position on user privacy globally. In February 2016, China made an unexpected appearance during a showdown between Apple and US law enforcement over the San Bernardino gunman's encrypted iPhone, which Apple refused to unlock for investigators. During the court hearings, prosecutors cited Apple's compliance with Chinese government requests to undercut Apple's pro-user privacy position.⁵ Whether or not Apple secretly provided Chinese authorities with a backdoor to circumvent user encryption protection — as a Faustian bargain for access to the Chinese market — remains a lingering concern among privacy advocates.⁶

By changing the rules of the Internet, the Chinese government has been able to nurture a trio of domestic Internet giants, commonly known as BAT (**Baidu** 百度, **Alibaba** 阿里巴巴集团, and **Tencent** 腾讯), which is willing to subscribe to the Party's regime of control. Most censorship doesn't occur at the internet service provider (ISP) level, but on individual platforms, which Chinese companies must police vigilantly.⁷ It's no surprise that Chinese super-apps such as WeChat are built to facilitate censorship, creating a

seductively convenient — and easily manageable and monitored — online space where the user can chat, bank, order taxis, send money to other users, pay bills, and even donate to charities. As Chinese apps and technology interweave with Chinese citizens' everyday existence, so does Beijing's control.

Freedom and Order: The Legacy of Lu Wei

On 29 June, without explanation or warning, the Chinese media reported that Lu Wei had stepped down from head of CAC, ending his three-year tenure as China's all-powerful Internet gatekeeper.⁸ Although Lu's brash, flamboyant style had made him enemies, his sudden deposition, unaccompanied by any sign of a clear political future, caught many observers by surprise. The media hailed his successor, Xu Lin 徐麟, who is close to Xi Jinping and previously served as Shanghai's propaganda chief, as China's biggest 'political star'.⁹



Xu Lin
Photo: cpc.people.com.cn

Whatever the reason for Lu's dismissal — a half a year later, the cause of Lu's fall remains unclear — his legacy is beyond question. While Internet freedom advocates celebrated the expansion of the free web, Lu launched a successful bid to bring China's cyber environs under state control, proving that China could assert its 'cyber sovereignty' 网络主权. So far, Xu Lin has proven to be a reliable steward of Lu's legacy, mobilising the expanding bureaucracy he created to police the Chinese web while keeping a lower profile than the attention-hungry Lu.

Early on, Lu showed an appreciation of the Internet that eluded most cadres in the Party. Writing in 2010, Lu argued in an article in *Seeking Truth* 求是 — the Party's theory journal — that China would not have national security until it achieved 'information security' 信息安全. When Xi

Jinping took power in 2013, the Internet was posing an ever-more complex and vexing challenge to CCP rule. Activists in the Middle East and elsewhere were using the Internet to help wage revolutions and people's revolt. Meanwhile, China's own forums and message boards were filling up with a unique class of independent voices: 'self-media' 自媒体, or what might be called public opinion 'influencers' which could hijack the public discourse from the stodgy propagandists with a single **Weibo** post — a prospect that the Chinese government found increasingly inconvenient. When a high-speed train in Wenzhou derailed in 2011 and the government attempted to cover up both the details of the tragedy and its cause (construction compromised by corruption), netizens poked holes in the official story faster than censors could erase their comments. They mocked and



Yu Guangyao
Photo: Baikie

criticised the government, whipping up public anger into a frenzy that led to a series of official apologies, including an emphatic, personal apology from the president of the Shanghai Metro, Yu Guangyao 俞光耀, in the form of a bow during a televised press conference. In an article at the time, *New Yorker* journalist Evan Osnos quoted a Weibo user saying that the bow was a 'sign of progress'.

Evidently, government officials were eager to avoid bowing too frequently, and Lu Wei was ready to help their cause. He was tasked with imposing government control over China's raucous virtual public square, first as the chairman of the State Council Information Office 国务院新闻办公室 (SCIO), then as the head of the CAC. Lu showed that the same tools of fear and intimidation used by authoritarian states to police its citizens offline were equally effective online. As Xi Jinping said in a secret speech on propaganda and ideology work in 2013, which was later leaked to

China Digital Times 中国数字时代, authorities would need to ‘unsheathe the sword’ 亮剑 to win the public opinion struggle online.¹⁰ Lu did just that, adding a little showmanship in the process.



Charles Xue
Photo: YouTube

After taking over the SCIO, Lu assembled the most influential online social icons (often known as the Big Vs for having verified accounts on Weibo) for dinner outings, where he warned them that speaking out against the Party would have repercussions. As if to prove his point, in August 2013, while Lu was hosting his star-studded soirées, Chinese authorities arrested Charles Xue 薛必群 — a Chinese American businessman and influential microblogger. While he was arrested for soliciting prostitution, no one doubted the real reason for his arrest. In a humiliating televised-forced confession, Xue stated that he had used his online influence irresponsibly to stroke his vanity, saying that fame online made him feel like an ‘the emperor of the Internet’.¹¹ Other would-be Internet emperors took notice. A former employee of Weibo, who worked in the online platform’s censorship department in Tianjin between 2011 and 2013, told the Committee to Protect Journalists:

The effect was felt immediately. The amount of original posting dropped rapidly. Users not only withdrew from serious commentary, but became reluctant to post about what they heard or saw in their daily lives, because any information not confirmed by government authorities could potentially be deemed as creating or spreading rumours.¹²

In 2014, Xi Jinping convened the first meeting of the Central Leading Group for Internet Security and Informatisation 中央网络安全和信息化领



April 2016: Xi Jinping presides over a symposium on cyberspace security and informatization in Beijing

Source: news.cn

导小组, and established the CAC with a broad mandate for cyber control with Lu Wei at the helm. Under Lu, online censorship spiked. The CAC began requiring real-name verification for online activity and pushed for the criminalisation of the act of spreading of online ‘rumours’. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, Chapter 3 ‘The Chinese Internet ‘Un-shared Destiny’, pp.106–123).

Lu also dispelled any doubt that China’s biggest Internet companies, which are privately owned, could be effective collaborators with the Party — even if following the Party’s tune occasionally required a little nudge. The CAC normalised the practice of summoning leading tech executives to the CAC office for reprimand. In 2015, in a rare public censure, the CAC even threatened to close down **Sina** 新浪 — China’s largest news portal — if the company did not tighten censorship of its online news service.¹³

For the most part, however, officials have used the carrot rather than the stick to get Internet companies to work with the Party-state to achieve its vision for the Internet. The state leads the drive to increase popular access to the Internet, bringing millions of new Chinese users online each year — from the companies’ perspective, customers. It pays to be on the

Party-state's good side. (See Forum 'Crayfish, Rabies, Yoghurt, and the Little Refuting-Rumours Assistant, pp.225–227.)

During Lu's tenure, online content frequently disappeared without any apparent rhyme or reason. This is because the actual work of censorship in China is highly decentralised, managed between local CAC offices and individual platforms and sites (which are responsible for self-policing). Researchers at the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab compiled a list of keywords blocked on China's three major video streaming apps and found that they differed from platform to platform.¹⁴ There was one notable exception: each platform blocked the name of its competitors.

In December 2015, Lu Wei suggested that, like most people, he too had been inconvenienced by censorship, but that 'online space and actual society are the same — we want freedom but also order'.¹⁵ It's clear the CAC wants Chinese netizens to subscribe to the same logic and become active participants in the policing of their fellows. Websites and online platforms such as WeChat feature a prominent 'report' 报告 button. The website of the CAC itself seeks to educate and involve people in the censorship



The caption above the image reads: 'Today is so-called "April Fools' Day" in the West. 'April Fools' Day does not accord with Chinese traditional values or socialism's core value system. We hope everyone will not believe, start, or spread rumours' ©

Image: Weibo

process by publishing rafts of statistics on censored content and sites that have been shut down. During one ‘clean up’ 净网 operation in 2016 alone, the CAC claimed to have shut down over one million accounts and closed more than 2,000 sites for disseminating ‘pornography, false rumours, and violent or other illegal content’.¹⁶ If you want to report content directly to the CAC yourself? The site provides an easy to remember phone number and URL (12377.cn). There’s even an app.



The caption reads: ‘Clients offered new “one-click reporting” service’
Source: cac.gov.cn

Spiritual Garden or Cultural Wasteland?

With its legions of censors and culture of self-censorship, the Chinese Internet has become, in Xi’s words, ‘clean and chipper’ 晴朗 — at least as far as direct threats to Party rule are concerned. But the CCP aspires to a higher plane of control, in which China’s Internet becomes nothing less than a ‘spiritual garden’ 精神家园 — an ennobling space where netizens complete their transformation into perfect citizens.¹⁷ With over 700 million users, the Internet is increasingly the Party’s most direct channel to its citizens, and it employs both online spectacle and its command over information to achieve this end.

In recent years, both Party publications and journals of theory have given expression to dreams of control and the potential of big data to enhance state control in the online sphere. The high-level policy document released in September outlining the government’s plan for a ‘Social Credit System’ 人信用监督 brought such dreams one step closer to reality. (See Forum ‘Cyber Loan Sharks, Social Credit, and New Frontiers of Digital Control’, pp.213–222.) In a speech to an audience of 1.5 million political and



Jack Ma
Photo: UNclimatechange, Flickr

legal officials in October, Alibaba's Jack Ma 马云 teased officials with what big data could accomplish — and implicitly what Alibaba could offer the government — by describing a *Minority Report*-style future in which big data could predict who will commit a crime, providing 'a kind of pre-determined sentencing'.¹⁸

For the time being, the CCP is focused on what officials like to refer to as a 'cleansing' 清理 of the Internet to eliminate harmful elements. At a conference on

cyber security and propaganda in 2015, Lu Wei said that the government must 'consciously eliminate filth and mire such as online rumours, online violence, sex, and vulgarity', and 'foster online behavioural norms that venerate virtue and are inclined towards the good, use outstanding ideas, morals and culture to nourish the network and nourish society'.¹⁹

In 2016, authorities took solid aim at the 'filth and mire'. In April, The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television 国家广播电影电视总局 (SAPPRFT) censured Jiang Yilei 姜逸磊, a celebrated comedian and online blogger known as 'Papi Jiang' ('Papi' 酱), for using vulgar language. A number of freewheeling videos were removed from her Youku 优酷 channel, though after vowing to 'broadcast more positive energy', she was allowed to continue posting videos.²⁰ Other targets of the Party's drive for web purity were less lucky. In 2016, authorities cracked down on China's growing live-streaming sites, doling out strict new regulations and imposing harsh punishments on online users found violating the rules.



Papi Jiang
Photo: YouTube



Examples of 'vulgar' content that finds its way to the front pages of China's top news portals

Source: Phoenix News, Red Net, and China News

One twenty-one-year-old 'cam girl', Xue Liqiang 雪梨枪 was sentenced in November to four years in prison for posting obscene videos.²¹

SAPPRFT also imposed strict new guidelines and approval processes on the burgeoning online gaming scene. The leaked transcripts of one Chinese game company's exchanges with the regulators revealed a frustrating and expansive list of official concerns, from bare-chested male characters, to 'forbidden characters' (like death 死 or rob 抢), and the excessive use of English-language words.²²

The Party's 'cleansing' of the Internet does not appear to have left it on the cusp of 'a golden age of Internet culture' 联网文化的黄金时代, as state-media has declared, but rather with less culture.²³ In the months after Papi Jiang's censure, and her voluntary adoption of 'positive energy', the comedian's star has faded. And despite the Party's best attempts and claims to the contrary, the Chinese Internet today is far from a clean, moral space. It is rife with financial and other scams, salacious content, and rumours.

As for regular media portals, the CAC regularly censures news sites for lewd content, ‘clickbait’ headlines, and rumour peddling. In July, it issued a strict ban on media outlets from quoting unverified information sourced on social media.²⁴ Yet without credible, independent media, rumours and disinformation spread like wildfire. The Party’s solution: more control.

Avoiding the ‘Digital Qing’

At the Cybersecurity and Informationalisation Work Conference 网络安全和信息化工作座谈 in April, President Xi began his most important speech of the year on Internet control with a journey through history.²⁵ ‘There have been three major qualitative leaps in social development’, Xi said, ‘the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution, and now the informational revolution. The China of the Qing dynasty was caught unprepared by the industrial revolution, resulting in one hundred years of national humiliation. China today must, by contrast, embrace the potential of the informational revolution to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.’

Chinese officials and the media often repeat that China is an ‘Internet big country’ 网络大国 on its way to becoming an ‘Internet superpower’ 网络强国. Most countries consider the Internet in terms of open borders and win-win cooperation. In contrast, China has applied the nation-state paradigm to the Internet, constructing digital borders and casting Internet development as a zero-sum arms race. On 7 November 2016, the National People’s Congress 全国人民代表大会 (NPC) gave this view legislative force with the new Cybersecurity Law 网络安全法, ignoring intense opposition from international tech companies. The law’s requirements for data localisation, strict real-name verification, and for companies to provide the government with ‘technical assistance’ (possibly digital backdoors) on request strongly disadvantages foreign tech companies — although Facebook is trialling censorship mechanisms that might allow it back in.²⁶ **Xinhua** 新



The Yarovaya Law refers to a pair of Russian federal bills passed in 2016 that tighten counter-terrorism and public safety measures in Russia. It is known to the public under the last name of one of its creators — Irina Yarovaya

Image: en.kremlin.ru

华 lauded the passage of the law and hailed Xi as an ‘Internet Sage’ 网络达人 who has mustered the troops to fight for China’s Internet future.²⁷ Among those ‘troops’ are some of the world’s biggest tech and Internet companies (including **Huawei** 华为 as well as Baidu, Tencent, and Alibaba, all of which are expanding their international clout. Gone are the days when Chinese authorities needed Cisco to help it build the Great Firewall.

At occasions such as meetings of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers and the Ten-Year Review of the World Summit on the Information Society (see Chapter 8 ‘Making the World Safe (for China)’, pp.276–293), Beijing has defied the ideal of a unified, borderless web, asserting instead the concept of ‘cyber sovereignty’ — a concept that appeals to a number of authoritarian regimes around the world. In November, reports surfaced that Chinese officials and Huawei executives were in conversation with Russian officials about selling the data storage technologies needed to implement the Yarovaya Law, which requires companies to store data about Russian citizens within Russia and mirrors China’s own data localisation drive.²⁸ Other governments, including Iran, Egypt, and Cambodia have expressed interest in similar Chinese

technology that would help them assert control over its own cyberspace. Chinese netizens joked about the Chinese government is bundling Internet control with other popular Chinese exports: ‘buy a high-speed rail and we’ll throw in a Great Firewall for free’ 买高铁送防火墙.²⁹

During last year’s Paris terrorist attacks, the Chinese media contrasted the peaceful, calm space of the Chinese Internet to such foreign platforms as Twitter and Instagram, where radical jihadists may organise and recruit. The message had resonance beyond China. Even in the West, confidence in the idea of a ‘free web’ has given way to concerns over just how free might be too free. During the US election season, experts and policymakers fretted that online ‘fake news’ 虚假新闻, Internet trolls, and Russian bots were sowing chaos on the country’s much-vaunted free web. Most American commentators would likely be surprised to hear that China has been combatting ‘fake news’ and ‘clickbait’ or ‘sensationalist headline writers’ 标题党 for years. Not to mention that the Party is always on guard against ‘hostile foreign forces’ 敌对外国势力, especially in cyberspace. Increasingly, China’s model of Internet control looks like a bellwether of the Internet’s future. Maybe jello can be nailed to a wall after all?

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'COMPUTER SAYS NO'

Cyber Loan Sharks, Social Credit, and New Frontiers of Digital Control

· NICHOLAS LOUBERE

Crayfish, Rabies, Yoghurt, and the Little Refuting-Rumours Assistant

· LORAND LASKAI

Ungeilivable: Language Control in the Digital Age

· ANNIE DRAHOS

CYBER LOAN SHARKS, SOCIAL CREDIT, AND NEW FRONTIERS OF DIGITAL CONTROL

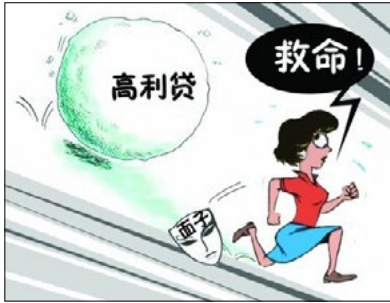
Nicholas Loubere

IN RECENT YEARS, China's rapidly evolving digital sphere has paradoxically been the site of both liberation and oppression. The development of the Chinese Internet has been characterised by openness and inclusivity — with the number of netizens in the country multiplying at an exponential rate. At the same time, however, Internet activity has increasingly been subjected to governmental restrictions aimed at controlling how the country's digital space can be used. The sudden emergence of Internet finance in China is emblematic of this contradictory cyber landscape. In only a few years, China has become the world's largest online lending market, fuelling new

forms of economic growth. At the same time, however, the rise of Internet finance has pushed governmental regulators to their limits as they seek to control rampant fraud and illegal behaviour in an attempt to engineer a more 'trustworthy' society.

Loan Sharking 2.0

In June 2016, reports emerged that Chinese female university students who borrowed money through Jiedaibao 借贷宝 — a popular online peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platform (see the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, Information Window 'The Rise of Chinese Internet Finance', p.27) — were



A woman cries for help as she runs from a *gaolidai* snowball

Source: money.163.com

being coerced into providing photos of themselves naked to secure high-interest loans. When the borrowers were unable to repay their debts, the lenders threatened to send the photos to their friends and families. Subsequent journalistic investigations of this ‘naked borrowing’ 裸条借贷 revealed that the practice was common.¹

For many, this story crystallised the ‘wild west’ nature of China’s emerging digital financial landscape. With the country’s rapidly expanding and diversifying online lending industry often slipping through the regulatory cracks, China’s ‘cyber loan sharks’ (*gaolidai* 高利贷) operate in a legal grey zone with seeming impunity. New and shifting power dynamics have upended the traditional rules and norms of control underpinning China’s financial industry, and society more broadly.

Disruptive Innovation or Dangerous Chaos?

Controlling young women’s bodies through debt is an extreme example of the ways in which lenders leverage their power to ensure repayment and to mitigate risk in China’s digital financial market. The unprecedented growth of Internet finance in China over the past decade has resulted in a great number of ventures using a variety of techniques, not all of them salubrious, to provide a wide range of products. Depending on one’s perspective, this dynamic new industry could be characterised as either disruptively innovative or dangerously chaotic.

Of particular concern for regulators is the P2P market, which is already the largest in the world. In 2016, it was estimated that P2P lenders in China would handle up to two trillion yuan in loans, provided across more than 5,800 platforms.² Some of these P2P providers handle extensive portfolios. For instance, Paipaidai 拍拍贷, which became the country’s first P2P lender when it was established in 2007, has over 1.2 million active members (including borrowers and lenders). This is a major shift for a financial system that has until recently been tightly controlled, regulated, and largely owned by the state. The Chinese financial

system has traditionally been characterised by state-mandated, below-market interest rates. At the same time, onerous lending requirements made it difficult for individuals, households, or small and medium enterprises without the right connections to get access to credit. The P2P lending industry has based its rapid growth on coming up with innovative ways to provide credit to this largely untapped market.

This massive new digital P2P industry features highly diverse entities operating online platforms. These include traditional financial institutions, new online-only start-ups, and even previously illegal underground banks that can now operate in the P2P grey zone. Some of these platforms, such as Paipaidai and Renrendai 人人贷, serve only as an intermediary, facilitating direct transactions between the lender and the borrower. However, there is a wide variety in the types of credit offered by these providers, ranging from tiny microloans for personal consumption or microenterprises, to billions of yuan for huge state-owned enterprises (SOEs). There are also indirect lending platforms where investors pool funds for lending, although recent legislation has restricted their activities. Sometimes these funds go through a number of ‘asset transformations’,³ obscuring



Ezubao's founder Ding Ning: multi-billion-dollar Ponzi scheme
Source: CCTV

risks and making it difficult to trace the origin of the finance.

Diversity, quantity, and the relative lack of oversight has resulted in high levels of risk and even outright fraud. It has been reported that up to one third of P2P lenders are in financial difficulty or are involved in dubious activities.⁴ At least three large P2P platforms — Ezubao e租宝, Zhongjindai 中金贷, and Rower P2P 融宜宝 — have lost billions of yuan each through defaults and fraudulent activity.⁵ Unlike traditional state-owned banks, these private operations come with no implicit guarantees. So when they fail, investors lose money. However, it seems that many investing in the funds don't fully understand this, or they conflate private lenders with

state-supported financial institutions that are assumed to be protected from failure by the government.

The dramatic fall of Ezubao in late January 2016 served as a wake-up call. Ezubao had run advertisements on **CCTV**, and drew on the Party's discourse on its website. The company was conscious of the importance of being perceived as a state-supported organisation, and therefore held its 2015 annual meeting in the Great Hall of the People, with CCTV hosts and government officials in attendance. However, underneath this veneer of official legitimacy, the company was essentially a multi-billion-dollar Ponzi scheme. Ezubao claimed to be a P2P lending platform, offering products for investors with returns of up to fifteen percent annually — substantially higher than the rates offered by state-owned banks. This drew in close to one million investors. However, the vast majority of the products were fake, and founder Ding Ning 丁宁 drew on the funds as if the platform were his personal bank account. When Ezubao collapsed in January, its clients lost their investments (in some cases, millions of yuan) and many of the company's employees went unpaid.⁶

Regulatory Tensions: Controlling Financial (In)stability

The spectre of high-profile cases of fraud and deception of this kind have caused unease for the Party-state. After years of non-interference in the industry, in 2015, the People's Bank of China (PBoC), along with a host of other government agencies, published the 'Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Healthy Development of Internet Finance'. This document aims to rein in the worst excesses of the open and free digital finance market with 'moderately loose regulatory policies'.⁷ The regulations require P2P lenders to deposit their funds in a formally registered financial institution, rather than holding onto the money themselves, thereby integrating the P2P market into the formal financial system. They also give the China Banking Regulatory Commission 中国银行业监督管理委员会 (CBRC) the power to oversee P2P lending. Previously, the P2P industry fell under the jurisdiction of a number of government agencies and regulatory bodies, and thus was able to slip through the regulatory cracks.

