



---

NIAS Global Politics Brief

# China in 2021: A year of grandiose political changes and foreign affairs

N Jayaram  
*Journalist, PTI*

---

It has been a momentous year in China both as regards internal developments and in its external relations. Its ruling party turned 100 and its current head has, by most accounts, anointed himself leader beyond the two terms that the late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping had set and which had operated until the last decade. President Xi Jinping has emerged as arguably China's most authoritarian since Mao Zedong's death 45 years ago. Under him, China has aggressed on India, throttled Hong Kong, menaced Taiwan and bared its fangs vis-à-vis the United States and many other Western powers.

## I Major developments in China in 2021

### **Centenary of the 'Communist' Party of China and Xi Jinping's rise**

China's ruling party persists in calling itself 'communist' despite having pursued pro-market reforms since the late 1970s and more so since the early 1990s. After Mao's death when Deng Xiaoping emerged as supremo, he ushered in economic reforms in the late 1970s. In 1992, he used the term 'socialist market economy', urging the kickstart of the Chinese economy which had suffered following the crushing of the pro-democracy movement of 1989 and which had led to sanctions being imposed by some Western countries. China has experienced runaway economic growth and has emerged as the world's second largest economy.

Xi has succeeded in further accumulation of powers, especially post the latest plenum of the Party Central Committee. In a resolution adopted in November, the plenum seemed to re-elevate Xi to the status of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, a first step in that direction having been taken in 2016.

### **Tensions with a wide range of countries including India**

About 150 sorties were carried out by Chinese fighter aircraft in early October alone (ahead of Taiwan's 'Double Tenth' i.e. Its October 10th National Day. Xi issued a stern warning that China was bent on achieving what he called 'reunification'. Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen was not wanting in using robust language, stating that Taiwan was ready to defend its democratic way of life and that any precipitate action would lead to a larger crisis.

To China-US tensions inherited from the four tumultuous years of the Donald Trump presidency got added several more since President Joe Biden took office in 2021. However, both sides have at various points sought to defuse tensions through several high-level meetings of the topmost officials advising the two presidents as well as a virtual meeting of the top two. But myriad issues divide them: bilateral trade, technology, human rights, reports about concentration camps in Xinjiang (East Turkestan), Taiwan, Hong Kong, Chinese muscle-flexing in the South China Sea and East China Sea etc.

Another major source of tensions stems from Beijing's quest for hypersonic weaponry. "China's military ... sees hypersonic weapons (as well as cyberwarfare and electromagnetic pulse strikes) as an "assassin's mace": a folklore term for a weapon that gives an advantage against a better-armed foe, says Larry Wortzel, a senior fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council who serves on the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. If tensions were to spike over Taiwan or the South China Sea, for instance, China might be tempted to launch pre-emptive strikes with conventional hypersonic weapons that could cripple U.S. forces in the Pacific Ocean, Wortzel says. China's hypersonic weapons, he warns, "seem deliberately targeted at upending the tenuous strategic stability that has been in place since the end of the Cold War."

While there are tensions over almost all of the above issues between China and several European countries, the latter has been able to drive a wedge between and among the latter by softening up the policies of some of them through both trade and investment inducements and threats. Even powerful Germany has been tip-toeing in its policies towards China.

Any newspaper reader in India would know of the reports of Chinese incursions, clashes and even reports of entire Chinese villages being constructed inside Indian territory. It is worth bearing in mind that China would not have been a neighbour at all if Tibet and East Turkestan had remained independent.

"Wolf Warrior Diplomacy" and propaganda offensive to dominate global narratives China is said by some observers to be pursuing it, a term coined after two films of that name, "Wolf Warrior" (2015) and "Wolf Warrior 2" (2017). Peter Martin, author of China's Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy (2021), defines it as follows:

"Wolf warrior diplomacy has become the shorthand expression for a new, assertive brand of Chinese diplomacy. In the past, Chinese diplomats tended to keep a lower profile and to be quite cautious and moderate in the way that they interacted with the outside world. Recently, however, they have become far more strident and assertive – exhibiting behaviour that ranges from storming out of an international meeting to shouting at foreign counterparts and even insulting foreign leaders."

China has long mounted a propaganda offensive to dominate global narratives. In the words of noted China Elizabeth Economy: Xi Jinping's call in June 2021 for Chinese officials to create an image of the country that is "credible, lovable, and respectable," suggests that the Chinese leadership recognizes that the country faces a serious soft power deficit. It also suggests, however, that Xi, at least, does not fully appreciate that

China's international image derives from its actions and not from a narrative manufactured by the country's officials."

### **China's aggressive foreign policy has drawn a backlash**

Several countries have decided to boycott the Winter Olympics in Beijing (February 4-20, 2022). Recently, China was not invited to the virtual Summit for Democracy that US President Joe Biden hosted, inviting the leaders of a select group of countries including India. China and Russia took umbrage at their exclusion, China, sparking a war of words, and Beijing hosting a similar exercise of its own to claim that "China's political system is, in fact, a high-functioning form of democracy of a different sort, and that it is delivering better results for its people than the broken U.S. system."

### **Continuing repression in Hong Kong**

The "One-Country, Two-Systems" formula promised by Deng Xiaoping until 2047, i.e. for 50 years following the former British-ruled territory to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, was effectively killed off with the imposition by Beijing of a National Security Law, which has led to sweeping arrests of pro-democracy activists, politicians, trade unionists and journalists.

Even school children have not been spared: There are reports of content being modified to remove critical thinking as regards developments in Hong Kong and China and to promote patriotism, at least once using graphic video footage.