At the end of 2015, the CBRC issued a draft set of regulations for the P2P industry. In August 2016, after



The People's Bank of China
Source: Wikimedia Commons

soliciting opinions on the draft, the CBRC, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology 工业和信息化部, Public Security Bureau 公安局, and State Internet Information Office 国家互联网信息办公室 (along with a multitude of other agencies) formally promulgated the ‘Interim Measures for the Management of the Business Activities of Internet Lending Intermediaries’.⁸ This policy is a direct response to the fraud committed by Ezubao and other lenders and aims to outlaw the more risky activities undertaken by P2P platforms. In particular, it restricts P2P operators to serving as the intermediary for, rather than the provider of, financial services. Investment pooling, direct lending, crowdfunding, and other wealth management products traditionally provided by banks are limited or banned.

There is still plenty of wiggle room, however, particularly with regard to partnerships between P2P platforms and third parties, such as formally registered financial institutions. Also, the policy is more punitive than preventative. It does not establish minimum capital or licensing requirements, and emphasises self-regulation and reporting.⁹ In this way, the government is attempting to have it both ways. On the one hand, there is the explicit strategy to ‘establish a sound, unified, and open nationwide market system ... to invigorate the market and turn the new benefits of reform into a new driving force for development’.¹⁰ On the other, the government also feels compelled to control the industry in order to minimise risks inherent in this dramatic economic liberalisation.

**Big Brother is watching you**

Source: Jean-François ALTERO, Flickr

Quantifying Social Quality

The new regulations also require all P2P platforms to submit their data to the National Credit Reference Centre 征信中心, which assesses consumer and commercial credit ratings in China. The consolidation and centralisation of data from the P2P sector foreshadows the proposed establishment of a nationwide social credit system that will assess citizens based on their social and economic behaviour. In September 2016, the Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued a set of opinions on the construction of this system.¹¹

The national social credit system would create a massive database compiling information about individuals and organisations in order to determine whether or not they are ‘trustworthy’. While the opinions are not specific on how the system would be

set up, or the exact criteria for determining ‘trustworthiness’, they do detail the myriad ways in which those with bad credit would be punished. In addition to being denied loans, ‘trust-breakers’ would face restrictions on the types of business they could engage in and the positions they could hold, limiting their eligibility for jobs in SOEs, the government, social organisations, and the financial industry. They would also be barred from acts of ‘conspicuous consumption’ including travelling first class, staying in luxury hotels, travelling overseas, enrolling their children in expensive schools, and even building houses or carrying out extensive home renovations. The stated aim is that ‘honesty and trustworthiness should become the common values and normal behaviours for all society’.¹² In this way, the Party-state intends for the social

credit system to lay the foundations for a society based on ‘joint governance’ 共同治理 and the ‘rule of law’ 依法治国.

Unsurprisingly, the Western media has depicted the social credit system as the ultimate Orwellian nightmare. For instance, in an article published at the end of 2016, *The Economist* opines that the Chinese government ‘is creating the capacity for a long-tentacled regime of social control ... If and when that is done, China would have the world’s first digital totalitarian state’.¹³ While this observation may be true, the magazine somewhat undermines their hard opposition to Orwellian data collection by dismissing fears of the rise of surveillance in Western countries — such as the UK, where the government passed the Investigatory Powers Act in November 2016, paving the way for ‘extreme surveillance’.¹⁴ Readers are assured, without the slightest hint of irony, that ‘you can be fairly sure that the West will have rules — especially where the state is involved’.¹⁵

What these attempts at Big Data collection by governments in both China and the West indicate is that we are now truly in the age of global surveillance, with many countries including the UK, the US, and Australia collecting metadata and other information on their citizens regardless of

whether they are suspected of a crime. Writing about an earlier outline of the proposed social credit system, the New York-based economist Sara Hsu points out that details of its implementation remain vague, and attributes much of the handwringing to the overactive imaginations of ‘China watchers’.¹⁶ It is true that, like most central policy outlines, this one is imprecise in its language and open to flexible interpretation at the local level. For instance, while the opinion outlines some possible punishments for ‘trust-breaking’, it also suggests that lower levels of government can come up with other sanctions, thus allowing for local policy experimentation.

As it often does with major policy proposals, the government has given the green light to small-scale pilot projects involving social credit systems. Dozens of municipal governments, including Hangzhou and Shanghai, have developed their own.¹⁷ The government has also permitted eight private Internet companies to create social credit measures for use with their own products and the products of their business partners. For instance, China Rapid Finance 信而富 employs a team of investigators who take pictures of prospective borrowers at work and visit their homes in order to assess credit

worthiness, while Welab's Wolaidai 我来贷 compiles information gleaned from mobile phone usage (with the permission of potential borrowers) to determine credit scores. **Tencent** 腾讯 and **Baidu** 百度 are also said to be developing social credit scores based on Internet activity, including online purchases and even search histories.¹⁸ Sesame Credit, meanwhile, has the benefit of utilising the big data vacuumed up by Alipay 支付宝, owned by their parent company Ant Financial 蚂蚁金服 (part of the **Alibaba Group** 阿里巴巴集团), which controls over eighty percent of China's online payment market, to produce credit scores based on shopping habits, bill payments, travel, and so on. The credit scores created by Sesame Credit are utilised by a number of other businesses, such as online dating websites and rental companies, to either provide perks or refuse service.¹⁹

Sesame Credit scores are also used in Alipay's new app, Daowei 到位, which seeks to apply the Uber business model to a large number of entrepreneurial activities — traditionally the domain of formally registered enterprises — by allowing private individuals to enter the market and compete for customers. Those with high enough credit scores can use the app to offer



Information is gleaned from mobile phone usage to determine credit scores

Source: Yang Long, Flickr

or request a range of services or products,²⁰ helping to transform 'trustworthy' citizens into micro-entrepreneurs. In many ways, this is the realisation of a neoliberal vision of an open, free, and 'pure' market — the imagined village of Adam Smith, where the baker and the fishmonger trade their wares for mutual benefit, coming to fruition in the context of contemporary China's digital space. Of course, how 'free' you are depends on your social credit rating.

The social credit system ties in with China's 'civilisation' 文明 project (see the *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilising China*, Introduction 'Engineering Chinese Civilisation', pp.x-xxix), which aims to increase the 'quality' 素质 of 'less developed' segments of the population. The policy explicitly states that those without good social

credit will be ineligible for honorary titles such as ‘civilised household’ 文明家庭.²¹ In this way, credit scores designate who is and is not a model citizen, and provide instruction for how to become ‘civilised’ and ‘trustworthy’. Credit scores are also couched in the language of scientism. Opaque algorithms coldly calculate ‘objective’ scores that are supposedly detached from the biases implicit in human decision making. This gives the illusion that individuals are in control of their scores, as it is their behaviour that determines the rights they will be granted in China’s perpetually emerging ‘harmonious society’.

Fractured Control in China’s Digital Space

These examples of how Internet finance facilitates multifaceted forms of control in China’s digital landscape should prompt us to question two-dimensional accounts depicting digital development as either empowering the ‘grassroots’ (and democracy) or abetting the monolithic state’s thirst for control over its citizens. Rather, the rapid development of Internet finance has given rise to fractured and layered patterns of domination and liberation.

It has opened up new opportunities for large segments of society, while also producing new types of indebtedness, and associated forms of exploitation and violence — including literal claims over the bodies of the indebted.

Regulators attempt to balance the urge to control with the desire to allow the type of ‘free’ market they believe is necessary to spur on China’s ceaseless need for socioeconomic development. All the while, the government is creating a nationwide social credit system that will use a financialised and ‘scientific’ logic to engineer a ‘trustworthy’ and ‘harmonious’ society.

This raises larger questions about who and what is actually controllable in contemporary China. For example, does the government have the ability to effectively govern the digital financial sphere? This question is especially relevant as loosely regulated Internet financial operators become more and more integrated into the largely state-owned formal financial sector. P2P lenders are teaming up with state-owned banks to provide financial services.²² Internet companies such as Alibaba, Tencent, **Sina** 新浪, and Baidu are displacing formal banks by launching online investment funds that have attracted hundreds of billions of yuan;



Alibaba's Yu'e Bao: 'a blood-sucking vampire'
Source: *Beijing Youth Daily*

and even the National Social Security Fund 全国社会保障基金理事会 has invested in the online Ant Financial. These are funds that would have traditionally been handled by the state-owned banking system, but are now being managed by private investment companies — a situation that prompted the CCTV commentator Niu Wenxin 钮文新, to liken Alibaba's Yu'e Bao to a 'blood-sucking vampire'.

The international media, which has more freedom to discuss such possibilities, has published a number of stories warning that risky lending for speculative investments, as has been common in the digital financial sphere, may lead to a major financial crash. This begs the question of how the current system will weather the integration of loosely regulated and inherently risky Internet finance providers into the larger, state-controlled system.

The centralised social credit system raises additional questions about

data security, as it is a prime target for hackers seeking to access, steal, or manipulate personal information.²³ It has also broken the mould of China's distinctive policy development process. Traditionally, new central policies are first piloted at lower levels of government. However, both local governments and private companies are piloting the social credit system, potentially giving rise to tensions over its ownership.

Most important is the question of the impact of this dynamic digital financial sphere, including the evolving social credit system, on the lives of the Chinese people. Will it result in a more egalitarian spread of resources and allow people to take more control over their destiny? Or will it simply serve to consolidate control and further calcify already existing socioeconomic divisions and hierarchies of power?

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CHINA STORY YEARBOOK | Crayfish, Rabbits, Yoghurt, and the Little
2016 | Chengde, Henan's Assistant
Lorenz Eckert

CRAYFISH, RABIES, YOGHURT, AND THE LITTLE REFUTING- RUMOURS ASSISTANT

Lorand Laskai

ON 26 JUNE, **Tencent** 腾讯 rolled out Rumour Filter 谣言过滤器 on its ubiquitous instant-messaging app, **WeChat** 微信. Since WeChat's launch in 2011, developers have tacked on feature after feature to keep the app central to the lives of Chinese users. WeChat users in 2016 could make restaurant reservations, transfer money, pay utilities, order a taxi, and even find a one night stand — all without leaving WeChat. Tech enthusiasts might not list a rumour filter as the most exciting new add-on of 2016 — that was probably WeChat Out 微信电话本, which allows users to call mobile phones or landlines, often for free. But it is a necessary bow to the Cyberspace Administration of China's 国家互联网信息办公室 (CAC) desire to control the spread of rumours online.

Rumour Filter functions much like WeChat's other public accounts. It publishes regular alerts, notifying users of rumours — some of which fall into the category of 'fake news' — circulating on the web. Does ham sausage when eaten with yoghurt cause cancer? No, says Rumour Filter. Can doing sit-ups paralyse you? Not unless you do them incorrectly, it says. The ac-



WeChat

Source: Xiao Chaoyu, Flickr



WeChat rumours

Source: wochacha.com

count also allows users to interact with it through a chat screen: users type in a potential rumour, contentious claim or possible item of 'fake news' and receive a prompt auto-reply from a 'little refuting-rumours assistant' 辟谣小助手 about the veracity of the claim. The 'little assistant' doesn't have all the answers, however. Ask, 'Did NASA fake the moon landing?' and it responds, 'there's no relevant information'.

The Chinese government has long identified online rumours as a threat to stability and Party rule, and WeChat, as China's largest online social platform, is a natural hotbed. Last year, a report by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 中国社会科学院 (CASS) stated

that censors intercepted as many as 2.1 million 'rumours' a day on WeChat.²⁴ While many rumours are political in nature, even more are related to health, phony products, finances and lifestyle issues, sparking daily health scares and spreading fraud. WeChat's Rumour Filter appears to target the apolitical ones. Ask the Rumour Filter about (disgraced leader) Bo Xilai, 薄熙来 riots in Xinjiang, Xi Jinping's 习近平 hidden wealth or Tibetan independence, and the 'little refuting-rumours assistant' turns up empty handed. Ask if crayfish are insects, and the 'little assistant' produces a lengthy report saying they're not. At least that's cleared up.

TOP 2016 WECHAT RUMOURS, by Lorand Laskai

1. You're more likely to give birth to a boy if you raise a cat 养猫的孕妇更易生男孩.

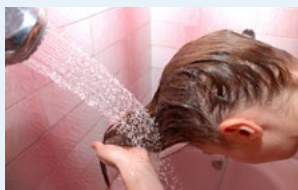


Baby boys for those who raise a cat
Source: Marie L'Amuse, Flickr

2. The iPhone auto-suggests 'China' after 'sinking' to insult China 苹果输入法 '击沉中国' 涉及辱华.

3. Deleting twelve people from your WeChat contacts saves ninety-four megabits of storage 微信删12人就能节省94M空间.

4. If a girl drinks yoghurt after eating a persimmon, she'll become fatally poisoned 女孩吃完柿子又喝酸奶中毒而死.



The dangers of hair washing
Source: party_267, Flickr

5. Rabies infections can flare up in women, leading them into a biting frenzy [in response to a video that showed a wild woman with blood dripping from her mouth, trying to bite bystanders] 网传女子狂犬病发作疯狂咬人.

6. Washing your hair first when showering leads to a cerebral hemorrhage 洗澡先洗头, 会导致脑溢血.

7. People have caught swine fever virus from eating lamb meat 有人吃羊肉感染SK6病.

8. The US President Donald Trump was born in Zigong, Sichuan province 美国新任总统川普出生在中国四川自贡.



Is Donald Trump Chinese?
Source: iphonedigital, Flickr

9. Pollution can turn your lungs black within six days 霾可使鲜肺6天变黑肺.

10. China has become a global transmitter of rabies [in response to an article in the Hong Kong media that stated that most Chinese pets are not vaccinated for rabies] 中国成'狂犬病流行国'.

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CHINA STORY YEARBOOK | Ungeff/ivable: Language Control in the
Digital Age
2016 | Annie D'Amico

UNGEILIVABLE: LANGUAGE CONTROL IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Annie Drahos

THE FORMER CHINESE leader Zhu Rongji 朱镕基 refused to simplify the second character of his name following the radical script reforms of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1993, the State Language Work Committee 国家语言文字工作委员会 quietly added the ‘offending’ character (镕) to the official standard character list. This contrasts sharply with the blunt treatment ordinary citizens routinely meet when they express a similar attachment to non-standard characters in their names. Over the last decade, the government has been pushing a sweeping modernisation agenda with the help of digital technology — with the side effect of making life difficult for people whose names contain uncommon characters.

In 2005, citizens’ compulsory IDs 身份证 went digital along with a raft of other bureaucratic processes. The result is that many people are having trouble obtaining IDs and household registration permits. They are also being refused banking and postal services, and facing other obstacles from bureaucratic processes requiring their name in digital format. Take, for example, the story of Ma Cheng 马騮, whose given name is written with the rare character *cheng* 騮 (gallop). Her grandfather chose this name to give her a spark of individuality, which is why she likes it so much, and it pairs perfectly with her family name Ma (horse).²⁵ Despite its rarity, she had always been able to use it in her official documentation by handwriting

Chinese Radicals

人 rén man person 人 亻	工 gōng labor; work 工 𠂇	示 shì to show 示 礻
刀 dāo knife 刀 刂	幺 yāo tiny; small 幺 纟	系 xì line; silk 系 糸 纟
力 lì power 力 勹	弓 gōng bow 弓 弓	耳 ěr ear 耳 耳
又 yòu right hand; again 又 又	心 xīn heart 心 忄	走 zǒu to walk 走 走
口 kǒu mouth 口 口	戈 gē dagger-axe 戈 戈	衣 yī clothing 衣 衤
口 kǒu mouth 口 凵	手 shǒu hand 手 扌	言 yán speech 言 讠
土 tǔ earth 土 土	日 rì sun 日 日	貝 bèi shell; silver 貝 貝
夕 xī evening 夕 夕	月 yuè moon 月 月	足 zú foot 足 足
大 dà big; large 大 大	木 mù tree 木 木	金 jīn metal; gold 金 金
女 nǚ female; woman 女 女	水 shuǐ water 水 氵	門 mén door 門 門
子 zǐ son 子 子	火 huǒ fire 火 火	隹 zhuī short-tailed bird 隹 隹
寸 cùn inch 寸 寸	田 tián field 田 田	雨 yǔ rain 雨 雨
小 xiǎo little; small; young 小 小	目 mù eye 目 目	食 shí to eat 食 食
		馬 mǎ horse 馬 馬

A selection of common Chinese radicals
Source: pinterest.com

it. However, 驪 is not contained in the Public Security Bureau’s 公安局 (PSB) database. When Ma applied to the PSB for a new ID in 2008, she was told to change her name to allow computer input. She eventually resorted to using backdoor connections to obtain a temporary ID that needs updating every three months — an unreliable strategy that also makes her vulnerable to legal repercussions for not following official

channels and for continuing to use a non-standard character.

Ma Cheng is not alone. In 2015, ten-year-old Zhang Yanhao 张奕皓 was not able to collect his English exam certificate, as the school’s computers did not contain his name’s middle character, *yan* 奕 (meaning wise or superior). So they simply left it out, printing his name, after a long delay and incorrectly, as Zhang Hao 张皓.

During the character simplification and women’s liberation campaigns of the 1950s, the radical 女 (female) was eliminated from many characters, which were then assigned the non-gendered radical 亻, signifying a person. Chinese characters generally comprise different recurring components called ‘radicals’, often including a semantic component, indicating meaning, and a phonetic component, indicating pronunciation. To the dismay of Xia Xiaoyu 夏小愉, this meant that her given name was forever miswritten as 小偷 *xiaotou* (thief) instead of 小愉 *xiaoyu* (delightfulness). Feng Mei 冯媪, a high school student in Changsha, was unable to obtain an ID in 2007 as PSB computers did not contain the rare character 媪 *mei* (meaning matron or tutoress). Without an ID, Feng Mei was unable to



Students sitting their *gaokao*
Source: dongyangliu, Flickr

sit the crucial *gaokao* 高考 university entrance examination — a life-shaping event. Her father was told that the only solution was for his daughter to change her name, yet to change it for the *gaokao* alone would render all her other documentation incorrect.

There is no consistent policy mechanism in place to protect people affected by digitisation-focused script reforms, and the official reform process does not take into consideration social impact. Individual local authorities such as schools, banks, and police stations respond inconsistently to those whose names are not found in the official computer database. They generally face demands to change their names to conform to the new technical requirements and bureaucratic procedures. Moreover, the story of Zhu Rongji neatly sidestepping this problem highlights the gap between

the privileged elite and the rights of common citizens, and the growing tensions around Party-state agendas that fail to look after ordinary people's interests.

The government's authoritarian approach to script reform and its impact on personal naming practices are symptomatic of a lack of concern for preservation of personal and cultural identity, as well as individual rights. The reforms do not address the reality that personal identity is intertwined with language and culture, nor do they recognise that culturally significant Chinese characters in a name are intricately connected to personal identity. Identity is not a passive 'status' that one is born into, but rather is a conscious and constant act of choice, and a personal name is the most fundamental expression of one's identity. In the Chinese context, names play an even more complex role due to the traditional genealogical system designed to preserve family lineage, as well as being related to fortune telling and many other cultural practices.

Traditional Chinese names contain a 'generation name', which designates a person's place in the family hierarchy and preserves continuity throughout successive generations. It

**Zhu Yuanzhang**

Source: zh.wikipedia.org

is rumoured that Zhu Rongji is a distant descendent of the first Emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398), and that the character 鎔 was chosen by Zhu Yuanzhang himself as the generation name for sons in Zhu Rongji's generation — a strong motivation for Zhu Rongji to keep his name in its traditional form.

It is obvious that the current autocratic approach to script reform generates dissatisfaction. However, digitisation of the language does throw up considerable technical challenges that require the standardisation of script.

Each character must be individually coded — a technical and time-consuming process. Whereas the total number of characters in the language exceeds 100,000, the current official Chinese character set coded for information interchange (called GB 18030-2000), contains only 27,484 characters. The 2013 *Table of General Standard Characters* 通用规范汉字表, to which the public is encouraged to restrict themselves in the naming of children, contains fewer still, at 8,105.

Rising education levels, economic development, and globalisation have

resulted in growing awareness of individual rights, dreams, and desires, including expression of personal and cultural identities. This brings people into direct conflict with a government that is becoming increasingly conservative and controlling of language use.

Language Control

The Party-state has been tightening its control over language generally in recent years. In 2010, the General Administration of Press and Publication 国家新闻出版广播电影电视总局 (GAPP) banned the use of foreign words, and the mixing of Chinese with foreign words to create abbreviations or slang in newspapers, books, and on websites. It argued that unregulated use of foreign words damaged the ‘purity’ of the Chinese language and the ‘harmonious’ cultural environment. Chinese netizens were quick to ironically dub the GAPP restrictions ‘un*geilivable*’ — cyber-slang that combines 给力 *geili* (give power) with English morphological rules to produce ‘not very cool/unbelievable’.

But classical, restrictive modes of language are breaking down and China’s youth like playing with characters, as some artists have been doing for



Duang
Source: YouTube

years — one created an entirely new set of characters for pollution-related terms. When Jackie Chan ad-libbed the nonsense sound effect *duang* in a hair product commercial in 2014, netizens swiftly invented a new character, comprising the two characters of Chan’s name, 成龙, to express the otherwise impossible-to-transcribe sound that became a viral Internet sensation. But creative use of language online has functions beyond the frivolous, with people using self-created words and phrases to discuss banned or politically sensitive topics. ‘Martian language’ 火星文 (a mishmash of characters, pinyin, numbers, emoticons, and symbols) helps to confound government censors. The character *jiong* 囧 — an archaic character for ‘bright’, now re-appropriated as an emoticon meaning anything from dismay to embarrass-

ment to shock due to its resemblance to a person's face — is not contained in the 2013 *Table of General Standard Characters*, yet it is ubiquitous online. The character 囧 is an optional embellishment to another popular Martian language phrase, '3QOrz' or '3Q囧rz'. The number three is pronounced *san* in Chinese; *san q* sounds like a Chinese accented 'thank you'. Orz graphically resembles a person kowtowing with their forehead to the ground, so 3QOrz is Martian language for 'thank you very much'. Unconventional and creative use of language, particularly online, facilitates non-mainstream discussion and transformative connectivity among citizens, which makes the state nervous: language is another area of tension between the controlling Party-state and an increasingly independ-

ent-minded citizenry. The popularity online of characters such as 囧 speaks volumes about the ineffectiveness of attempts to control the online environment, as it shows that many are simply ignoring the standardisation mandate, and the government does not have the means to control such widespread flouting of the rules.

As long as the Party-state maintains its heavy-handed approach to script reform and language control, tension is inevitable. Restrictions on personal naming practices and online language use are only the tip of the iceberg; this discussion is ultimately about the quest for a kind of technology-driven modernity at the expense of respect for humanity, individual identity and language rights.

How to Orz

練習：如何正確地失意體前屈

首先練習從跪著姿勢進行向前仆倒動作。

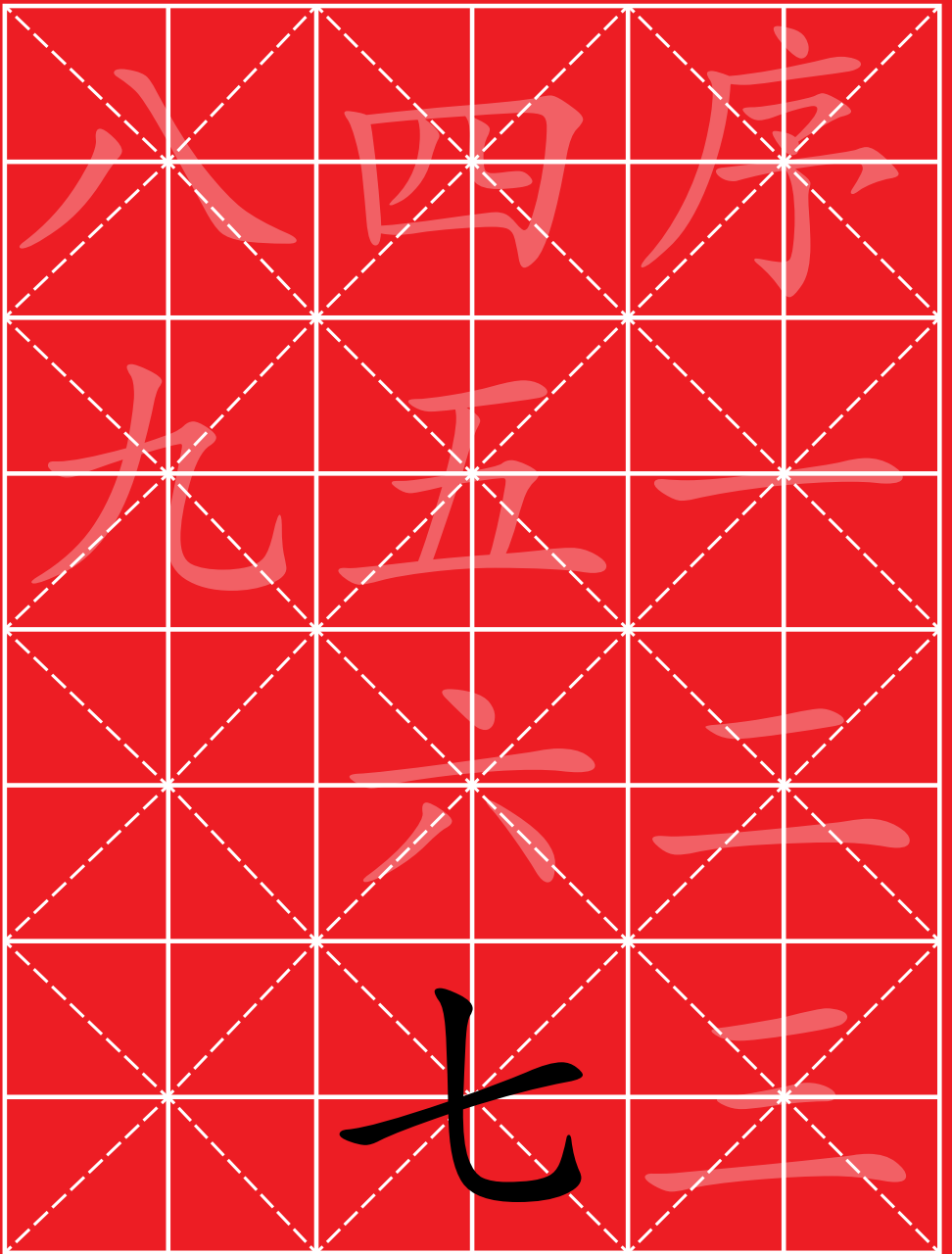
- 1 彎曲腰部，令上半身、雙臂前傾下來。
- 2 最重要是手指完全分開，手肘至指尖範圍同時觸及軟墊。
- 3 雙手互成 90° 直角。
- 4 面部側向左邊。
- 5 這樣可以避免地上的沙石撞及眼睛和鼻孔。
- 6 手肘先著地，會弄傷關節。
- 7 手掌先著地則衝擊力會傷及頸骨。
- 8 從側面看正確的向前仆倒姿勢。

Orz神教低幼學堂

5

6

7



八 四 序

九 五 一

六 二

七

三

6月

7月

8月

9月

10月

11月

12月

2016年1月

2月

3月

4月

5月

6月

7月

8月

9月

7


POLICING THE BORDERS:

HONG KONG CONUNDRUMS

Carolyn Cartier

Hong Kong

Source: Wikimedia Commons

The background of the entire page is an aerial photograph of a city, likely Hong Kong, showing a dense cluster of high-rise buildings. A white dashed grid is overlaid on the image, creating a pattern of squares and diamonds. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The text is centered in a white rectangular box with a thin black border.

THREE SEEMINGLY SEPARATE events in 2016 demonstrated China's territorial strategies for control and governance over people and places. One was an unruly vote over supplementary funding for an Express Rail Link between Hong Kong and Shenzhen that brought chaos to the Hong Kong Legislative Council. Another was the revelation by one of a group of detained Hong Kong booksellers (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Information Window 'The Causeway Books Incident', p.xxiii) of the real facts of his detention. Finally, there was the overturning of a thirty-year ban on Hong Kong democrats entering the mainland. Together, these events illustrate how the Party-state tailors its governing strategies to suit local conditions in sub-national territories — including provinces and cities as well as Special Administrative Regions such as Hong Kong and Macau.

The philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault was the first to conceptualise the effects of the state and state power as ‘governmentality’, which is expressed in Chinese as the ‘art of control and governance’ 治理术. Chinese scholars of political theory are very familiar with this concept. Rather than treating state power as a uniform thing, agent or authority, ‘governmentality’ focuses on the use and implementation of state power and its effects. The Chinese state does not normally disclose governing strategies; they are revealed through the identification and analysis of their outcomes and impacts. Because the Constitution gives the Party-state the power to change the borders and definitions of subnational territories and govern them in new ways, the territorial contexts of governance are often especially significant.¹

Governing Borders

On 11 March 2016, the Hong Kong Legislative Council 香港特别行政区立法会 (LegCo) Finance Committee passed a bill that appeared to be a technical matter of railway funding, but which carried heavy ideological freight. What’s more, it passed the bill while members of the Council’s pan-democratic camp 泛民主派 (which refers to a political alignment in Hong Kong



Guangzhou–Shenzhen–Hong Kong Express Rail Link
Image: Wikimedia Commons



Chinese national high-speed rail system
Image: chineseeye.com



January 2016: Pan-democrats protesting about the missing booksellers

Source: Inmediahk, Flickr

that supports increased democracy, including the values of the rule of law, human rights, civil liberties, and social justice), who would have opposed it, were out of their seats.² This ignited a storm of controversy.

The vote was to approve an additional HK\$19 billion (US\$2.45 billion) funding package for the Guangzhou–Shenzhen–Hong Kong Express Rail Link 广深港高速铁路 (XRL) — a fourteen-minute, twenty-six kilometre rail link between West Kowloon and the Hong Kong–Shenzhen border. The Hong Kong XRL is the southernmost portion of the People’s Republic’s national high-speed rail system. In 2010, LegCo authorised funding for the Hong Kong government–owned Mass Transit Railway (MTR) to begin constructing the project. Nineteen billion dollars is a supplement to the original price tag of HK\$61 billion (US\$7.86 billion) — an additional expense of almost one-third of the original estimate. The link will be the most expensive rail line in the world per kilometre because it is a tunnel — a twenty-six kilometre tunnel through Hong Kong’s New Territories and under the mainland China border.³

The link’s lack of intermediate service within Hong Kong has compounded local concerns about its cost and engineering requirements. One out of five people in Hong Kong live in poverty, and the territory has one of the widest income gaps among developed economies. Protests against



Johannes Chan Man-mun
Photo: zh.wikipedia.org

the XRL concerned the Hong Kong government's prioritisation of expenditure (in planning jargon) of 'pre-demand infrastructure' over the people's welfare. Projections show that the majority of XRL riders will be from Guangdong province. As the Hong Kong Citizens' Media reported, 'If it is based on the user pays principle, why should it

not be funded by the Central Government [Beijing]?'²⁴

The controversies around the XRL in 2016 weren't confined to governing cost and construction — there were political questions too. The plan calls for the 'co-location' 一地兩檢 (literally 'one place-two inspections') of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and PRC immigration controls at the West Kowloon terminus. Co-location is a hot political issue because under '**One Country, Two Systems**', 一国两制 the foundational policy basis of the Hong Kong SAR, only Hong Kong SAR institutions govern Hong Kong.

Eurostar passengers departing London for France complete French immigration procedures before boarding the train. Canadian airports have US immigration facilities for passengers flying to destinations in the United States. But these arrangements involve countries with complementary governing systems. Under the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR, Hong Kong maintains freedoms of speech, publication, and demonstration. These rights do not exist in mainland China, where public security organs have the power to detain citizens who express alternative views. These differences can make the border and border crossings a political issue — and Chinese border security already has a history of politicising immigration procedures in Hong Kong's neighbouring SAR of Macau.

For example, in March 2009, Macau SAR immigration denied entry to Johannes Chan Man-mun 陳文敏 — the dean of the law faculty at the University of Hong Kong — who was en route to the University of Macau. This happened just days after the Macau SAR passed new national security legislation, which forbids, and sets out punishments for, national crimes of ‘treason, secession, and subversion’. Chan had been a founding member of the Basic Law Article 23 Concern Group 《基本法》二十三条关注组, which had successfully lobbied against a similar law for Hong Kong. Many other Hong Kong politicians, lawmakers and journalists were denied entry to Macau from late 2008 through early 2009, and Macau immigration admitted there was a denial-of-entry list.⁵ The bans were undoubtedly a message of displeasure from Beijing at Hong Kong’s refusal to pass its own national security law.

Incremental changes to territorial governance also lead to new negotiations with opportunities for expanding governing control. In December 2015, the Hong Kong Secretary of Justice, Rimsky Yuen Kwok-keung 袁國強, said of the co-location issue: ‘it was inevitable that mainland personnel must be allowed to enforce laws in the XRL West Kowloon Terminus’.⁶ Because the Hong Kong government had yet to assess the legal basis of co-location, observers inferred that there had been an advance, secret agreement between the Hong Kong executive and the Chinese government.

Yet according to Article 18 of Hong Kong’s Basic Law, China’s national laws cannot be applied in Hong Kong except for those related to defence, diplomacy, and other matters that ‘fall outside the autonomy of the Hong Kong SAR’. Only the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress can approve changes to this law. Whether mainland laws



Rimsky Yuen Kwok-keung
Photo: Wikipedia



Chan Kam-lam
Photo: Wikipedia

concerning immigration, customs, and quarantine could fit into one of the three specified categories became another subject of negotiation. Legal experts contend that either Hong Kong or both Hong Kong and the mainland would need to enact separate laws to implement co-location.⁷ The pan-democrats and other concerned pro-democracy groups in the territory, meanwhile, view co-location as the thin end of a wedge of control.

In advance of the 11 March Finance Committee meeting, nineteen lawmakers of the pan-democratic camp filed 1,262 motions that questioned both the additional funding package and the co-location issue. But only thirty-six were tabled. Concerned with how the acting chair of the committee, Chan Kam-lam 陳鑑林, was handling the debate, some in the democratic coalition rushed to the chairman's table to try and remove his microphone. One sprayed Chan with ink, and soon it was chaos. Chan suddenly called the vote while most pan-democrat members were out of their seats. Pan-democrats consequently charged that the vote should be voided, and apologized to the Hong Kong people for not blocking the funding.⁸

Governing Freedoms of Expression

Concerns over the stability of the Hong Kong SAR as a territory under separate governance, with legally secure rights and freedoms, continued to rise in 2016 as a consequence of the ongoing saga of the detained Hong Kong booksellers. They had been involved in the production and distribution of tabloid-style accounts of the lives of China's national leaders, including the current Chinese Communist Party Chairman and President

Xi Jinping. Estimates suggest that the publishing house Mighty Current 巨流傳媒有限公司 accounted for one third to one half of the market for such books, which are banned in mainland China. Mighty Current's most recent bestseller was *2016: Collapse of the Communist Party of China* 2016中共崩潰, and it planned to bring out a book called either *Xi Jinping and His Lovers* or *Xi Jinping and His Six Women*, with content including compromising political incidents.⁹ In mainland China, where such titles are known as 'wild histories' 野史, no such books can be legally published or sold.

Widely reported in the local and international media, the detentions raised questions about the unusual extension of non-transparent forms of governance and control over individuals' rights and protections from unwarranted search and seizure, as well as about freedoms of the press and publication in the Hong Kong SAR. Any potential for mainland security agents to detain Hong Kong citizens in Hong Kong and then to transport them to the mainland undermines the Basic Law and poses complex questions about territorial governance.

The case of the booksellers includes incidents of unexplained or extrajudicial transborder travel, and detention without warrant while crossing the border. Gui Minhai 桂敏海 — a naturalised Swedish citizen and owner of the Mighty Current publishing house — was living in Pattaya when he suddenly departed his home in October 2015 without warning and with unnamed 'visitors'. His whereabouts was unknown until January 2016, when he appeared on Chinese Central Television claiming that he had gone voluntarily to China. In December 2015, Lee Bo 李波, a British passport holder, apparently left Hong Kong while on an errand to the bookstore warehouse in Chai Wan; subsequent investigation showed no record of him passing through Hong Kong-Shenzhen immigration or any other checkpoint, and at the time he was not in possession of his Hong Kong identity



Gui Minhai
Image: Wikipedia



Lam Wing-kee
Image: zh.wikipedia.org

pressure, would publically confirm exactly how they arrived in mainland China.

Three additional employees were detained in October 2015. Two were already in Guangdong province. The third, Lam Wing-kee 林榮基, the bookstore manager, was detained while crossing into the mainland at Hong Kong-Shenzhen immigration. After a period incommunicado in the mainland, the men made televised statements and signed documents attesting to ‘voluntary’ co-operation in an investigation into the transport and sale of ‘banned books’.

In the first half of the year, and in the absence of information about the men, a range of speculative accounts emerged. For example, a pro-government LegCo politician, Regina Ip Lau Suk-ye 葉劉淑儀, made the puzzling statement that ‘undocumented exit from Hong Kong does not constitute an offence’ since there are ‘many ways to enter the mainland without going through the proper immigration channels’.¹¹ In an interview with Hong Kong’s Commercial Radio, she stressed: ‘there is no “permanent resident unauthorised exit and entry ordinance”, there is none’.¹² But according to this outlook, if there are many ways to enter and exit the mainland and undocumented exit does not constitute an offence, then people could ‘randomly’ cross the border. Ip’s statement represents how a unitary state formation, without multiple parties and separation of powers, can engage in targeted decisions and idiosyncratic changes with unusual effects that require subsequent efforts to normalise them.

card, used by SAR residents to cross the border. In February 2016, Lee Bo appeared on Hong Kong-based Phoenix Television, broadcasting from mainland China, in which he renounced his British citizenship and stated he had ‘resorted to illegal immigration’ in order to ‘cooperate in a judicial investigation’.¹⁰ Neither Gui nor Lee, presumably under

Two days after being allowed to return to Hong Kong in June 2016, Lam Wing-kee openly recounted to the press how he had been detained at the border, handcuffed, hooded, and sent on a train to Ningbo, Zhejiang province. There, he said, he was incarcerated, interrogated, and pressed to sign agreements that stated he would not contact either legal counsel or his family. According to the terms of his release and ‘bail’, Lam would assist investigators by going back to Hong Kong to collect documentation on the bookstore’s clients and return with it to the mainland.

In his media statement, Lam stated ‘I have no plan to go to the mainland again’.¹³ Lam’s public statement ‘exposed what many have suspected all along’, said Mabel Au, director of Amnesty International Hong Kong.¹⁴ Public marches to ‘oppose political kidnapping’ 抗議政治綁架 took place in Hong Kong in January and again in June 2016, after Lam told his story to the press. Meanwhile, Gui Minhai remains detained in China; in October 2016, on the one-year anniversary of his detention, his daughter Angela Gui wrote a poignant essay, ‘Who will remember my father, Gui Minhai?’, in which she noted that the lively publishing industry represented by Gui has ‘gone unusually quiet’.¹⁵

Territorial governance means that China and Hong Kong each have their own legal jurisdictions. For Chinese authorities to probe into what is in Hong Kong a legal publishing industry, they require the physical presence of the booksellers in the mainland, along with evidence of sales there. Eric Cheung, a legal scholar at the University of Hong Kong, explained how the territoriality question entangles the two legal jurisdictions. ‘Here is the question: When one’s actions in Hong Kong are perfectly legal according to Hong Kong laws but are illegal in the mainland and have an effect there, are they subject to the mainland law? And can one be arrested accordingly



Regina Ip Lau Suk-ye
Image: zh.wikipedia.org

when going to the mainland?”¹⁶ Selling banned books falls under criminal law in the mainland. According to China’s race-based interpretation of nationality, Hong Kong citizens with Chinese ancestry are also Chinese citizens. Yet under the Basic Law, while in Hong Kong, Hong Kong citizens are subject to mainland laws of diplomacy and national security but not its criminal code.

Publishing books for the market in Hong Kong may affect mainland China — but to conclude, then, that the Chinese criminal code applies in Hong Kong is a violation of the Basic Law and ‘One Country, Two Systems’. The interpretive problem for the Party-state is the absence of separation of powers — legislative, executive, and judicial — in mainland China and the overriding authority of the Party’s decisions in all governmental spheres. The Party can decide, for example, that a given action has affected national security. ‘Any actions,’ said Cheung, ‘could have some so-called “effect” in the mainland: something that you say, some articles that you write, or some demonstrations and rallies that you join ... Who will ever be “safe” and “innocent”?’¹⁷

The governing system of the SAR — a place of information and press freedoms — makes Hong Kong an important site for the national circulation of information and publications in China. The Hong Kong difference can constitute an opportunity in mainland China where political factions may exploit Hong Kong’s freedom of information by leaking information about rivals to Hong Kong publishers. Extension of mainland politics to Hong Kong, especially factional politics, would explain increased central government interest in the SAR.

During 2016, book sales in Hong Kong declined, which also affected the major book dealers. By November 2016, more than half the bookshops at Hong Kong International Airport had closed down. These included six outlets of the Singapore-based Page One bookshops. Page One, a general interest bookstore, also closed their large shops in major malls, including Festival Walk in Kowloon Tong, Harbour City in Tsim Sha Tsui, and Times Square in Causeway Bay.¹⁸ The international Independent Publishers Association put the situation in stark terms: ‘Publishers driving Hong Kong’s

once booming independent book business are living with the twin threats of financial ruin and arrest by Chinese mainland police in the wake of the Causeway Bay bookseller kidnappings'.¹⁹

This issue has also generated a round of negotiations resulting in further potential



Page One bookshop
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

border effects. After Lam's exposé, the Hong Kong government met with its counterparts in Beijing to 'overhaul the existing cross-border notification system' between the Hong Kong Police Force and the Ministry of Public Security since it 'failed to keep Hong Kong informed' about the booksellers.²⁰ The system has existed since 2001 but 'uncertainties exist because the process is not mandatory', which contributes to the problem of unreliable disclosure.²¹ Meanwhile, Ningbo Public Security issued a statement that Lam had 'violated bail laws' and urged him to return.²² Then, a Shenzhen University academic said, 'extradition would be possible if a reciprocal judicial assistance agreement was struck between the two sides'.²³ Such an apparently banal comment is an example of how the circulation of ideas about governing Hong Kong enters public awareness for potential future negotiation. As Hong Kong Secretary for Security, Lai Tung-*kwok* 黎棟國, underscored, 'there is no legal arrangement for the transfer of a person to the mainland authorities and the Hong Kong government will handle all cases in accordance with the law of Hong Kong'.²⁴ The absence of an extradition agreement between the government of the Hong Kong SAR and the mainland makes it illegal for any police authority to transfer a person to mainland officials.

Governing Population Mobility



Leung Cheung-ying
Image: Wikimedia Commons

On 30 November 2016, the People's Republic's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office announced that the central government was lifting the ban on travel by pan-democrats to the mainland: they could once again apply for 'home return permits', which are required for Chinese Hong Kong identity card holders. The travel ban had applied to a number of prominent pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong, including some who had been in Beijing supporting the student-led protest in June 1989 and who had called for an end to one-party rule. Viewed as a strategic olive branch to the pan-democrats, widespread speculation greeted the announcement. A Hong Kong representative to the National People's Congress, Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai 范徐麗泰, revealed it was the central government's decision, and that Hong Kong Chief Executive, Leung Cheung-ying 梁振英, had played no role in it, thus underscoring central government authority and sidelining Hong Kong's unpopular chief executive.²⁵ Historically, Guangdong province, bordering Hong Kong, was the issuing authority of the home return permit, but in 2013 it changed from Guangdong provincial government to the central Ministry of Public Security 公安部.

Rescinding the nearly thirty-year-old ban on pan-democrats' travel to the mainland demonstrates strategic interest in governing political parties in Hong Kong. Today, these belong to one of three general groups: pro-Beijing, pan-democrats, and 'localists'. The platform of the pan-democratic parties promotes democracy within the framework of 'One Country, Two Systems'. Localists are relatively new political parties formed in

2015–2016, some of which support independence for Hong Kong. A survey on Hong Kong’s future, conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong in July 2016, showed that thirty-nine percent of young adults (aged fifteen to twenty-four) would prefer Hong Kong to become independent in 2047, when the current arrangement expires, rather than a regular subnational territory of the People’s Republic of China, as specified by the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ arrangement.²⁶

The idea of Hong Kong independence is unacceptable to China. In response, pro-government interests have begun to strategically govern the political parties with a view to working more pragmatically with the pan-democrats while isolating the recently formed pro-independence parties. For example, the Hong Kong Electoral Affairs Commission 选举管理委员会 banned six localist candidates from standing in the 16 September 2016 Legislative Council election on the basis of their refusal to sign a new ‘confirmation form’ recognising three particular articles in the Basic Law that identify Hong Kong as ‘an inalienable part of the People’s Republic of China’ and ‘a local administrative region of the People’s Republic of China’.²⁷ Then the banned activists organised what they called Hong Kong’s ‘first pro-independence rally’ on 5 August, drawing 12,000 people.²⁸ Results of the September election resulted in three localists elected to LegCo seats. But two were soon disqualified, in November 2016, after altering the oath of office. Rumours circulated that they were ‘funded by pro-Beijing groups because no one had seen them take part in the Umbrella Movement’.²⁹ Regina Ip said the decision, promoted by Beijing and issued by the Hong Kong High Court, had ‘made clear to Hong Kong people the importance of territorial integrity and respect for the sovereignty of our country’.³⁰

Coming after a year of uncertainty over the Hong Kong booksellers, combined with controversy over the co-location of PRC immigration security at West Kowloon, the decision to allow pan-democrats to travel to the mainland appeared as a measure of strategic governance that would make some good news out of border crossing.



A busload of Chinese mainland tourists in Hong Kong
Photo: Jamie Lloyd, Flickr

Control Through Dynamic Governing

State administration of governing functions normally takes place within relevant domestic jurisdictions. Administration of trans-border travel and trade, for example, takes place at customs and immigration checkpoints at national borders. But the Party-state also engages in more discrete forms of dynamic governance through incremental strategies that seek to extend control over people and places to achieve particular goals and outcomes. This kind of governance has nothing to do with legislation. As a ‘unitary state’ — that is, one without multiple parties or separation of powers — China can choose to implement a range of targeted and sometimes surprising or idiosyncratic changes to established systems first, and then make discursive efforts to normalise them to the public later.

The Chinese state also advances sovereign authority in experimental ways, effectively treating subnational territories and territorial boundaries as dynamic or changing rather than as fixed places or established institutions. On the co-location issue, for example, pro-government inter-

ests advocate an alteration to the Basic Law, if necessary, to allow for it. Regarding the booksellers, Hong Kong and Beijing officials negotiated a revised cross-border notification system. Rescinding the travel ban for pan-democrats, meanwhile, emerged in the context of calls for Hong Kong independence rather than as a consequence of political reform or restoration of normal travel rights. From a governmentality perspective, such dynamic governing seeks to strategically advance authority over contested issues and, in the process, gain the cooperation of local government through negotiations while incrementally extending control. Hong Kong people's reactions help to reveal where they may have crossed a line.

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A YEAR OF LOOKING BACKWARDS

Mark Harrison

IN JANUARY 2016, Taiwanese voters ushered in a new era when they elected Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文 from the Democratic Progressive Party 民進黨 (DPP) as their President. Ending eight years of Kuomintang (KMT) rule under Ma Ying-jeou 馬英九 (2008–2016), voters were emphatic: Tsai came to power in a landslide, and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won a majority in the legislature for the first time.

Tsai's policy platform addressed rising social inequality, Taiwan's economic malaise, marriage equality, and the need for better environmental protection. Campaigning against a divided and directionless KMT, her strong victory was not a surprise in terms of

the dramatic results that democratic electoral politics sometimes produce. However, Taiwanese politics exists within the larger context of the territorial claim over Taiwan by the People's Republic of China, the strategic rivalry between China and the US, and the aspirations of the majority of Taiwanese people for a statehood that is recognised by the international community. For voters, Taiwan's unique geopolitical circumstances means that their democratic choices have meaning that goes beyond an endorsement of the domestic platforms of particular parties.

Tsai Ing-wen has responded to Taiwan's geopolitical circumstances in both her domestic and international rhetoric. She trod a carefully calibrated



Ma Ying-jeou and Tsai Ing-wen
Source: Wikimedia Commons

ed line during the election campaign that she has maintained during the first year of her presidency, expressing support for the status quo of cross-strait relations and calling for continuing peaceful relations in the interests of both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwanese voters, by electing Tsai and the DPP to power, reaffirmed their commitment to the integrity of their democracy and of Taiwan's civil society. They endorsed the central concerns of the Sunflower Movement of 2014 that *rapprochement* with mainland China did not represent progress towards permanent peace in the Taiwan Strait, but was instead due to the machinations of opaque party and business interests.

Beijing responded to the inauguration of Tsai with both the Party and the state invoking the 1992 Consensus 九二共識. The Taiwan Work Office of the CCP Central Committee (Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council) 國務院台灣事務辦公室 (TAO) issued a joint statement urging that the achievements of the Ma era be maintained, including twenty-three agreements on trade and cross-strait exchanges, and stating that Beijing 'will continue to adhere to the 1992 Consensus and resolutely oppose any form of secessionist activities seeking "Taiwan independence"'.¹

The 1992 Consensus refers to the outcome of a meeting in Hong Kong in 1992 between two nominally non-governmental organisations that facilitate

relations between Taipei and Beijing: the mainland's Association for the Relations Across the Taiwan Strait 海峡两岸關係協會 (ARATS) and Taiwan's Strait Exchange Foundation 海峽交流基金會 (SEF). The 1992 Consensus holds that both sides agree there is one China and that Taiwan is a part of China, and they also agree to leave unexamined their respective definitions of the meaning of 'China'.

In mainland China, the phrase '1992 Consensus' began to replace '**One Country, Two Systems**' 一國兩制 from the mid-2000s as the key prescription for cross-Strait relations. In Taiwan, whether any 'consensus' was reached is the subject of vitriolic and partisan debate. Nevertheless, during the period of the government of Ma Ying-jeou, against the backdrop of the military threat from mainland China as well as billions of dollars of trade, the phrase was taken up by both sides and used to assert the presumption of a shared worldview from which Beijing and Taipei could facilitate institutional relations. It became the basis for a pragmatic policy framework that enabled the establishment of numerous trade and investment agreements between Taipei and Beijing.

But on a more abstract level, by proposing that Taipei and Beijing can agree that they might disagree, the 1992 Consensus wove together two



Logo of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council
Source: zh.wikipedia.org

possible meanings of China — the CCP Party-state of the People's Republic of China and the KMT Party-state of the Republic of China — and sought to transcend their national histories. It suspended the historical animus between them and conveyed the notion that China is something much more than just a modern nation-state.

In the artifice of magnanimously agreeing to disagree expressed in the 1992 Consensus is the belief that there is a higher Chinese civilisational moral and social order. It alludes to an elaborate and expansive concept of China that has long captivated the imagination of Chinese people, that Taiwan and mainland China both belong to 天下 *tianxia*, or all under heaven.²

For Beijing, the concept validates the authority of the regime: China means order and unity and the PRC Party-state presents itself as its instrument. In the 1992 Consensus, the idea that there may be a greater civilisational order encompassing Taiwan and mainland China that transcends

the nation-state — a *tianxia* — is one that casts an aura over what would otherwise simply be the tacit acceptance that agreeing to disagree is the best Beijing can hope for and that unification is not currently a realistic prospect.

But instilling the 1992 Consensus with an aura of a transcendent concept of China requires ideological work. The histories of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China must be wrought together into a coherent whole.

So when Xi Jinping met with former president Ma Ying-jeou in Singapore in 2015, he spoke of the 'last seven years' of cross-Strait relations, the 'power of kinship in the 1980s' that 'finally pushed forward the dialogue across the Strait', and of how 'history has left bad memories and deep regrets for untold families on both sides of the Taiwan Strait'. Xi's comments, vague as they were, excised Taiwan's Japanese colonial history, the democratic transformation of Taiwan in the 1990s, and the existence of the first DPP government, of Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁, from 2000–2008. He did not mention the failed uprising against the Chinese Nationalists by the Taiwanese in 1947 — the '28 February Incident' 二二八事件, which resulted in the deaths of

tens of thousands of Taiwanese. Xi also issued a veiled warning to Taiwanese voters:

No matter how much difficulty we have gone through, no power can separate us because we are closely knit kinsmen, and blood is thicker than water. Now we are at a juncture in our relationship. We cannot repeat historical tragedy. We cannot lose the fruits of our development. People across the Strait should continue to push forward a peaceful development and enjoy the fruits of peace together. We should learn and reflect from the history of the cross-Strait relationship. We must be responsible for history, and make wise decisions that will stand the test of time.³



28 February 2017: President Tsai attends a memorial service to mark the seventieth anniversary of the '28 February Incident'

Source: Presidential Office of the Republic of China, Flickr

At the very least, in other words, they should elect the KMT candidate for president.

The KMT remains willing to affirm the 1992 Consensus in its party policy and political rhetoric. By contrast, in her inauguration speech on 20 May, President Tsai Ing-wen did not name the 1992 Consensus, merely acknowledging:

In 1992, the two institutions representing each side across the Strait [SEF & ARATS], through communication and negotiations, arrived at various joint acknowledgements and understandings. It was done in a spirit of mutual understanding and a political attitude of seeking common ground while setting aside differences. I respect this historical fact.⁴

With a quiet finesse, Tsai reduced the 1992 Consensus to a mere description of an historical moment and rendered the phrase inert, devoid of its historical aspiration and greater political purpose.

Beijing's response was to re-assert the importance of the 1992 Consensus and the need for Taipei to commit fully to it. In September, on the six-month anniversary of President Tsai's inau-



Zhang Zhijun
Source: Wikimedia Commons

guration, the TAO hosted a meeting in Beijing of eight city and county mayors and deputy mayors from Taiwan, all members of the KMT. The Director of the TAO, Zhang Zhijun 张志军, praised their continuing commitment to the 1992 Consensus and lamented how the 'change of circumstances' had harmed the achievements of the previous eight years. For their part, the eight mayors and deputy mayors affirmed 'that the counties and cities they represent will continue to uphold the 1992 Consensus and work together with the mainland to safeguard cross-Strait peaceful development, in order to benefit the people.'⁵

Beijing continues to find creative ways to deploy policy and political language in order to assert its view on Taiwan's place in the Chinese world. The difficulty for China, however, is not simply that the people of Taiwan reject the prospect of living under Beijing's *tianxia*, but the fact that they are not listening to Beijing at all.



15 August 2016: President Tsai travels to Sandimen Township in Pingtung County to attend a harvest festival held by the Paiwan tribe and Rukai tribe

Source: Presidential Office of the Republic of China, Flickr

On 15 July 2017, Taiwan commemorates the thirtieth anniversary of the lifting of martial law on the island. The Taiwanese have long given voice to a compelling narrative of Taiwan's transformation from a largely agricultural economy to an export-driven industrial powerhouse and from a dictatorship to a liberal democracy. However, the violence and trauma inflicted on individuals and families by Taiwan's KMT-led authoritarian state from the 1950s to the 1980s has not receded from memory. Rather, it has grown in importance for the Taiwanese as the years have passed. The narrative of Taiwan's modernisation has given way to a preoccupation with the legacy of authoritarianism.

The Taiwanese have started to understand their modern history in a distinctive way: as shared experiences that have been concealed and unspoken and which now must be revealed and uncovered. As a result, in recent years the past and its enduring anxieties have come to saturate Taiwan's contemporary cultural and social life. Museum exhibitions, popular culture, literature, and art have all incorporated the martial law period as part of a re-examination of the story of Taiwan.

For example, the former detention centre for political prisoners in Xindian, in southern Taipei, became the Jingmei Human Rights Museum in 2009, with a large memorial naming every individual who passed through

the centre on the way to the prisons on Green Island for opposing the policies and ideology of the KMT government during the martial law period. Those prisons have themselves been restored as museums after years of neglect. The Ministry of Culture 文化部 established storytaiwan.tw in 2012 — a national memory project to record stories that the ministry says, ‘may have been hidden, or may have been forgotten, to open the time capsules of every individual, using sound, images and text to recover those lost experiences and heal past suffering’. The return to power of the KMT under Ma Ying-jeou from 2008 to 2016 seemed to give extra impetus to Taiwanese wanting or needing to look back to their past.

In her inauguration speech, Tsai Ing-wen stressed Taiwan’s painful history. She proposed to establish a truth and reconciliation commission to address the experience of Taiwanese people during the martial law period. In August 2016, she formally apologised to Taiwan’s indigenous peoples for their treatment at the hands of Chinese settlers from historical times onward: ‘For the four centuries of pain and mistreatment you have endured, I apologise to you on behalf of the government.’⁶ She looked beyond the martial law period to the entire era

of European and Chinese settlement beginning in the seventeenth century and through to the present.

The idea that the purpose of writing history is to assuage past suffering, to offer a kind of national psychoanalytic therapy, is radically different to the approach to writing history on mainland China. There, official historical accounts serve the ideological and pragmatic needs of the Communist Party and state. Writing history on the mainland can also mean invoking the historical legacy of Chinese civilisation to situate both everyday life and China’s modern national history within a unique and immutable Chinese order that serves state interests.

These two incompatible views of the nature and purpose of history across the Strait illustrate how deep the predicament of cross-Strait relations has become. The truths that are self-evident to the Chinese Communist Party and many Chinese on the mainland, about the nature of an ordered Chinese world that includes Taiwan, are not at all self-evident for the Taiwanese.

The majority of Taiwanese recognise that there is a legacy of Chinese history and culture in Taiwan, but they see it as only one thread of a fabric of social, cultural, and political life that

they call ‘Taiwanese’. The rest has been woven out of their experience of Japanese colonialism, the violent history of authoritarianism, economic modernisation, and democracy.

At the end of 2016, as Taiwan continued to speak of preserving the status quo and maintaining peaceful cross-Strait relations while the mainland maintained its insistence that the Tsai government accept the 1992 Consensus, cross-Strait relations were sharply disrupted when President Tsai Ing-wen spoke directly to the then US

President-elect Donald Trump. Beijing responded with a formal protest to the US over what it considered a breach of the One-China Policy.

Yet, beneath the political rhetoric and the periodic crises, more fundamental social cultural changes are taking place. Mainland China and Taiwan look ever more uncomprehendingly and unyieldingly at each other’s distinctive preoccupations, and this means a resolution of the Taiwan issue is further away than ever.



2 December 2016: National Security Council Secretary-General Joseph Wu, Minister of Foreign Affairs David T. Lee, and President Tsai speak with US President-elect Donald J. Trump

Source: Presidential Office of the Republic of China, Flickr

CONTROL AND RESISTANCE IN HONG KONG

Antony Dapiran

THE YEAR IN HONG KONG was marked by interventions from Beijing to extend its control over the Special Administrative Region and expressions of dissent led by pro-democracy and localist groups — a continuing legacy of the post-Umbrella Movement 雨傘運動 era. At stake is whether the authoritarian regime in Beijing can suppress dissent in the territory while preserving the framework of the rule of law and civil liberties promised in

the Hong Kong Basic Law. The result appears to be a neverending game of whack-a-mole, with Beijing smacking down every act of resistance on a case-by-case basis. However, there are also signs that Beijing is increasingly inclined to solve the problem by dispensing with the rule of law and civil liberties altogether.

The new year began with the news that a fifth Hong Kong-based bookseller, Lee Bo 呂波, had disappeared. (See



Lee Bo
Source: YouTube



Hong Kong street food, fishballs
Source: bryan..., Flickr

Chapter 7, ‘Policing the Borders: Hong Kong Conundrums’, pp.236–253, and the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Information Window ‘The Causeway Bay Books Incident’, p.xxiii.) The bookseller’s detention in the mainland to assist authorities with certain investigations was only confirmed months later. Four of the five abducted booksellers were returned to Hong Kong during the course of the year. (Gui Minhai, a Swedish citizen abducted from his home in Thailand, remains incommunicado in detention on the mainland.) The abductions in Hong Kong were a stunning breach of the **‘One Country, Two Systems’** 一国两制 principle, shocking even Hong Kong’s pro-Beijing administration, with Chief Executive CY Leung 梁振英 calling it ‘unacceptable’ for mainland legal agencies to be operating in Hong Kong.

After being allowed to return to Hong Kong in June, one of the booksellers, Lam Wing-kee 林榮基, defied mainland authorities by speaking about his ordeal and then leading thousands of people on a protest march.

The eve of the Chinese New Year saw the first major protests in Hong Kong for 2016 — and the most violent scenes on Hong Kong’s streets in many years. In Hong Kong, authorities have traditionally turned a blind eye to unlicensed street vendors selling popular snacks such as fishballs 鱼蛋 as part of the Lunar New Year markets during the festive season. However, on Chinese New Year’s day, 8 February 2016, officers from Hong Kong’s Food and Environmental Hygiene Department attempted to shut down vendors operating in the Mong Kok district — notably one of the ‘occupied’ sites during 2014’s Umbrella Movement and a scene of frequent protest activities since then. The localist group Hong Kong Indigenous 本土民主前線 called on their supporters through social media to gather in Mong Kok to ‘protect’ the vendors. As the Hong Kong-born restaurateur Alan Yau — founder of Wagamama — told *The Guardian*, fishballs are a quintessential Hong Kong working-class food, and the street

stalls where they're sold 'represent the values of entrepreneurship' and even 'liberal democracy' itself. 'Anthropologically,' Yau said, 'they mean more than a \$5 skewer with curry satay sauce.'

Confrontations between protesters and hygiene officers led to police being called in and things becoming violent. Protesters set fire to rubbish bins and prised up more than 2,000 brick pavers to throw at police — some of whom promptly threw them right back. Police also responded with batons and pepper spray, and one officer even fired two live rounds from his service revolver as warning shots — a deeply shocking act in Hong Kong where the use of guns (by criminals or police) is almost unheard of. The violence lasted for more than ten hours before order was restored and, with 124 people injured (including over eighty police officers) and eighty-six arrests, was the worst in Hong Kong since the Cultural Revolution-era riots of 1967 (when months of rioting left fifty-one dead and 832 injured). The Hong Kong government referred to the incident as the Mong Kok Riot 旺角暴动, whereas some media, including social media sympathetic to the vendors, dubbed it the Fishball Revolution 鱼蛋革命.

September saw the first elections for Hong Kong's Legislative Council 香港特別行政區立法會 since the Umbrella Movement. In advance of those elections, and seemingly at the behest of Beijing in response to the rising localist movement represented by parties such as Hong Kong Indigenous, the Electoral Affairs Commission 选举管理委员会 (EAC) carried out political screening of candidates. All candidates were asked to sign a form declaring their adherence to the principle set out in the Basic Law that Hong Kong is an inalienable part of China. Edward Leung 梁天琦 of Hong Kong Indigenous signed the declaration but the EAC banned him from running because its members did not believe the sincerity of his declaration. A number of other candidates were disqualified on



The Fishball Revolution
Source: Wikipedia



Joshua Wong
Photo: Antony Dapiran

similar grounds. This incident raised real questions about the fairness and legitimacy of the electoral process.

The record turnout for the elections — fifty-eight percent of registered voters — was clear evidence of energised political engagement among Hong Kong's populace. Pan-democrats won the majority of the popular vote (a record high of approximately sixty percent). But the 'functional constituency' system ensured that establishment parties still retained majority control of the legislature, with pro-Beijing parties taking forty out of the seventy seats, and pan-democrats the remaining thirty seats (an increase of three seats). The pro-Beijing parties' weak

showing in the popular vote was despite extensive support for pro-Beijing parties' campaigns from the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government (LOCPG) in Hong Kong, which had hoped to break the pan-democrats 'super-minority' (which enables them to filibuster government legislation and block amendments to the Basic Law).

Most notable in the 2016 elections was the success of the newly established localist and Umbrella Movement-inspired youth parties, including Youngspiration 青年新政 and Demosistō 香港众志. Indeed, localist candidates attracted nineteen percent of all votes cast. Although Edward Leung was disqualified from running, his nominated successor, Sixtus 'Baggio' Leung 梁颂恒, won a seat, as did fellow Youngspiration member Yau Wai-Ching 游蕙祯 and another localist candidate, Lau Siu-Lai 刘小丽. Demosistō, established by Joshua Wong 黄之锋 of the Umbrella Movement group Scholarism 學民思潮 (which had announced its dissolution earlier in the year) was also successful, with their candidate, former Hong Kong Federation of Students' 香港專上學生聯會 leader Nathan Law 羅冠聰, winning a seat. The success of Demosistō and Youngspiration represented a stun-

ning result for the political newcomers and a clear achievement of 2014's Umbrella Movement, especially given the co-ordinated efforts of the LOCPG to sway the election, and the government's efforts to screen out candidates not committed to the view that Hong Kong was an inalienable part of China. Among other successful non-establishment candidates, Eddie Chu 朱凯迪, a veteran protester and land justice activist attracted the most votes of any single candidate, with Hong Kong media crowning him the 'King of Votes'.

However, just when it appeared that Beijing had failed in its attempt to extend its control in Hong Kong, it was given a second chance. During the oath-taking ceremonies for the new legislators, the two Youngspiration law-makers deliberately botched their oaths as a protest exercise, mispronouncing 'China', adding obscenities to their oaths, and displaying 'Hong Kong Is Not China' banners. Other pan-democrat lawmakers had also enacted less extreme forms of symbolic protest during their oaths. The Hong Kong government sued in the Hong Kong courts to prevent the legislators from being allowed to retake their oaths. But before the court made its decision, the National People's Congress stepped in with



Sixtus 'Baggio' Leung
Image: Wikimedia Commons

an unsolicited interpretation of Hong Kong's Basic Law. The NPC stated that Article 104 of the Basic Law requires legislators and other government officials to take their oaths properly and solemnly; there would be no retaking of an invalid oath. This interpretation was to be applied retrospectively. The NPC's clear intention was to automatically and permanently disqualify the two Youngspiration legislators.

This was unusual in itself — in the past, Beijing had only directly intervened in Hong Kong legal matters at the request of the Hong Kong government or courts. The interpretation was so broad, moreover, that many argued it was in fact a 'new law'. As of the date



December 2016: Carrie Lam announces plans for a Hong Kong Palace Museum in the West Kowloon Cultural District
Source: YouTube

of writing, the two Youngspiration legislators are appealing their disqualification to Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal 香港終審法院, while the government is attempting to disqualify six additional legislators pursuant to the interpretation. To the extent this issue culminates in a conflict between Hong Kong's courts and Beijing's authority, it will have severe implications for the rule of law in Hong Kong.

At the end of the year, Hong Kongers received two 'Christmas gifts'. The first, in early December, was the announcement by the unpopular Chief Executive CY Leung that he would not seek re-election for a second term due to family reasons. In the subsequent election for members of the 'election committee' that elected the next Chief

Executive in March 2017, pan-democrats again enjoyed strong results in a historic high turnout, ultimately winning 327 of the 1,200 seats on the committee. Again, corporate voting and functional constituencies ensured pro-Beijing representatives won the vast majority of seats.

The second 'gift' was less well received. Hong Kong's Chief Secretary Carrie Lam 林鄭月娥 announced a few days before Christmas that Hong Kong's new West Kowloon Cultural District will host a permanent local branch of Beijing's Palace Museum 故宮博物館, which will display relics on loan from Beijing. Pan-democrat politicians and media commentators decried the lack of public consultation that would usually precede a public

project of this scale, as did representatives of Hong Kong's music industry — it only became apparent with hindsight that a proposed 'mega performance venue' was scrapped to make way for the museum. There were also concerns that a local Hong Kong architect was awarded the contract to design the museum without any formal tender process (and that the project specifications initially required a local 'Chinese' architect, in breach of Hong Kong's racial discrimination laws). A large-scale advertisement in Central MTR station for the project, depicting the Forbidden City, became a focal point for protests, against both the Hong Kong government for its handling of the project and Beijing for the Tiananmen Square crackdown of 1989. This was perhaps not the outcome Beijing had expected from the display of soft power this 'gift' represented.

The government responded to the concerns by launching a belated public consultation, although Chief Executive CY Leung stated at the outset that at the end of the consultation the project must, in any event, go ahead. Some commentators saw the project as intended to bolster Lam's own candidacy for Chief Executive. Lam responded by noting that the Hong Kong Jockey

Club's charitable fund had taken full responsibility for funding the museum — thus conveniently avoiding the need for Legislative Council budgetary approval, but also implying that Hong Kongers had no reason for looking this particular gift horse in the mouth.

The past five years of the CY Leung administration have been years of confrontation and discord, with Leung's uncompromising governance style being met with resistance and protest, prompting interventions by Beijing to try to control Hong Kong, leading to more resistance in what has become a destructive cycle. The result has been policy gridlock, social division, and a nascent 'Hong Kong independence' movement that did not exist five years ago. The selection of the next chief executive in 2017 offers a welcome opportunity for a much-needed reset. Whether this is realised will depend on the ability of the new chief executive to compromise and act as a bridge-builder across these divisions, and the willingness of Beijing to resist its urge to intervene, and live up to the promise embodied in the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle that 'Hong Kong people govern Hong Kong'.

八

四序

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七二

6月

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8月

9月

10月

11月

12月

2016年1月

2月

3月

4月

5月

6月

7月

8月


9月

8

MAKING THE WORLD SAFE (FOR CHINA)

Gerry Groot

Chinese New Year celebrations in Melbourne
Source: Chris Phutully, Wikimedia



THE YEAR 2016 WAS notable for the visibility of China's international ascendance: in addition to military and diplomatic assertiveness in the South China Seas, it invested billions of dollars in Hollywood's film industry, foreign-based media, academic, and financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Despite international concerns about Chinese government kidnappings of dissidents abroad, meanwhile, for the first time a Chinese official has been elected head of Interpol.

The government of Xi Jinping has worked boldly to create an international environment conducive to the Party achieving its goals. Its strategy includes both direct intervention and ‘soft power’ initiatives. The Chinese Party-state system can harness commercial deals, and carry out propaganda



Learning about the United Front
Source: img.gmw.cn

and United Front Work 统一战线工作 (see the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, Forum ‘The United Front in an Age of Shared Destiny’, pp.129–134) in relatively systematic and long-term ways impossible for democracies to emulate.

If we exclude China’s military and diplomatic activities, which are discussed elsewhere (see Chapter 9 ‘Strategic Control’, pp.316–331, and Information Window ‘Taiwan and the South China Sea’, pp.332–333), the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) main aim is to foster positive attitudes or understanding of Chinese positions in international media, institutions, and general publics. It also wishes to reshape these media and institutions so that they better reflect China’s official values and serve its interests. The Party-state is also continuing to expand its links with **overseas Chinese** groups, from long-established communities to new emigrants. The aims are to build or reinforce identification with China, allow monitoring, isolate dissidents, and influence local politics.

Underlying China’s outreach is a strong desire for redress, if not vengeance, for past national humiliations, and a desire for an international ‘voice’ befitting a nation that now boasts the world’s second largest economy (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Forum ‘One Belt One Road: International Development Finance with Chinese Characteristics’, pp.245–250). It wants recognition of its long history and rich culture, and an end to the global dominance of the English language and ‘Western’



'United Front' (the joined hands), 'Party leadership' (centre)
Source: img.gmw.cn

or 'universal' values (see the *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilising China*, Conclusion 'A Clash of Civilisations', pp.426–433). As Xi declared in 2014, 'the stories of China should be well told, voices of China well-spread and characteristics of China well explained'.

The Party-state is keen to see a dramatic change

in international perceptions of China as reflected, for example, in opinion polls carried out by the US-based 'non-partisan fact tank', the Pew Research Center. Respondents give China credit for its growing economy. But overall, median approval among the respondents in surveyed countries in 2015 was only about fifty-five percent — although the figure is higher among young people generally and especially in Africa and Latin America. Among neighbouring countries, issues such as human rights and pollution, border tensions, and other factors take the numbers lower: only nine percent of Japanese and nineteen percent of Vietnamese view China favourably compared to thirty-eight percent of Americans and fifty-seven percent of Australians. In Pakistan, however, approval registers at eighty-two percent.¹ As a very rough measurement of soft power influence, these numbers are a poor result for expensive attempts at image management. But it is still early days.

Buying Hollywood

Since 2006, Beijing has encouraged its cultural industries, including through strategic investment, to compete with those of Japan and the US. International success with films, animation, literature, and television has generally proven elusive, with some exceptions (see Chapter 5 'Culture: In and Out of Control', pp.148–164). But these exceptions are unlikely to be-

come ‘main melody’ 主旋律 productions — as those are explicitly created to sing the Party’s tune. The new 2016 film law is increasing the degree to which the Party will control and guide Chinese cinema (see Chapter 5 ‘Culture: In and Out of Control’, p.153). But never mind trying to cultivate audiences overseas,



Wang Jianlin

Image: Wikimedia Commons

Chinese domestic films have enough trouble competing with foreign ones for the box office at home, despite protectionist policies that allow only thirty-four foreign films to screen in China per year.

If you can’t beat them, buy them. In 2016, real estate billionaire Wang Jianlin 王健林, of Dalian Wanda 大连万达 shopping centre fame, spent billions on AMC, the world’s largest theatre chain. In July, he used AMC first to buy Europe’s largest cinema chain, Odeon & UCI Cinemas Group, and then the Carmike chain (to total more than 636 US cinemas, fifty in Australia, and 187 in China). On the production side, in January, Wanda bought the Hollywood production and finance company Legendary Entertainment (which co-produces films with both Warner Bros and Universal Studios) and then swooped up Dick Clark Studios in November as well. According to *Business Insider*, Wang eventually wants to own one of Hollywood’s big six studios, while Bloomberg has written of Wang’s determination to control twenty percent of the world’s film market by 2020.² His goal, as he told a Chinese TV interviewer in August, is to ‘change the world where the rules are set by foreigners’.³

Other Chinese corporate players getting involved in Hollywood include **Alibaba** 阿里巴巴集团, **Tencent** 腾讯, and even Hunan TV, which signed a US\$1.5 billion co-financing and co-production pact with Lionsgate, America’s largest ‘mini-major’ film studio. Co-productions are one way of getting around the quota system. They feature more roles for Chinese actors, and pay

attention from the start of the process to official Chinese sensitivities and to storylines that appeal to both Chinese audiences and censors. The beauty of co-productions from the Chinese perspective, stated Propaganda Chief, Liu Qibao 刘奇葆, in *Guangming ribao* 光敏日报 in 2014, is that Chinese propaganda is much more palatable when it is seen as imported from abroad.⁴ Another incidental benefit is that co-productions can help the Chinese partners ‘skill up’.

Even on its own, Hollywood is working hard to make films for the Chinese market, which is now often crucial at the box office. When MGM was doing post-production for its 2012 film *Red Dawn*, it changed the villains from Chinese to North Korean. The 2014 Wikileaks dump of Sony Corporation emails exposed, among other things, how Sony modified movies such as *Pixels* to maximise their attractiveness to Chinese audiences and censors. Hollywood films today increasingly include Chinese actors and products, and endeavour to portray China in a positive light. In the 2015 film *The Martian*, Chinese space technicians help out an American stranded on Mars. *Independence Day: Resurgence* (2016), meanwhile, features Angelababy (杨颖) — a Shanghai-born actress and reality TV celebrity. Some films that did poorly in the West have done well enough in China for a sequel to be produced (*World of Warcraft*, for example).

The darker side of this is the fear that studios will pander to Chinese sensibilities at the expense of artistic integrity or free expression. In the case of Marvel’s *Dr Strange* (2016), concern over China’s reaction to the casting of a Tibetan in the key role of the Ancient One (a Tibetan in the original comic) led to the character being changed to a Scottish witch (played by Tilda Swinton).⁵



Dr Strange

Image: intergalacticrobot.blogspot.com.au

Translation is Difficult but not Impossible: The Case of *Monkey Magic*

There is also the small irony that a television series, *Monkey* or *Monkey Magic* (NTV, 1979–1980) achieved considerable success internationally in the early 1980s, particularly in Australia and Britain, and was popular for a further two decades or more. It even became a successful play. But not only was *Monkey* a Japanese production, it was also notable for using irreverent and sly humour quite at odds with Chinese injunctions about dignity and the need to be didactic and exemplary. Many related Japanese anime series such as *Dragon Ball* (1984–1995) have had even greater international success, with any acclaim or affection going to Japan, despite the Chinese roots of the original stories. In contrast, not one of the many Chinese versions have had international success. Even if they ever do, the experience of Japan suggests that this is unlikely to translate into the soft power that China's leaders desire.



Still from *Monkey Magic*: Masaaki Sakai played the role of Monkey
Image: YouTube

Extending Online Censorship Beyond the Great Firewall

Facebook has been banned in China since the Urumqi (Xinjiang) riots in 2009. That Mark Zuckerberg has since been learning Chinese and holding high-level meetings in China, including with Xi Jinping, is old news. In November 2016, *The New York Times* revealed that Facebook has been working on censorship software tools that might help it regain access to the world's biggest social media market. These would allow the suppression

of posts from appearing in people's feeds in certain geographic areas. This is understandably controversial, for both the moral issues involved and the fear that Chinese government access to Facebook users' data could compromise the safety, violate the privacy, and interfere with the freedoms of people outside China as well. Facebook already blocks content (55,000 items in total over six months in 2015) in countries including Pakistan, Russia, and Turkey to comply with those countries' censorship regimes. But this software would take it to another level.⁶ On 6 December, Facebook suddenly deleted the account of the overseas-based, Chinese-language Boxun 博讯 news service, which publishes articles on human rights abuses in China, among other topics.



Mark Zuckerberg meets with Xi Jinping and Lu Wei
Image: Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook

China's own social media, including Tencent's **WeChat** 微信, blocks some websites (such as gambling ones) for its more than 846 million users in China, while allowing access to 70 million people outside China. There is also censorship of sensitive issues such as Falun Gong, but it is usually so subtle that users don't notice. Tencent has to allow state access to its accounts in order to function. It's a Chinese company. But if Facebook does the same, or even similar, as the title of an article published in December in the online news magazine Quartz put it: 'There's only one clear winner if Facebook breaks into China — and it's not Facebook'.⁷

The Chinese Party-state has big ambitions for extending its control in the online world generally. In March 2016, the US handed control of the Internet to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, responsible for domain names, which was originally a creation of the US Department of Commerce, and its headquarters are still in the US. But it is now entirely independent, with members that include governments,

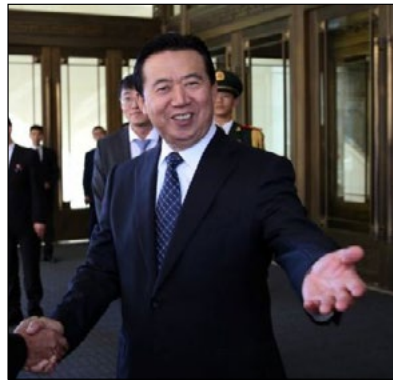
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corporations, and individuals from around the world. The final transition was a source of anxiety for some commentators, notably American ones (Donald Trump included) who fear rising Chinese (and Russian) influence at America's expense and will be closely watching China's actions in this sphere.

Meanwhile, **Huawei** 华为 — the largest telecommunications equipment company in the world since 2012 — has taken a leading role in setting technical standards for next generation mobile 5G communications (crucial for the realisation of the 'Internet of things' and driverless cars). Chinese firms increasingly have the technical capacity, skills, and knowledge to justify their standards being adopted as international ones. One way they achieve this is by buying up foreign high-tech firms, though sometimes governments (US and Australian, for example) block the sale. While such rejections spark angry complaints in Beijing, there is, of course, no reciprocity: the Party-state does not allow foreign companies to invest in industries they deem related to China's national interest.

An Extraterritorial Policeman

In November, Meng Hongwei 孟宏伟, a Vice-Minister of Public Security, was elected head of Interpol. He is one of an increasing number of Chinese officials who are also influential players in international institutions. The case of Meng and Interpol is remarkable as it represents a hitherto hard-to-imagine degree of influence over a law and order body that prosecutes terrorism, transnational crime, and cybercrime. This is particularly significant in light of accusations of Chinese state-linked hacking into US websites (accusations China vociferously de-



Head of Interpol, Meng Hongwei
Source: 23H News, Flickr

state-linked hacking into US websites (accusations China vociferously de-

nies), the state-organised kidnapping abroad of Hong Kong publishers and booksellers and other dissidents, and the political nature of law and criminal justice in China itself (see Chapter 2 ‘Control by Law’, pp.40–57). Less than three weeks after Meng’s election, on 29 November, the sixty-year-old democracy and human rights advocate Peng Ming 彭明 died in a Hubei prison. Peng, a Christian, had been granted refugee status in the US but, in 2004, was kidnapped from Burma, having been lured there on the pretext of meeting his parents. He had been in prison in China ever since. Meng’s appointment reflects an increasing willingness by the international community to turn a blind eye to such abuses when convenient — a huge win for China’s goal of asserting its values and norms in the global sphere.

The CCP and the Chinese Diaspora

Peng Ming’s death is a reminder of one of the most dramatic expressions of the Party-state’s desire for increased control and influence over the Chinese diaspora. His abduction, and the 2015 kidnappings of the five Hong Kong booksellers (see Chapter 7 ‘Policing the Borders: Hong Kong Conundrums, pp.236–253) reflect an increased confidence that the Party-state can get away with breaking international laws (in this case, against ‘enforced disappearance’) when it suits them; it also reflects a rising intolerance of dissident expression abroad. This also mirrors the Party-state’s belief that it has a right to treat any ethnic Chinese as subjects of the PRC even if they have since taken on foreign citizenship.

In August, China reported that Foxhunt 2016 — the overseas arm of the anti-corruption drive (see the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, Information Window ‘Naked Officials’, pp.236–237) — had successfully returned 409 suspects to China for further investigation. In Australia, Zhou Shiqin 周世勤 and Tang Dongmei 唐冬梅 both returned home ‘voluntarily’ after their cases were publicised across Chinese state media. In Zhou’s case, this involved the publication of her photo and an Interpol notice. Authorities also put intense pressure on her sister to persuade Zhou to turn herself in. ‘A fugitive is like a kite, the body is overseas but the



Islam in Yunnan
Photo: Gerry Groot

thread is inside China — through family and friends, [we] can always find them (sic)', a leader of Shanghai police's Economic Crimes Unit declared in 2014.⁸ Critics are concerned that some of Foxhunt's activities, such as sending undercover agents abroad to pursue investigations and to pressure suspects, their families and friends, fall into a grey area that may well violate other nations' laws.

There are now an estimated fifty million Chinese people living outside of China according to *The Bluebook of Overseas Chinese*, including members of established multi-generational, ethnically Han communities as well as newly arrived students, and business migrants, and small numbers of Uyghurs and Tibetans (although the latter are generally not counted as 'huaqiao'). As I wrote in last year's *Yearbook* (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Forum 'The Expansion of the United Front Under Xi Jinping', pp.167–177), the Party-state has sought to maintain and reinforce the loyalties of both new migrants and long-established overseas Chinese in numerous ways, including United Front Work.

The Party-state has also extended its influence deep into Chinese-language media abroad through numerous means including training journalists, supplying content, purchasing advertising, and offering official endorsements. Reuters reported in late 2015 that China Radio International controls a significant portion of Chinese-language radio around the world (specifically in the US, Australia, and Europe), via holding companies in a way that gets around any legislation (such as exists in the US) against foreign powers holding radio licences.⁹

Australia provides a good example of how this increasing influence can manifest. Australia's national public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) struck a deal in 2014 to shut down its own uncensored Mandarin-language news service in order to send content into China via AustraliaPlus.cn. The ABC's own *Media Watch* program was among those that asked tough questions about the deal, noting that among the stories dropped from the feed to China were those related to the Panama Papers (an early 2016 leak of 11.5 million documents, mainly on tax evasion), Chinese cyber-attacks on the Bureau of Meteorology, and the exhibition in Australia of work by Ai Weiwei 艾未未. A belated ABC decision to return to independent news was only made in November 2016.



Liu Qibao
Photo: en.kremlin.ru

Meanwhile, the visit of propaganda chief Liu Qibao 刘奇葆 to Australia in May 2016 resulted in a number of under-reported agreements between Chinese media entities and Australian companies. One outcome was the appearance in Fairfax newspapers of *China Daily* inserts. *China Daily* itself was clear about the importance of this deal: 'Fairfax Media owns three important Australian daily newspapers and nine others in New Zealand, through which *China Daily*'s influence will be spread to cover the two most important countries in Oceania'. The title of the article was also notable: 'Media exchanges to help soft power sow understanding'.¹⁰

Chinese print media are especially vulnerable to manipulation and control, thanks in part to the fact that the overseas Chinese press is almost totally reliant on advertising. Yan Xia, editor of the Sydney paper *Vision Times* reported that the Chinese Ministry of State Security 国家安全部 pressured one of its best advertisers, a migration agent in Beijing, to withdraw from his paper for its perceived hostility to the Party-state's agenda.¹¹ Chinese consular officials regularly make their views known to local media. Chinese migrant communities reliant on local Chinese media for their

news and information may not be entirely aware of the resulting bias, as a 2016 review by Wanning Sun of Chinese-language media in Australia revealed.¹²

On 23 July, in Melbourne, some 3,000 Chinese from 169 community associations and fifteen Chinese-language media outlets took part in a large-scale protest at The Hague Tribunal's ruling in favour of the Philippines against China's claims to maritime boundaries in the South China Seas. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 6 'Belt Tightening', pp.214–239.) The organiser, a 'Mr Li', said it was to protest American involvement behind the decision and to urge Australia not to follow the US example.¹³

The participation of so many Chinese community organisations and media in the protest strongly suggests active United Front Work behind it. As I wrote in last year's *Yearbook*, since 2014 the CCP has stepped up such work aimed at the Chinese diaspora, including citizens studying abroad. On 4 December 2016, the CCP Central Committee Office 中国共产党中央委员会 formally restated the importance of working with overseas Chinese, cultivating their patriotism, guiding their political consciousness, using them to support China's diplomacy, and encouraging their entry into the mainstream of the societies they live in, where they could presumably influence the broader community in China's favour.¹⁴

The kind of connections fostered by such a policy cost one prominent Australian politician dearly in 2016. Senator Sam Dastyari had broken ranks with both his own (Labor) party and government policy on the South China Sea disputes, taking China's side. Trouble arose when Dastyari revealed that he had asked a company run by Chinese businessman



July 2016: Chinese protestors in Melbourne
Source: YouTube



Sam Dastyari
Source: Wikipedia

(and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference delegate) Zhu Minshen 祝敏申 to cover staff travel expenses above the amount of his parliamentary entitlement: AU\$1,640. Then it emerged that the property developer and founder of the Australia Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China, Huang Xiangmo 黄向墨, had helped Dastyari out a few years earlier with substantial legal fees. It turned out that Dastyari had visited China twice as the guest of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign

Affairs 中国人民外交学会 and the International Department of the Communist Party 中国共产党中央对外联络部.

In this case, China's bid for influence went wrong. The scandal fuelled suspicion over Chinese influence in Australian politics and cost a hitherto popular politician more than his reputation: Dastyari resigned his position as manager of opposition business in the Senate and moved to the backbench.

The Dastyari affair highlighted the degree to which Chinese donors were contributing to Australian politicians more generally. An ABC investigation found Chinese-linked businesses to be the largest donors to both the Labor and Liberal parties, donating more than AU\$5.5 million between 2013 and 2015. Many of the donors had strong United Front connections. The scandal also drew attention to China's growing influence in Australian universities. Huang Xiangmo is a major player in this regard, having donated AU\$1.8 million to the University of Technology Sydney towards the establishment of its Australia–China Relations Institute (ACRI), of which he was, until recently, the chair. He has also pledged AU\$3.5 million to the University of Western Sydney to set up an Australia–China Institute for Arts and Culture. Huang, using his title of ACRI chairman, subsequently



The China Dream in Yunnan
Photo: Gerry Groot

wrote in the *Global Times* that Australian media was ‘groundless and racist in its accusations [that] Chinese-linked payments could skew Australia’s democracy’, arguing that Chinese donors had a legitimate role to play in Australian politics.¹⁵ He resigned as chair in September, suggesting that he had been ‘unfairly’ scrutinised for his donations, that the Australian media had been ‘biased’ in its coverage, and that Australia was in the grip of both racism and a kind of ‘McCarthyism’.

ACRI, which officially bases its work ‘on a positive and optimistic view of Australia–China relations’, was left having to defend its intellectual independence and integrity. Its director, former state premier and later foreign affairs minister Bob Carr, similarly decried critics as ‘Cold War warriors’, who were themselves unduly influenced by Washington. Yet as Anne-Marie Brady wrote in 2015, influencing foreign think tanks through donations and so on to adopt a more positive view of China is precisely one of the many ways Beijing has sought to shift global perceptions of itself.¹⁶

Chinese students are also becoming more active in student and university politics. In one incident on The Australian National University campus, a student who identified himself as president of the Chinese Student and Scholars Association demanded that the university pharmacy discontinue its distribution of Falun Gong's *Epoch Times*, which had been stocked there since November 2015. The surveillance of Chinese students by such 'patriotic' organisations has long been a concern. In October, ABC radio's *Background Briefing* brought to light some disturbing examples of harassment of students holding dissident opinions and of ties between consular and student organisations.¹⁷

Conclusion

The CCP Party-state today is extending its global influence in multiple and often subtle ways, at the same time as it is actively and vociferously reducing any ability of foreign nations to do the same in China. At home, it is even extending its demands to shape curricula in international schools and stepping up ideological education in schools and universities to prevent what it sees as Western ideological infiltration. Yet there is a real risk that growing awareness of China's increasing reach into other nations via combinations of state, private, and ostensibly civil society organisations will fuel perceptions of both interference in others' internal affairs and result in doubts about the loyalty to their adopted countries of ethnic Chinese around the world. Such fears may well spark or inflame racist sentiments and are especially dangerous in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia where anti-Chinese feelings are easily stoked. The CCP's attempts to both claim all overseas Chinese as China's own as well as use them to influence local politics is a perilous game. It not only endangers all overseas Chinese by impugning their loyalties, it is also an implicit threat to the political integrity of immigrant-based nations including Australia, Canada, the US, and others, which are ill equipped to deal with such issues.

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CHINA'S ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT: THE ZAMBIAN EXAMPLE

Beyongo Mukete Dynamic

JUST TEN DAYS AFTER becoming President in March 2013, Xi Jinping, for the first leg of his first official visit abroad, visited Tanzania, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo — an acknowledgement of the importance of Sino-African relations to China. In December 2015, during the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation in South Africa, Xi announced that China aims to provide US\$60 billion finance, to African nations over a three-year period to finance construction, mining, agriculture, and industrialisation projects across the continent. In September 2016, in his opening speech to the G20 Summit in Hangzhou, Xi reiterated China's commitment to

promoting industrialisation in Africa, and to boosting trade and investment between China and its African partners. Chinese trade and investment in Africa, alongside cultural exchange with the region, has already increased dramatically over the past three decades: China is now Africa's largest trading partner (US\$385 billion in two-



March 2013: Xi Jinping's first official visit abroad
Source: CCTV news



Chinese-owned Chambishi Copper Mine, Zambia

Source: Justin Qian, Flickr

way trade in 2015). It is also the fourth largest foreign direct investor in the region.¹

Chinese investment in Africa has benefited some African countries by creating jobs, injecting capital into cash-starved economies, and opening markets back in China for African agricultural and mining products. But there have been controversies as well, especially about the environmental cost of these investments.

The Case of Zambia

Zambia is a case in point where the environmental practices of some Chinese investment in the country have drawn criticism from the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other commentators. In 2016, China's Ambassador to Zambia announced that the total value of Chi-

nese investment in the country had grown to over US\$5.2 billion. Zambia is rich in copper, lead, and zinc, and has deposits of uranium, coal, and gemstones. Chinese foreign direct investment there, which spans finance, mining, agriculture, construction, education, and real estate, grew from US\$6 million in 2000 to more than US\$292 million by 2012.

Much of this investment was in the mining and construction sector. The Zambia Development Agency — a public agency established in 2006 to facilitate trade and investment in Zambia — claims that these Chinese investments have created jobs, rehabilitated old mines, opened new mines, constructed roads, and generated tax revenue for Zambia's government.²

However, there are concerns over the environmental impact of Chinese investments, especially in mining, hy-

dropower, roads, and smelters. Some local environmental NGOs accuse Chinese mining companies of serious pollution of air, water, and land; damaging wildlife habitat and displacing local communities without adequate compensation.³ In 2013, Citizens for Better Environment (a local NGO), criticised two Chinese companies Nonferrous China Africa (NFCA) and Chambishi Copper Smelter (CCS), both based in the Copperbelt province, for failing to comply with local environmental regulations, including the timely submission of emissions and other environmental impact reports to the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) — the public body entrusted with the enforcement of local environmental regulations.⁴ Chinese companies are not the only ones to stand so accused regarding environmental pollution in Zambia: in 2016, 1,826 Zambian villagers living around the banks of the Kafue River in Zambia's Copperbelt province took the UK's Vedanta Resources to court in the UK for environmental damage that, they said, had turned their water supply into 'rivers of acid'.⁵

Zambia has a long history of poor environmental management, especially in mining areas. Its environmental

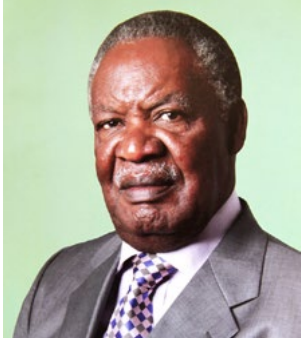


Chinese and Zambian coworkers at Chambishi Copper Mine

Source: Michael Chipili, Flickr

regulation is relatively weak compared with those in developed countries such as Australia and Canada (which also have significant mining activities), and the government has been, historically, inattentive to calls for environmental protection in mining communities. What is more, Zambia's previous mining regulations, such as the Mining and Mineral Development Act of 1996, and the development agreements signed between foreign mining companies and the Zambian government, protected mining and mineral processing companies against financial liabilities that might arise from legal suits by local communities for environmental damage.

Some officials at Citizens for Better Environment and the Zambia Institute for Environmental Management (ZIEM) — another local environmental NGO — argue that Chinese investment



Former Zambian president Michael Sata
Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, Flickr

in Zambia (as in most African countries) has negatively impacted on the health of local communities, rivers, wildlife, and agriculture, and further weakened ZEMA's ability to do its job.⁶ Some scholars, such as Dan Haglund,⁷ contend that Chinese companies have little incentive to comply with Zambia's regulations because neither Chinese banks nor the government has the framework to monitor compliance by Chinese companies with the host country's regulations, and because their managerial ethics emphasise productivity and profits above all else. Worse still, it is widely believed that Chinese managers are prone to bribing regulatory officials in Zambia, and that they use the threat of shutting down the mines (and subsequent job losses) to control or 'capture' Zambia's government officials into turning a blind

eye to their damaging environmental practices.⁸ Former Zambian president Michael Sata made Chinese investment in Zambia the centre of his 2006 presidential campaign, as he accused Chinese investors of non-compliance with local Zambian laws and the Levy Mwanawasa government of failing to address what he referred to as poor practices among the Chinese.⁹

Another Side to the Story

But things are not always as they seem. Based on evidence gathered during my fieldwork in Zambia and my ongoing research on this topic, the views cited above are over pessimistic. Despite perceptions of regulatory weakness, over the past two decades the Zambian government has, in fact, introduced a number of measures to strengthen the country's environmental laws. In 2007, it developed a National Environmental Policy to enhance the monitoring and enforcement capacity of local environmental agencies through increasing funding, revising environmental regulations, promoting coordination among relevant agencies, and increasing the fines for polluters, with the goal of boosting compliance from business, government, and individ-



Air thick with sulphuric acid vapour, Chambishi Copper Smelter
Source: Jonathan Elliott, Flickr

uals. In 2011, it passed the *Zambian Environmental Management Act* that created ZEMA, which replaced the *Environmental Council of Zambia*. In 2015, it passed the *Mines and Mineral Development Act*, prescribing stringent measures against mining companies that pollute the environment. These changes have forced companies, including those from China, to be accountable to government and local communities for their actions that affect the environment.

In line with this new regulatory regime, the *Zambian government* has suspended the mining operations of some Chinese companies, and collaborated with others to improve their environmental standards. For example, in December 2013, ZEMA suspended the operations of the *Non-Ferrous China Africa (NFCA) Southeast Ore Body (SEOB)* in Chambishi, Copperbelt prov-

ince for two weeks because the company had failed to properly compensate and resettle communities affected by the SEOB project.¹⁰ The matter was resolved after NFCA agreed to compensate some members of the community who had formal legal claims to the land. That same year, ZEMA suspended operations at *Chambishi Copper Smelter* because the smelter was releasing emissions above ZEMA statutory limits. In 2015, ZEMA suspended mining operations at *Chinese Copper Mining in Chingola* after some residents of the township accused the company of ‘polluting their environment and some streams from which local people were drawing water’.¹¹

While most of these suspensions were temporary, they nevertheless led to changes at both NFCA and CCS. For instance, CCS hired *Citizens for Better Environment (CBE)* to monitor



Copper mine in Chingola, Zambia

Source: Hiromu Jimbo, Flickr

its emission levels and report them to ZEMA as required by law. NFCA developed a program to compensate communities affected by its mining activities. According to its Chief Executive Officer, Wang Chunlai 王春来, NFCA lost US\$10 million as a result of the suspension.¹² The company also created a new Department for Safety and Environmental Management, with an assistant director for environment, to ensure that NFCA complies with local environmental laws.

Other constraints on Chinese companies operating in Zambia come from NGOs and community groups, such as farming communities. Local NGOs have taken Chinese mining companies to court for financial compensation and they have conducted independent assessments of the environmental impact of mining projects that local residents have deemed to be polluting the local environment.

For instance, in 2011, the Zambia Institute for Environmental Management (ZIEM) — a members-based NGO whose partners include the Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources, and Environmental Protection and the University of Zambia as well as Oxfam, Action Aid, and other international organisations — conducted an Environmental Social Impact Assessment for a mine operated by the NFCA, in the Musakashi River Catchment Area. The project exposed shortcomings in NFCA's management of wastewater, and also found that the mine's acid emissions had damaged crops, aquatic life, houses, and roads.¹³ The mine agreed to improve its waste storage and processing facilities, and to compensate some of the affected farmers.

In another case, in 2014, CBE, acting on behalf of the Luela Community farmers of Chambishi in Kalulushi District, sued CCS in the Kitwe High Court

for damages caused to local farms. The case was settled out of court. The company agreed to compensate the affected farmers, and hired CBE to monitor its emission levels on an ongoing basis.¹⁴

The Big Picture

The Chinese government and Chinese companies are developing strategies to reduce environmental damage caused by overseas operations. In 2013, China's Ministry of Commerce 商务部 and Ministry of Environmental Protection 环境保护部 released a document titled, 'Guidelines on Respecting Overseas Environmental Standards and Managing the Environment'.¹⁵ This and other official documents stress the need for Chinese companies to comply with the environmental standards of the countries in which they operate. According to Lin Songtian 林松添, Director General of the Department of African Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese 'government did not want to see

African countries following the path of pollute first and clean up later'.¹⁶

The environmental challenges brought by Chinese investment in Zambian mining and the evolving means by which they are addressed should also be seen as part of a larger and dynamic relationship. Chinese investment in most African countries comes with both costs and benefits. Thus, the rise of Chinese investment in Africa is not inevitably harmful to local economies. In the case of Zambia, both sides have shown efforts to address negative environmental effects, among other public concerns, and are expanding their collaborative efforts in these areas. Nonetheless, as China continues to deepen its economic ties with Africa, social concerns associated with the growing economic presence of China in the region, and how these concerns are addressed, will continue to influence Sino-African debates in the near future.

THE YEAR OF THE SCAPEGOAT: CHINESE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Nick Stember

BETWEEN 2005 AND 2012, thanks to an immigrant investor program, 36,892 millionaires emigrated to British Columbia (BC). With sixty-six percent hailing from mainland China, and another fifteen percent from Hong Kong and Taiwan, greater Vancouver's ethnic Chinese population grew from 17.5 percent of the population in 2001 to 18.7 percent of the population in 2011.¹⁷ This demographic shift coincided with the city's benchmark house price in 2016 rising to CA\$1.4 million — double what it was in 2005 and out of range for many other citizens in a city where the median family income is CA\$76,040.¹⁸ While housing prices were doubling, inflation-adjusted income growth in BC was far and away the worst in Canada — falling by as much as 2.4 percent according to

some estimates.¹⁹ This strange state of affairs led some analysts to argue that an influx of wealthy Chinese immigrants generating most of their wealth overseas had allowed the housing and labour markets to decouple — a troubling conclusion in a city with a long history of anti-Chinese racism.

Many Chinese immigrants like to joke that Vancouver, and BC in general, is 'so pretty, so clean, so boring' 好山好水好无聊. In the media, the mainland Chinese community in particular has become famous for ostentatious displays of wealth, with teenagers at the wheel of Lamborghinis, college students buying mega-mansions, and other jaw-dropping displays of conspicuous consumption such as those that feature in the web series *Ultra Rich Asian Girls of Vancouver*. The ar-



Still from *Ultra Rich Asian Girls of Vancouver*
Source: YouTube

rival of wealthy mainland Chinese has provided a stark example of the effect of rising income inequality on house prices within Canada, exacerbating a problem that predates the investor immigrant program by decades. It has also obscured the arrival of non-investor Chinese immigrants providing much-needed skills and labour in a country with declining fertility. Tensions are simmering, and many liberal Vancouverites who pride themselves in BC's more recent ethos of multicultural inclusivity find themselves struggling to understand their own city's dark and racist past.

Making Tracks

As with the Irish potato famine and related demographic crises in rural Sweden and Italy that sparked waves of immigration across the Atlantic, the

Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) and resulting Punti–Hakka Clan Wars 土客械斗 in Guangdong province sent struggling farmers and merchants in southern China to Canada in search of new opportunities. The first wave came in 1858, during the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush. The second arrived when BC demanded a railroad link to the east as a condition of joining the Canadian federation in 1871.

BC's first census, carried out that same year, recorded some 3,000 Chinese residents — ten percent of the total population of BC at the time, and over ninety-nine percent of Chinese immigrants in Canada. Despite widespread racism against the Chinese immigrants, with 'Chinamen' (along with 'Indians') being stripped of the right to vote in BC provincial elections in 1872, over the next four years some

15,000 Chinese were brought into the province to work on the railroad. They were paid CA\$1 a day — one-third of the wage of other workers. They were also consigned to the most difficult and dangerous passages: an unrecorded number of Chinese labourers were injured and killed during the difficult (and rushed) tunnelling and bridging of the Rocky Mountains; another unknown but far larger number deserted the railway for the gold mines. A new wave of immigration began when gold was discovered in the Klondike in 1886.

Exclusion and Inclusion

Once the railway was finished, the federal government quickly established a head tax to discourage further Chinese immigration. The tax, originally set at CA\$50 but eventually reaching CA\$500, and other exclusionary, racist practices, including expanding the disenfranchisement of Chinese British Columbians to federal elections in 1899, meant that while the overall population of BC increased eight-fold between 1891 and 1911, the Chinese population was kept at an artificially low 14,000 residents. Even this small number was a point of contention for the Trades and Labour Council-sponsored Asiatic Exclusion League, which



A Chinese man washing gold in British Columbia's Fraser River around 1875
Source: collectionscanada.gc.ca

staged a riot in Chinatown in 1907, blaming the Chinese for accepting lower wages and stealing jobs from white British Columbians.

Ten years later, World War I saw some 80,000 Chinese labourers travel to Europe to aid the Allied war effort by digging trenches. They travelled via Canada in cattle cars on the same railroad their compatriots had built just three decades earlier. Meanwhile, many Chinese Canadians joined the service to fight alongside their fellow countrymen. Yet in 1923, the Canadian government promulgated the Chinese Immigration Act, outlawing ethnic Chinese immigration with but a few exceptional cases. The Act was not repealed until 1947 — a condition of Canada's signing the UN Charter on Human Rights. Two years later, Chinese British Columbians were allowed to vote again for the first time, since their provincial and federal voting rights had been suc-



Won Alexander Cumyow
Source: Wikipedia

cessively taken away in 1872 and 1899, with Won Alexander Cumyow 溫金有 (1861–1955) becoming the only Chinese Canadian to have voted both before and after the exclusion acts, having last cast his vote in the 1890 federal election.

Only in the late 1960s did Canada overhaul its immigration policy, allowing qualified immigrants to settle in Canada irrespective of their country of origin. Following the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984, in which Britain pledged to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, and the bloody crackdown on the student protests in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989, wealthy Hong Kong Chinese

became one of BC's largest immigrant communities, with some 241,000 Hong-Kong Chinese living in Canada by 1996, many of them in Vancouver. The more recent wave of Chinese immigrants from mainland China has boosted the overall Chinese population of Canada to nearly 1.5 million, or 4.5 percent of the total population. While Ontario has greater absolute numbers of ethnic Chinese in its population than BC (about 750,000), they only make up five percent of the population of the province, whereas the 500,000 ethnic Chinese British Columbians make up more than ten percent of the total population of the province — roughly the same ratio as when the first census was conducted there in 1871.

Twenty-first-century Chinese immigration to Vancouver has revived old concerns about racial mixing and changing cultural norms. Like the Asiatic Exclusion League before them, fringe groups such as the Council of European Canadians and Immigration Watch Canada have used the concurrent phenomena of rising house prices and stagnating incomes to argue that immigration from non-European countries, and from China in particular, represents a threat to Canada's social cohesion and economic wellbeing.

In February 2016, the ruling Liberal Party of BC commissioned its own study of foreign ownership of provincial real estate. Before the study was completed, however, BC Premier Christy Clark instituted a fifteen percent foreign transfer tax in August. Although the tax aims to curtail real estate speculation by wealthy overseas investors whatever their country of origin, to some it calls to mind the institution of the head tax of 1885.

Interestingly, in 2016, it is some members of BC's ethnic Chinese population who have led the debate, defusing some of its racial elements. Among them is Eveline Xia, who is behind the lively Twitter hashtag #donthave1million; urban planner Andy Yan, who conducted a controversial study drawing an explicit link between new Chinese wealth and the overheated housing market; and Ian Young, a former editor with the *South China Morning Post* whose 'Hongcouver' blog ran a story on 24 November with the headline: 'Vancouver's mayor never dreamed foreign-funded housing crisis would get so bad. If only he'd been warned ...'



Eveline Xia
Source: Mark Klotz, Flickr

CHINESE AMERICANS FOR TRUMP, THE 'GENUINE PETTY MAN'

Linda Jaivin

ON 28 OCTOBER, a plane flew over Seattle towing an aerial banner with an American flag and the words 'WA CHINESE AMERICANS FOR TRUMP'. (WA stands for Washington State.) Chinese Americans for Trump, which by November claimed upwards of 6,000 members across thirty states, was the brainchild of David Tian Wang, himself only a Green-Cardholder. He told Seattle radio station KUOW that Chinese Americans supported Trump on immigration and national security. He also cited resentment against affirmative action programs supporting access to education for students from underprivileged backgrounds, which, he said, 'Chinese Americans see as disadvantaging their own chil-

dren's chances of getting into good universities'.²⁰

Two decades ago, the Republican Party, as the party of business, could count on a good proportion of the Chinese American vote. But over the last twenty years, this has changed dramatically, to the point that Chinese Americans, like Asian Americans overall, tend to vote Democrat. In 2012, Obama commanded seventy-three percent of the Asian-American vote and support grew through 2016. A commonly cited reason for this is the rise of exclusionary, anti-multicultural, anti-immigrant rhetoric on the right.²¹

After all, among the 'undocumented immigrants' who have been such a focus of Trump's ire are near-



Still from YouTube video 'Chinese Americans for Trump'
Source: YouTube

ly 1.5 million people of Asian origin. What's more, twenty-one percent of the 3.3 million Muslims in the US identify racially as Asian (including South and Central Asian); it's safe to assume that Trump's fanning of anti-Muslim sentiment would have upset this significant group of Asian Americans as well. Both populations — undocumented migrants and Muslims — include ethnic Chinese.

But at least one segment of the Chinese American population was vocal in its support of Trump: first-generation, relatively recent immigrants. Daniel Deng, a Chinese American attorney from California (and Clinton supporter) told the *Los Angeles Times* that they appeared to be unaware that the kind of exclusionary laws Trump was proposing for Muslims had once been aimed at the Chinese community:

they didn't know, he said, 'what Chinese Americans have been through'.²²

The American Chinese journalist and podcaster Kaiser Kuo conducted conversations with dozens of Trump-boosting Chinese Americans. They confirmed that dislike for affirmative action and approval of Trump's views on immigration were big factors in their support. He also found that they tended to share the Trump team's hard-line conservative views on homosexuality. They were worried about law and order, conflating 'blackness with criminality'. They were wary of Clinton's hawkishness and her commitment to Obama's Pivot to Asia policy. They resented having to pay taxes (apparently failing to link tax revenue with the education they so valued for their children). They liked that he was a businessman. Some spoke in terms

of the advantages of the ‘genuine petty person’ 真小人 (Trump) over the ‘hypocritical gentleman’ 伪君子 (Clinton).²³

In a YouTube video titled ‘Chinese Americans for Trump’, a middle-aged Chinese-born voter in a Trump t-shirt rants against America’s drift to the ‘left’ and looks forward to Trump returning it to the ‘right’. As for claims Trump is a racist: ‘That’s a big lie,’ she insists, perpetuated by the ‘leftist media’.²⁴

One older immigrant, a Chinese university graduate of the class of 1977, told Kuo that the Chinese American Trump supporters ‘reminded her of nothing so much as the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution’.²⁵ Just switch ‘left’ for ‘right’ and you get the idea.

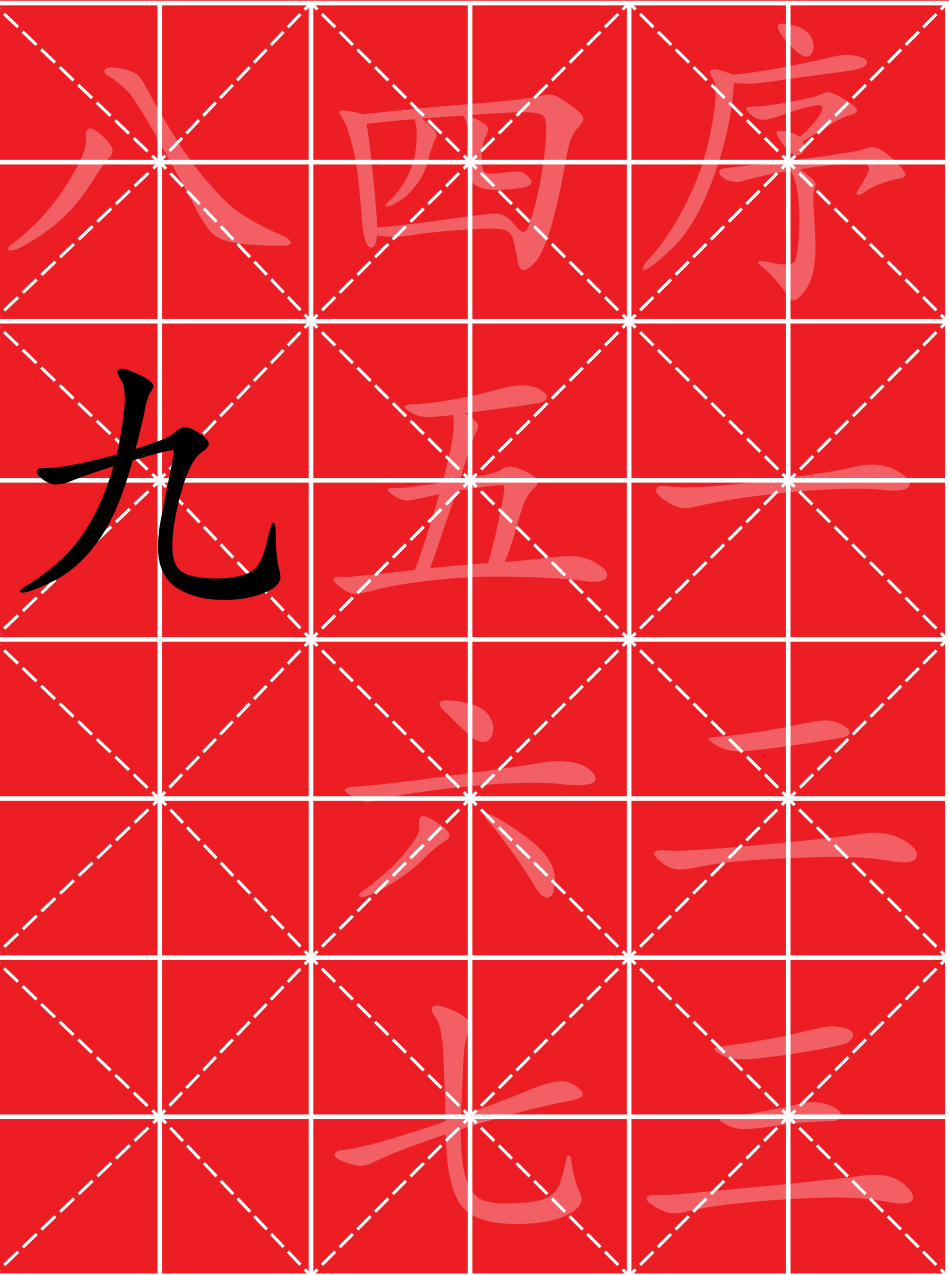
Even Trump’s attacks on China did not dim their enthusiasm — as Kate Linthicum wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*: ‘... some Chinese-born Trump supporters say his focus on China invokes pride in their native country’s economic prowess’.

The anonymous woman in the YouTube video referred numerous times to how Trump represented her ‘American dream’. Yet Kuo writes that a number of the Trump supporters with whom he spoke were aware

that their candidate might well end up trashing the American economy, the country’s image abroad, and democracy itself — and didn’t care. Indeed, Haoyu Wang 王浩宇, a student at the University of Washington who claimed to harbour no feelings of hostility towards the US, admitted to feeling delighted at the prospect of a Trump presidency. As he told Seattle’s KUOW: ‘We don’t like Trump as a person, but we like him as a tool to kind of bring America down’.



Kaiser Kuo
Source: Fantake, Flickr



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STRATEGIC CONTROL

Rebecca Fabrizi

Chinese honour guards
Source: Wikimedia Commons



A CENTRAL TENET OF CHINA'S foreign policy under Xi Jinping, according to his speeches, is improving relations with its neighbours. China has fourteen land neighbours: more than any other country, and with some — India, Vietnam, and Russia for example — their history is complicated. Others, particularly North Korea, pose direct and complex challenges. Its maritime neighbours, meanwhile, include Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Philippines — US allies with which China has tricky relationships. If Xi Jinping is to achieve his stated goal of turning China into a ‘moderately prosperous society’, and maintaining Communist Party rule, a benign external environment will support domestic progress. But claims of a ‘peaceful foreign policy’ and pursuing better relations with its neighbours sit awkwardly with some of China’s other policies, such as that of building islands on land features claimed by other countries, and even on their continental shelves.

Who Rules the Waves?

On 12 July, a tribunal convened under article VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) ruled against China in its dispute with the Philippines over some land features in the South China Sea. This coincided with Rodrigo Duterte — the ‘Filipino Trump’ — taking power in Manila. The ruling looked like a momentous development in this seemingly intractable matter, but also led a strategic pause in Asian diplomacy, as China proved its skill at damage control through very proactive diplomacy, and claimant countries waited to see what US action might ensue.

As with other territorial disputes in Asia, the South China Sea dispute has a very long history. The current uncertainty about ownership stems partly from the 1951 San Francisco accords, which obliged Japan to renounce its claims to the Spratly Islands 南沙群島 and other conquered islands and territories — but didn’t spell out who would then have sovereignty over them. China asserts sovereignty over every land feature within its ‘Nine-Dash Line’, which is ambiguous but essentially covers all the land features in the South China Sea. There are five other claimant countries.

In an attempt to clarify matters in its own favour, the Philippines had filed fifteen submissions to the arbitral tribunal in January 2013. In July 2016, the court declined to rule on seven of these, and asked for clarification on one. It ruled in favour of the Philippines on the remaining seven.¹ The ruling was damning for China on all counts, even if the result has made no difference to the situation on the water: China did not retreat from its claims, either rhetorically or physically.



Rodrigo Duterte

Image: Wikimedia Commons

Beijing insists that the dispute in the South China Sea is about sovereignty, and as such should be resolved through bilateral negotiations between the countries concerned. Since China has also said it can never compromise on sovereignty, it is not clear what it hopes to achieve. Despite Chinese accusations to the contrary, the tribunal did not rule on matters of



China's maritime claim (red) and UNCLOS' Exclusive Economic Zones (blue) in the South China Sea
 Source: Wikimedia Commons

sovereignty, which are outside the remit of the UNCLOS. In fact, it explicitly declared that it would not ‘rule on any question of sovereignty over land territory and would not delimit any maritime boundary between the Parties’. Rather, it had looked at the issues over which it formally had jurisdiction, including the legal basis for the Nine-Dash Line (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 6 ‘Belt Tightening’, pp.234–237). It considered the status of the various land features of the Spratlys to resolve the crucial question of whether any of these features could be considered an island (capable of sustaining habitation in its natural state), and therefore entitled not only to twelve nautical miles of territorial waters, but also to a two-hundred-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The five judges argued that there was no basis in law for the Nine-Dash Line. They concluded that the largest feature of the Spratly islands — ‘Itu Aba’ or ‘Taiping Island’, which is currently controlled by Taiwan — was not actually an island. (See Information Window, ‘Taiwan and the South China Sea’, p.332–333.) This implied that none of the other features of the



The five tribunal judges
Source: Permanent Court of Arbitration

archipelago were islands either. The judges ruled that any valid ‘historical rights’ — China’s key argument for sovereignty — had been taken into consideration by UNCLOS at the time of drafting, leaving no possibility for a legal argument based on abstract ‘historical rights’. The tribunal also found that China had infringed upon the rights of Filipino fishermen to fish around the Scarborough Shoal, and had caused mas-

sive environmental damage to the Philippines’ continental shelf through overfishing of certain species.

China had consistently refused to accept that the tribunal had any authority to adjudicate the matter. It argued, without evidence, that the tribunal was covertly ruling on sovereignty, an issue the parties had agreed to resolve through friendly negotiation. The Chinese government referred to the tribunal as ‘political provocation under a cloak of law’, though it did offer some national positions in the form of diplomatic notes.²

Throughout the proceedings, China called the credentials of the arbitral judges into question in commentary across state media and official statements. China had refused to appoint its own judge even though it had the right to do so. The Philippines, therefore, requested the President of the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), Shunji Yanai, to appoint one on their behalf. *Xinhua*, in a news analysis titled ‘Shunji Yanai, manipulator behind illegal South China Sea arbitration’, calls the ITLOS President ‘rightist, hawkish, close to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, pro-American, unfriendly to China’.³ Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin 刘振民 also complained that none of the judges were Asian, and, therefore, could not possibly understand the situation, speculating that they were probably only motivated by Filipino money.⁴ Diplomats and scholars from the People’s Republic also claimed, without basis, that the tribunal exag-

NO ROCK IS AN ISLAND,

by Rebecca Fabrizio

The 'island' designation is valuable. Taiwan insists that Itu Aba or Taiping Island (*Taipingdao* 太平島) is an island (*dao* 島 means 'island') because it wants the rights to fish, oil, gas, and any other resources in a 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)



Taiping Island

Source: ocean,skywalker, Flickr

around the rock. China makes the same claim for Taiping Island. And with the prospect of reunification with Taiwan in China's vision of its future, Beijing has not objected to Taiwan building infrastructure on the rock, including an airstrip, hospital, post office, and services for the 200 people who reside there on a temporary rotating basis. (For the Taiwan perspective, see Information Window 'Taiwan and the South China Sea', p.323-333.) The tribunal ruling gives the Philippines exclusive legal rights to, for example, extraction of hydrocarbons on the Reed Bank, which falls within the Nine-Dash Line, and partly within 200 nautical miles of Taiping Island.

The precedent-setting designation of Taiping Island as a 'rock' has implications for maritime law all around the world. It may affect claims including Japan's over the uninhabited atoll Okinotorishima in the Philippine Sea and US and French claims in the Pacific.

China cites the tribunal's decision that Taiping Island is a rock as evidence of the flawed nature of the entire decision. The judges relied on historical evidence and did not visit Taiping Island themselves, believing that the current state of the island was unlikely to reflect its natural capacity for sustaining human habitation. They noted also that the People's Republic had strongly objected to such a visit through a letter from the Chinese Ambassador to the Netherlands, addressed to the judges, on 6 February 2015.⁵

generated its association with the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) and ITLOS. In reality, it was convened under article VII of UNCLOS using the administrative services of The Hague PCA, in the same format used for most maritime dispute resolutions, and was the only legal option available to the Philippines in this case. That various media used the shorthand 'PCA tribunal' was not the fault of the judges.

China had strongly pursued its claim to the South China Sea islands through the year, leading critics to accuse Beijing of wanting to create a 'Chinese Lake',⁶ controlling all the waters within their Nine-Dash Line, and, thereby, all navigation through the area. This would constitute a



An airstrip and aircraft hangar on Mischief Reef, from the CSIS Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, captured on 21 July 2016
Source: amti.csis.org

clear challenge to the US and other countries' concepts of their own navigational rights in the area and, by extension, national interest.

And yet, China's approach has seemingly proved effective. It has successfully constructed over thirteen square kilometres of land on the seven features it controls in the Spratly Islands, according to the Pentagon's 2016 report on China's military. This is around ninety-five percent of the total land reclamation in the area. China had announced

in June 2015 that the construction phase was over. This appears to be the case. Instead, 2016 saw installation of facilities including airstrips, aircraft hangars, radar and missile systems, and lighthouses. The longest airstrip, on Subi Reef (渚碧島) is 3,250m long, much more substantial than the airstrips operated by the other claimant countries, and theoretically capable of landing a Boeing 747. It can handle any plane of the People's Liberation Army Air Force fleet. Hainan Airlines conducted a civilian test flight landing on Subi Reef on 13 July, the day after the tribunal ruling.

In January, Vietnamese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Le Hai Binh accused China of violating Vietnamese sovereignty by landing a plane on Fiery Cross Reef, a land feature of the Spratlys that is also claimed by Taiwan and the Philippines. China asserted its sovereign right to make the test flight on the new airstrip, and followed up with further test flights.

Sporadic 'freedom of navigation operations' during the year by the US, supporting former President Obama's assertion at the US-ASEAN Summit in February that 'the United States will continue to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows', did not seem to affect China's behaviour.⁷ Press reports in July indicated that, when he met Xi Jinping

in Washington in March, Obama had put further pressure on the Chinese president to rein in China's construction activities in the South China Sea.⁸ This followed US intelligence reports that suggested China was preparing to reclaim land on Scarborough Shoal (claimed by China, Taiwan, and the Philippines). Some US commentators claimed that the conversation between Obama and Xi led to China's decision to avoid further, overt provocation in a year when a high priority was the successful hosting of the G20 Summit in Hangzhou. The decision-making process in Beijing is too opaque to know whether the conversation with Obama did, in fact, lead to a change in plans. Certainly, Chinese leaders would never publicly admit conceding to pressure from a US president. Nonetheless, although the Philippines reported the presence of dredging ships around the Scarborough Shoal in September 2016, no building seems to have taken place there.

ASEAN continued to demonstrate its powerlessness following the ruling. At the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting in late July in Vientiane, Cambodia successfully prevented the group from making a strong statement on the tribunal outcome. Cambodia — not a claimant, but a beneficiary of Chinese largesse — had previously orchestrated ASEAN's first ever failure to issue a summit statement in 2012, also over language on the South China Sea.



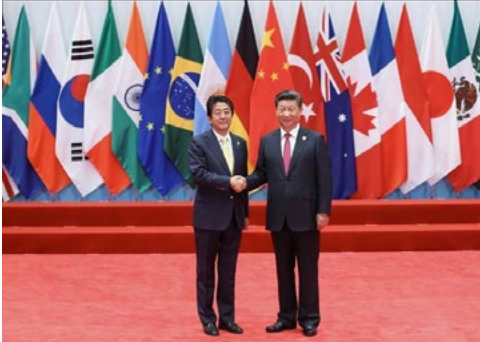
Obama and Xi greet each other at the G20 Summit in Hangzhou
Source: Official White House, photo by Pete Souza

Codes of Conduct

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In 2002, China was a signatory, along with the member states of ASEAN, to a 'Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea', which aimed to create the conditions for 'a peaceful and durable solution of differences and disputes' between them, but which China and other claimants have since seriously violated.⁹ Following the tribunal ruling in July, China announced a diplomatic push to achieve progress on the 2002 proposal for a binding code of conduct in the South China Sea. Beijing called a senior officials' meeting for August 2016 in Inner Mongolia. The meeting boasted of 'several breakthroughs' including an agreement to establish an ASEAN–China 'hotline' for maritime emergencies, adoption of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea for the South China Sea, and a new deadline for drafting the official code of conduct by July 2017.

The new Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte, meanwhile, came into office keen to reset his country's fraught political relationship with China. He was at first reluctant to press the matter of the tribunal, and later courted Beijing in a surprisingly enthusiastic fashion. During his October visit to Beijing, he announced his 'separation' from the US, and his idea for a new trilateral security relationship between Manila, Beijing, and Moscow. This represented a new opportunity for China to negotiate with the Philippines without US interference, despite misgivings among Chinese commentators regarding Duterte's likely consistency and even longevity in office, given his controversial style. But above all, it meant that the Philippines did not run a campaign for international support for enforcement of the arbitral tribunal's ruling, despite its resounding victory. China, for its part, claimed that eighty-seven countries supported its stance that the situation should be resolved through negotiation. Although this was an overstatement, it is true that only the governments of the US, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Philippines, and Vietnam publicly stated that the tribunal's ruling should be enforced. Russia supported China's position that the matter should be resolved without interference from third countries (presumably implying the US). China and Russia then conducted their first South China Sea-based joint naval exercise. This took place off the coast of Guangdong



Xi and Abe at the G20 Summit in Hangzhou
Source: Xinhua

and far from any disputed areas, but it carried symbolic weight.

While international attention was focused on the South China Sea in 2016, China did not neglect its claims on the Diaoyu (or Senkaku) islands 钓鱼岛 in the East China Sea, currently administered

by Japan, and also claimed by Taiwan. (See *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Chapter 6 ‘Belt Tightening’, pp.214–239.) Chinese patrols by sea and air continued through the year, reaching a peak in September with the reported incursion of up to 230 Chinese fishing boats. Japan also complained through diplomatic channels in November about the operation of a Chinese drilling ship in disputed waters. Significant Chinese hydrocarbon exploration activity appears to be concentrated close to the median line. Prime Minister Abe and President Xi held a thirty-minute bilateral meeting in the margins of the G20 Summit in Hangzhou on 4 September. Xi reiterated his position that the East China Sea dispute must be resolved through negotiation, and Abe his view that a legal resolution was appropriate. It was their first meeting in over a year, and the atmosphere was, perhaps, a little improved. Both leaders cracked a smile for the camera.

Trumping the United States

If China had had to choose between the US presidential candidates it would have found it a challenge. Beijing has viewed Hillary Clinton as unfriendly since her speech on human rights at the UN Women’s Conference in Huairou in 1995, when she was First Lady.¹⁰ They also consider her as the architect



Hard Choices

Photo: torbakhopper, Flickr

of Obama's Pivot to Asia policy, which they see as a China-containment strategy. As secretary of state, she consistently promoted democracy and human rights — profoundly irritating the Chinese leadership.¹¹ She also personally assisted the blind 'barefoot lawyer' Chen Guangcheng 陈光诚 who escaped illegal house arrest in Shandong, fleeing to the US Embassy in Beijing and then on to New York while Clinton was in China for the April 2012 Economic and Strategic Dialogue. In her book *Hard Choices*, Clinton recounted her negotiation of this tricky situation as an example of successful diplomacy that reflected the relative stability of the US–China relationship. But Chinese analysts have privately described it as a turning point: the public perception in China that the US could control the outcome of a domestic political issue compelled the leadership to adopt a more hard-line approach on national sovereignty and relations with the US. So Clinton might not have been Beijing's first choice.

On the other hand, Beijing also fears unpredictability. Interestingly, there was some evidence in the run up to the election that Trump was a more popular candidate in China than elsewhere in Asia — certainly, some of the fake news circulating on American social media gained traction on Chinese social media as well, as did the notion that Clinton was 'crooked'.¹² Trump's campaign statements heralding the possibility of a new American isolationism, meanwhile, seemed to favour Chinese domination of the western Pacific Ocean, and give it space to pursue a policy of gaining strategic centrality in Eurasia.¹³ What's more, Trump's populist but authoritarian style has shades of Xi Jinping and other leaders admired in China, such as Vladimir Putin. (See Forum 'Chinese Americans for Trump, the "Genuine Petty Man"', pp.313–315.) On the other hand, he attacked China nearly as much as he did Mexico during the campaign — threatening a trade war, and accusing China of currency manipulation.

Any illusion that this might have been pre-election bluster was quickly dispelled. On 3 December, Trump took a call from Tsai Ing-wen, whom he called ‘President of Taiwan’, breaking with nearly four decades of diplomatic tradition on both counts (the direct contact, and the use of the phrase ‘President of Taiwan’ rather than an appellation such as ‘Taiwanese leader’). The President-elect’s ensuing series of tweets and then an interview with Fox News on 11 December made it clear that he was determined to stay on the offensive with China — and that he was making it up as he went along. He said that the US should make its ‘One-China Policy’ conditional on a larger deal including trade, apparently oblivious to this most important red line for China. The Taiwan issue, if badly played, is more likely to precipitate conflict in East Asia than any of the other many flashpoints.¹⁴ But Trump (and his advisors) apparently had no understanding of — or interest in — the fact that a resolution of Taiwan’s status would always be much more important to Beijing than good relations with the US. On 5 December, China, with Russia, vetoed a United Nations Security Council motion requesting a seven-day ceasefire to allow civilians to flee the Syrian city of Aleppo — essentially condemning many of them to death. This reversed an apparent trend of putting some distance between themselves and Putin’s support for Assad’s brutality, and may have been designed to show Trump that China can also play hardball.

And yet, Trump has also dismantled the Trans-Pacific Partnership on trade. This is good news for China, as it pushes its rival plan for a Regional

Comprehensive Economic Partnership. It could even mean the beginning of the end of the Asia pivot, which China finds directly threatening to its own security and ability to pursue direct diplomacy with its neighbours. Any



Trump's tweet about his phone call from Tsai Ing-wen
Source: Twitter



Chinese military on parade
Source: Wikimedia Commons

weakening of American security guarantees to regional partners such as South Korea and Japan also creates opportunities for China to advance its interests in territorial disputes. China will be able to secure its dominant place in the region, not least through its massive program of economic diplomacy, the ‘One Belt One Road Initiative’.

Chinese commentators have publicly expressed reservations about whether China, now looking surprisingly like it may become the world’s most vocal proponent of free trade and climate security, is fully ready and willing to take on a leadership role in global governance.¹⁵ China’s GDP per capita, at around US\$8,000, is still four times less than that of the European Union and around seven times less than that of Canada and the US. It still faces substantial challenges related to low economic development and high levels of inequality.

As for China’s military, as economic growth slows, so must the growth of the defence budget. It only increased by 7.5 percent in 2016, leaving it at 1.9 percent of GDP, which is below the NATO two percent target, and well below the US level of around 3.5 percent (or forty percent of total military spending worldwide). China’s per capita military spending is around twelve times lower than that of the US. China now has the ability to protect its interests in the region by imposing unacceptable costs on those who threaten them, but this is a far cry from being able to project power globally.

Still, it was only in 2014 that former President Obama accused China of being a free-rider on the international system. China has since then established its own international financing body — the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. It is the third biggest lender to the World Bank, and has made significant pledges to the United Nations, albeit limited to areas of specific Chinese interest.¹⁶ China even succeeded in persuading the International Monetary Fund to include the renminbi as a reserve currency in 2016, despite it not meeting the criteria of being freely tradeable and without capital controls — a significant change to the rules of the global economic order. Under Trump, the US may well remove further obstacles to China's steady pursuit of incremental policies that will reshape and even control the global order.

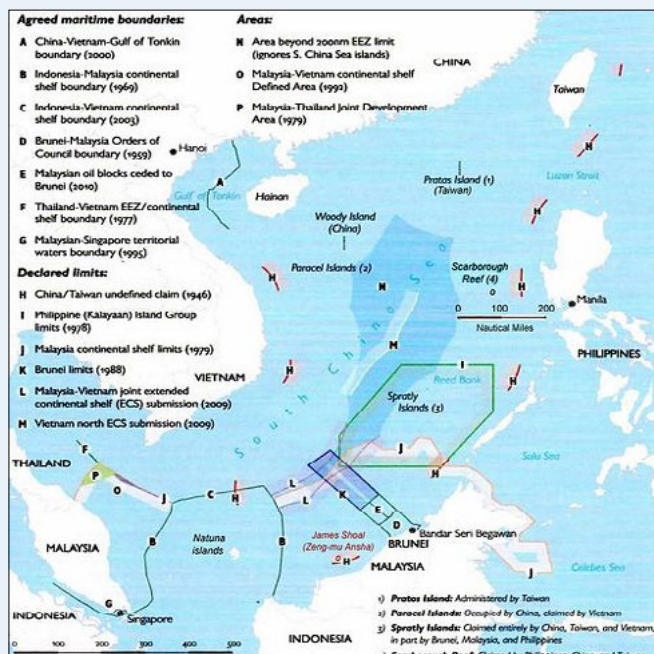
TAIWAN AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, by Richard Rigby

The People's Republic of China's (PRC) South China Sea (SCS) claims, including the Nine-Dash Line, derive entirely from those of its predecessor regime, the Republic of China. To this day, the Republic of China (Taiwan) has not resiled from any of these claims. Indeed, the Taiwanese claims are slightly larger, as they include the original Eleven-Dash Line, as drawn in 1947. The PRC subsequently reduced this by ceding a part of Taiwan's original claim to its fellow communists in Vietnam. Taiwan, both before and after 1949, has remained in effective control, including a military garrison, of the Dongsha/Pratas archipelago, to which there are no 'non-Chinese' claimants. It also occupies and garrisons the single largest feature of the contested Spratlys — Taiping Island (Itu Aba).

Former president Ma Ying-jeou 马英九 and his Kuomintang (KMT) administration pursued these claims (and similarly Taiwan's claims in the East China Sea, particularly the Diaoyutai [Diaoyu in PRC parlance]/Senkaku islands), with considerable vigour. A major and long-running exhibition devoted to the Taiwan's SCS claims was mounted in Taipei in 2015, accompanied by a very substantial publication issued by the Ministry of the Interior, titled *Compilation of Historical Archives of the Southern Territories of the Republic of China* 中華民國南疆史料選集.

At the same time, Ma sought to promote his own plan for the peaceful resolution of the various SCS territorial disputes, and despite the virtual identity of Taiwan's and the PRC's claims, refused to join any form of united front with the PRC against other claimants. In the closing months of his presidency, Ma was also very active in seeking to establish the identity of Taiping Island as an island in fact and not just name (with consequent implications under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea for its own 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone). He himself visited Taiping Island, with a large contingent of journalists, attracting criticism from the US, which saw his actions as 'extremely unhelpful'.

Due to Taiwan's lack of international recognition as a sovereign state, it was not able to participate in the arbitration proceedings of the UNCLOS tribunal launched by the Philip-



piners against the PRC, although a submission was made to the tribunal by a non-governmental group of lawyers arguing the case for Taiping Island. The tribunal rejected virtually all of the PRC's, and hence Taiwan's, historic claims regarding the SCS (but did not rule on the sovereignty of the various features within the SCS). It also found that Taiping Island was not, in fact, an island, but only a 'rock', therefore excluding claims to the



Taiwanese fishermen protest to protect Taiping Island

Source: Wikimedia Commons

exclusive use of its territorial sea and fishing waters. The tribunal's findings attracted fury from both 'blue' and 'green' camps in Taiwan, specifically over the nature of Taiping Island, and more generally for the perceived lack of respect shown to Taiwan by the tribunal, in particular its reference to the 'Taiwan authority of China'.

Despite this reaction, many expected that the newly elected Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration of President Tsai Ing-wen would take a much softer line regarding the SCS, given its greater stress on Taiwan per se rather than issues tied up with the historic attributes of the Republic of China. However, this has not been the case. Tsai rejected the tribunal's ruling, saying it 'severely infringed' Taiwan's SCS rights, and despatched a frigate (which she briefly boarded) to patrol the SCS as a reaffirmation of Taiwan's determination to defend its national interests. Subsequent activities have included a visit to Taiping Island by a flotilla of fishing boats in late July, and by the Interior Minister in mid-August.

On 29 November, the Taiwanese Coast Guard Administration conducted a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operation on Taiping Island and surrounding waters. The exercise involved three aircraft, eight vessels, and 336 personnel. Apart from the Coast Guard, participants included contingents from the Ministries of Transportation and Communications, National Defence, Health and Welfare, and the National Rescue Command Centre. The official press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said this took place in accordance with President Tsai's SCS policy, which consists of the following four points:

- Disputes in the SCS should be peacefully resolved in accordance with international law and the law of the sea, including UNCLOS.
- Taiwan should be included in multilateral mechanisms aimed at settling disputes.
- Countries concerned should have an obligation to ensure the freedom of navigation and overflight in the SCS.
- Disputes in the SCS should be resolved by shelving disputes and promoting joint development.

Vietnam protested against the exercise, saying it was illegal, leading to a reaffirmation of Taiwan's sovereignty over Taiping Island by a Taiwanese spokesman, while the Director-General of the Coast Guard Administration has not ruled out a visit by President Tsai in the future, 'if it becomes necessary'.

It remains to be seen with what vigour Tsai and her administration will continue to prosecute Taiwan's SCS claims, but, for the time being, she has avoided being outflanked by the KMT opposition on the issue, and similarly avoided further aggravating cross-Strait relations. In the eyes of the PRC, any weakening of support for 'China's' — however interpreted — sovereignty would be seen as a move towards Taiwan independence.

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ALIEN INVASION

The ABCs of Working in China

· LORAND LASKAI

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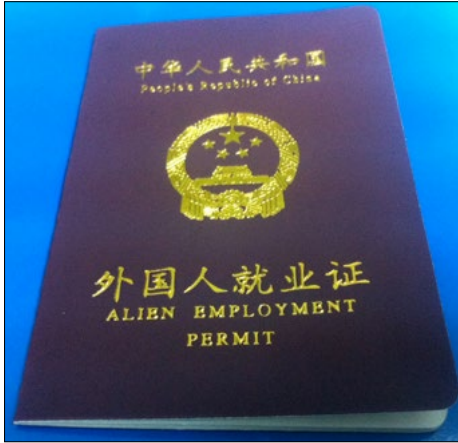
THE ABCs OF WORKING IN CHINA

Lorand Laskai

ON 1 NOVEMBER 2016, the People's Republic State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs 国家外国专家局 (SAFEA) introduced a new program for issuing work permits to foreigners. The program, which was rolled out nationwide in April 2017, combines the previous categories of 'alien employment permit' and 'foreign expert certificate' into one 'foreigner work permit' 外国人工作许可证, and streamlines the application process. It will also replace the current, mostly paper-based system with a digital registry linked to each worker's ID. Most foreigners will be glad to see the end of the notoriously time-intensive application process; the new system requires

half the paper work, even if both systems still require foreigners applying for certain categories of jobs to present an original copy of their university or college diploma. But the Chinese government will now decide how much it wants them based on a three-tier classification: A for 'high-level talent', B for professionals, and C for unskilled or service workers hired on a temporary or seasonal basis.

How will the government determine a foreigner's place in the system? The exact metrics remain unclear. However, the point-based system will take into account salary, educational background, work experience, and age. The classification 'A' is given to tal-



Foreigners' 'Little Red Book': an Alien Employment Permit

Source: joshinshanghai.blogspot.com

ent such as scientists, tech leaders, and entrepreneurs, and accords a number of perks, including a visa 'green channel' 绿色通道 to speed up the application process. If an applicant graduated from a university in the world's top 100, or has a bachelor's degree and two years of work experience, he or she can expect at least a 'B'. If the applicant has neither, they might find themselves stuck with a 'C' — which promises to make a longer term stay in China difficult. If the applicant speaks Chinese, however, they'll earn additional points. If the foreigner will work in an impoverished, rural area or otherwise conform with government priorities, that could also help.

Foreign HR, a human resource company in Beijing, estimates that there are roughly two million foreigners in China. Government figures are much lower, and do not take into account foreigners working illegally.¹

On the one hand, foreign workers have been seen as a boon. The number of native English speakers working in English-language education is a source of pride for the Chinese schools and universities that employ them. State media regularly quote resident foreigners praising Party policies as a way of bolstering confidence in the policies among the general populace. On the other hand, grumbling about ill-behaved foreigners has become in-

creasing vocal. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilising China*, Information Window 'Foreigners Behaving Badly', p.176.) In August 2016, a photo of a Caucasian man urinating on the Great Wall prompted Internet users to share other recent examples of poor conduct by foreigners.²

With this new system, Chinese officials are suggesting that they can sort between the good and the bad. An article in the media about the new system said the government plans to 'encourage the top, control the middle, and limit the bottom' of foreigners.³



Foreigners behaving badly
Source: weidu8.net

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CROWN CASINO ARRESTS

Lorand Laskai

ON 13 OCTOBER 2016, China-based employees of the Australian-owned Crown Casino woke up to the sound of police knocking on their doors. The police detained eighteen employees on suspicion of gambling-related crimes. Three of those employees, including a visiting executive, were formally arrested in November. (Authorities in China can, technically, hold suspects for thirty-seven days without formally arresting or charging them).

Gambling is illegal in China. In the past, Chinese nationals with a penchant for the game of chance frequented the casinos of Macau. But the special administrative region's gambling industry was one of the first casualties of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign, and Macau's economy underwent two years of severe contraction as the flow of highrollers from the mainland fizzled out.

Since then, Chinese officials have undertaken an operation called 'break



Crown Casino complex

Source: Wikimedia Commons



Crown Casino tycoon James Packer
Source: Sarina Russo, Flickr

the chain' 断链 to stop rich Chinese nationals from gambling abroad — an activity they see as connected to corruption and money laundering — and to dissuade foreign casinos from courting them. Travel agents are banned from organising trips for groups of more than ten people to foreign casinos, but the casinos have often skirted the ban by promoting general travel packages, rather than gambling-specific ones.

China's detention of Crown Casino employees caught the world by surprise, and especially startled the management of multinational corporations dealing in or with China. Yet China has long shown a willingness to punish foreigners who don't follow the rules, and not just in the gambling sphere. In 2014, Chinese officials arrested scores

of GlaxoSmithKline employees, including a company executive for bribery within China's pharmaceutical industry.⁴ (See also the *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny*, Forum 'A Confusing Year for Business', pp.43–50.) Cases like this fall under an age-old Chinese strategy of making an example of a single transgressor to dissuade others from similar behaviour, or 'killing the chicken to scare the monkey' 杀鸡儆猴. After GlaxoSmithKline's predicament, other international pharmaceutical companies made sure to clean up their act.

In the case of Crown Casino, the company had failed to heed warnings from officials that courting Chinese high rollers would not be tolerated. In June 2015, Chinese police arrested thirteen South Korean casino managers for 'enticing' Chinese nationals to gamble in their casino with free tours, accommodation, and even sexual services. While there's no indication that Crown Casino used similar tactics, Chinese police were evidently unhappy with the company's lack of response to its warning.

Crown Casino's share prices tumbled twenty percent in response to the arrests, wiping out AU\$1 billion from the company's market value. In



'Killing the chicken to scare the monkey'
Source: lostin, Flickr

a previous company report, CEO James Packer had reported that the clamp-down on gambling in Macau had been good for business, as it sparked an influx of Chinese high-rollers to Australia. High rollers account for a third of Crown's revenue, and a majority of Crown's top players are from China.⁵ While it's unclear why the authorities singled out Crown Casino, as opposed to any other foreign casino marketing itself in China, rumours circulated in international media that Crown had adopted an especially aggressive approach to courting potential clients.⁶

At the time of writing, no Crown Casino employee had been formally charged, and the fate of many detained employees is still unclear.

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’.

NOTES

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Alibaba 阿里巴巴集团

The dominant ecommerce platform in China, Alibaba became the world's largest retailer in April 2016. Its popular online marketplace Taobao 淘宝网 allows small and boutique vendors to connect with hundreds of millions of registered customers. Beyond online enterprises, Alibaba also owns Hong Kong's premier English-language newspaper the *South China Morning Post* (see the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, 'Alibaba Buys The *South China Morning Post*', p.157).

Baidu 百度

Baidu — a US-Chinese web services company with headquarters in Beijing — is one of the largest Internet companies in the world. It offers a huge number of online services including a pop-

ular search engine and the reference encyclopedia Baidu Baike 百度百科.

Caixin 财新传媒

Founder-editor Hu Shuli 胡舒立 runs Caixin, the only non-state organisation in this list of keywords. Forbes has described Hu as China's 'muck-raker-in-chief' and 'one of the country's most respected and intrepid journalists'. Caixin has an economics focus, publishes both online and off, in English and Chinese, and also produces books, video, and television content. It claims to be an 'unrivaled producer of independent, investigative journalism in China, and an indispensable [sic] source of information'. China Media Capital — a venture capital fund with connections to Rupert Murdoch and Time Warner as well as state

institutions including the China Development Bank — purchased a reported forty percent share in Caixin in 2013.

China Central Television 中国中央电视台 (CCTV)

CCTV is China's national television broadcaster and largest media network. It also broadcasts several foreign-language channels. Its mission is to serve the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) by promoting its political ideology both to domestic and international viewers and to advance China's state of development, while trying to break even financially.

Global Times 环球时报

Owned by the *People's Daily*, this paper is known for its stridently nationalist tone. While enjoying a degree of editorial independence, the *Global Times* is still linked to state propaganda apparatus. It has both Chinese and English editions, and goes after political targets with less restraint than the *People's Daily* or other official papers. In 2016, for example, after Australian swimmer Mack Horton — who had labelled his Chinese rival Sun Yang 孙杨 a 'drug cheat' — won gold at the Rio Olympics, it called Australia 'a country at the fringes of civilization ... [that was once] Britain's offshore prison'.

Guangming Ribao 光明日报

This daily newspaper is published and distributed nationally by China's Central Propaganda Department and claims to be 'the only key central news portal focusing on ideology and theory ... targeted specifically at the intellectual and academic communities'.

Huawei 华为

With headquarters in Guangzhou, Huawei is the world's largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer. In addition to its network infrastructure projects, it is a major supplier of mobile phones globally: in 2016 it shipped 76.2 million units in China alone. But Huawei's international ventures in the sensitive field of telecommunications can be dogged by controversy on account of its connections with the Chinese military and other state actors. See Jane Golley in the *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilising China* for more on Huawei's attempts to gain influence in Australia, and of the extent to which it may be an actor of the Chinese state.

KMT and DPP, BLUE and GREEN

Politics in Taiwan is currently dominated by two parties: the Kuomintang (KMT) 國民黨 (Na-

tionalist Party) and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) 民進黨. The affiliated political views that cluster around them are labelled pan-Blue and pan-Green respectively. Associated with Sun Yat-sen 孫中山, the first president of the Republic of China in 1911, the KMT originated as a revolutionary party, helping to overthrow the millennia-old system of rule by imperial dynasties. Its leader in 1949 was Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石, who retreated with his army and government to Taiwan in 1949, when the CCP established the People's Republic of China on the mainland. It held power in Taiwan until 2000 (including nearly forty years of martial law, which ended in 1987).

Under Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁, the DPP, which originated in the anti-KMT social movements of the late 1970s and 1980s, claimed electoral victory over the KMT in 2000 and ruled for the following eight years. After another period of KMT rule, the DPP came into power once more in 2016 under Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文.

'One Country, Two Systems' 一国兩制

'One Country, Two Systems' is the constitutional formula proposed by former leader Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 in the 1980s to describe how Hong Kong,

Macau, and Taiwan would be able to retain a high degree of political, legal, and financial autonomy under reunification with the mainland. Although it was enshrined in the Basic Law that came into effect in Hong Kong in 1997, the amount of Chinese interference in Hong Kong politics, including in the freedom of expression and publication, has led many local people to question the extent to which it represents reality.

Overseas Chinese

Also known as *huaqiao* 华侨, members of the Chinese diaspora have for centuries acted as conduits between China and Chinese populations around the world. These connections may be commercial, cultural, or political: the Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命 of 1911 that brought the downfall of China's last imperial dynasty was partly driven and funded by *huaqiao* communities in Japan, Hawaii, and elsewhere. As seen in the counter-protests that faced off pro-Tibetan and other demonstrations during the Olympic flame's global tour to Beijing in 2008, *huaqiao* are a great potential source of patriotic support as well as investment funding for China, though controversies have erupted from time to time when their loyalty to the countries of which they

hold citizenship has come under question. (See the *China Story Yearbook 2015: Pollution*, Forum 'The Expansion of the United Front Under Xi Jinping', pp.167–177.)

Party Central, Plenums, and the Politburo

Party Central refers to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 中国共产党中央委员会. The current committee, Eighteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, was elected in November 2012 and continues until 2017. It generally meets once a year (twice in 2013) in multi-day sessions known as **plenums**. The **Politburo** (Central Politburo of the Communist Party of China 中国共产党中央政治局) contains twenty-five members, many of whom have other senior positions in the CCP. The seven top leaders of China form the **Politburo Standing Committee** 中国共产党中央政治局常务委员会.

People's Daily 人民日报

Claiming to be 'one of the top ten newspapers in the world', the *People's Daily* is historically known as the 'tongue and throat' of the CCP. Its web portal People.cn is listed on the Shanghai stock exchange, and boasts of being

'one of the largest comprehensive media sources on the Internet'. It has thirty-one branches across China and bureaus around the world.

Qi 氣

Despite its long presence in foreign-language discussions of Chinese medicine, exercise, and health, there is still no precise translation for *qi* into English. It is best understood as an animating force present throughout the universe as well as within the living human body. Practitioners of training methods such as *qigong* 氣功 claim to be able to cultivate and manipulate *qi*. *Qigong* exercises and training became very popular in the 1980s (including with members of the CCP). However, the CCP became wary of the rise of charismatic leaders and associated sects within the *qigong* movement, including the Falun Gong. It has launched crackdowns on popular groups, adding political complexity to the consideration of this esoteric force.

Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council 国务院台湾事务办公室 (TAO)

An administrative agency under the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the TAO is responsible for

official communications with Taiwan, as well as disseminating news about Taiwan in China. The current Minister for Taiwan Affairs, Zhang Zhijun 张志军, stated in 2011: 'It is the common aspiration of all the Chinese in the world to usher in a new phase of peaceful development of cross-strait relations'. A TAO spokesperson warned the US in late 2016, following President-elect Donald Trump's unprecedented phone call with Tsai Ing-wen, to respect the 'one China principle' and handle Taiwan-related issues 'carefully'.

WeChat 微信

With over 700 million users, WeChat is currently the most popular mobile communication platform in China. More than a mere messaging program or social media platform, WeChat offers users the ability to link their bank details to the app so they can perform cashless transactions in all areas of their daily lives: people can donate to charity, book restaurants, buy film tickets, and much more without leaving the platform. Its revolutionary financial ecosystem is spurring further innovation in China; Facebook and others have studied it closely as well. It is owned by **Tencent** 腾讯, which became the largest Chinese corporation

when it was valued at HK\$1.99 trillion (AU\$332 billion) in September 2016.

Weibo 微博

Sina 新浪 is the Chinese web company behind Weibo, the microblog sometimes called 'China's Twitter'. Earlier this decade, Weibo played a vital role in breaking news, guiding public discussion, and spreading information (see the *China Story Yearbook 2012: Red Rising, Red Eclipse*, 'Behind the Great Firewall', pp.170–191). But, with increases in the amount of personal information required to open an account and censorship (both self-imposed and from the state), the platform is not as dynamic or influential as it once was.

Xinhua New Agency 新华通讯社

Mao Zedong 毛泽东 wanted Xinhua to have global influence. A ministry-level organisation, its goal is to 'publicise China and report the world'. Thanks to its authority and the massive volume of news it produces daily, Xinhua content appears throughout Chinese media.

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ONLINE MATERIAL

Electronic versions of this book and supplementary materials are available for free download in a variety of formats at: www.chinastory.org. Below are some of the resources available on The China Story site:

China Story Yearbook 2016:

Control

[thechinastory.org/yearbooks/
yearbook-2016](http://thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2016)

China Story Yearbook 2015:

Pollution

[thechinastory.org/yearbooks/
yearbook-2015](http://thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2015)

China Story Yearbook 2014:

Shared Destiny

[thechinastory.org/yearbooks/
yearbook-2014](http://thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2014)

China Story Yearbook 2013:

Civilising China

[thechinastory.org/yearbooks/
yearbook-2013](http://thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2013)

China Story Yearbook 2012:

Red Rising, Red Eclipse

[thechinastory.org/yearbooks/
yearbook-2012](http://thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2012)

Dossier

Chinese-language source materials and supplementary materials related to the Yearbooks

thechinastory.org/yearbook/dossier

Key Intellectuals

Profiles of some of China's leading public or citizen intellectuals, men and women who are vitally involved with the ideas, debates and concerns about China's present and its future direction

[thechinastory.org/thinking-
china/-key-intellectuals](http://thechinastory.org/thinking-china/-key-intellectuals)

**Index and searchable database for
The China Story**

thechinastory.org/index

**Index and searchable database for
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thechinastory.org/index/2016

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PREVIOUS CHINA STORY YEARBOOKS



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 Chinese Communist Party, 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'.



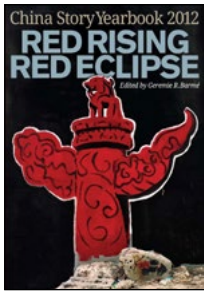
2014: *Shared Destiny*

The People's Republic of China under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party 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.