### **Concentration camps in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and continuing repression in Tibet**

Over the past few years there have been several reports of the build-up of vast collections of concentration camps in East Turkestan, which China calls Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, housing a million or more men and women undergoing indoctrination to give up many Islamic practices and to learn to be loyal to the Han Chinese occupying regime. Large numbers, including leading Uyghur intellectuals, such as Ilham Tohti, have been jailed and the vast region's residents almost entirely forbidden from travelling abroad or staying in touch with relatives abroad.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Human rights said in early December 2021 that in a few weeks it would be releasing a report on Chinese repression against the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in East Turkestan.

Suppression of Tibetan culture and massive influx of Han Chinese into Tibet continues as does imposition of Mandarin in schools, offices and even in private dealings, as well as surveillance over Tibetan monks and nuns who are forbidden to revere the self-exiled Dalai Lama. As in East Turkestan, so in Tibet too large jails have been built and the regions' residents are prevented from having contact with the outside world.

### **Quelling of Chinese Muslims and Christians**

Apart from the alleged severe repression targeting the Muslim Turkic peoples of East Turkestan, Chinese Muslims too face severe curbs on their practice of their faith. Hui Muslims, as they are known, mostly live in some western parts of China and Chinese-occupied Tibet but can also be found in Beijing and other cities and are Putonghua

(Mandarin speakers). They face growing Islamophobia and demands to promote loyalty to the regime and its leadership while toning down many aspects of Islamic practices.

Chinese Christians, both Catholic and Protestant ones too face surveillance and restrictions throughout China. The Vatican has reached an uneasy agreement with the Chinese authorities giving both sides say in the appointment of Bishops. But prominent Catholics say the Vatican has lost out.

### **Suppression of the #MeToo Movement: Case of Peng Shuai**

The term “Me Too” was coined in 2006 in the US by sexual attack survivor and activist Tarana Burke. In October 15, 2017, actress Alyssa Milano said on Twitter: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem." That led to vast numbers of women in academia, media, civil society, politics, the corporate world etc coming forward with painful stories of their own experiences.

This found echo in many parts of the world with the hashtag #MeToo going viral, including in India (with Raya Sarkar compiling a list of Indian sexual harassers in academia in India and the US. A large number of women in the media came out with accounts of having been sexually harassed in the past by then member of the Union Council of Ministers, M.J. Akbar, who filed a defamation case against just one of his accusers, Priya Ramani, now a Bangalore-based journalist Priya Ramani. She won that case.)

The case of internationally renowned tennis star, Peng Shuai, illustrates the state of the movement there. She accused former Vice-Premier and CPC Politburo Standing Committee member Zhang Gaoli of having sexually assaulted her. Although she has since been shown speaking to the International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach by video link but there is continuing concern around the world over her freedom of movement. Meanwhile there are no reports that Zhang, who is said to be close to Xi, has been proceeded against by law enforcement authorities.

The LGBTQIA+ community in China also complains of harassment.

### **Workers' struggles**

Innumerable wildcat strikes are continuing to be stated across China, as the NGO China Labour Bulletin (CLB) in Hong Kong has been documenting. This is because the sole official union, the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) under the ruling party's thumb is mandated to uphold stability, meaning that its primary loyalty is to the regime and even to factory bosses and other employers rather than to the workers whose interests it is supposed to defend.

Manfred Elfstrom, assistant professor of Political Science at the University of British Columbia Okanagan (in Canada), speaking about the ACFTU role says “...they've sort of stuck to this transmission belt role where they're supposed to bring down the party's directives to workers, and to a lesser degree, pass along workers' grievances and just by law and by the instinct of the people involved in the trade union system, the focus has always been on maintaining production above all else and they're basically treated like

a department of the government and people are routinely cycled from the trade union to other areas of public policy in a city or a province.”

Meanwhile China has set about dismantling painstakingly built trade unions in Hong Kong, arresting their leaders such as Lee Cheuk-yan, whose Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions has had to disband.

Top businessmen such as Jack Ma too have been subject to censure as Beijing has set about bringing private sector back under party control after a few decades of loosening of the shackles.

Chinese behemoth, Huawei Technologies’ chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, who had been detained in Canada upon US prosecutors’ demand, returned to China in September following a plea deal with the US Department of Justice. Simultaneously, China let go Canadian former diplomat Michael Kovrig and entrepreneur Michael Spavor, who had been jailed in the immediate aftermath of Meng’s detention. Andrew Scobell, a distinguished fellow with the China program at the U.S. Institute of Peace, says: “While this de-escalation of this “hostage standoff” is arguably a positive development in the short run, its outcome might incentivize China to consider similar tactics in the future, which could set the stage for future escalation.” Many other such forced disappearances have also been reported.

### **COVID-19 and China**

Allegations that that the Covid virus originated from a laboratory in central China have reverberated around the world but as Beijing does not allow independent inspections by international experts, they remain unproven. Unprecedented lockdowns across the country have caused much hardship for vulnerable sections of society, besides causing food shortages and in some cases cutting off of access to food items.

## **II Trends in 2021**

### **Factionalism persists**

The history of the CPC even going by its own frequently rewritten official history is one of constant factional struggles. Staying with just the post 1949 period, the country witnessed the “Hundred Flowers Campaign”, the “Great Leap Forward” and the “Cultural Revolution” that Mao Zedong launched to eliminate dissension not only in the society at large but among the highest echelons of the ruling party.

Factionalism has continued since Mao’s death in 1976, with Deng Xiaoping having seen off Mao’s chosen successor Hua Guofeng to emerge as the paramount leader by 1978. Deng railed against what he deemed “bourgeois liberalisation”, meaning pro-democracy yearnings, in the 1980s and managed to lose two general secretaries – Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang – in quick succession. After the violent suppression of the 1989 Beijing Spring, factional feuds appeared to have been suppressed for a while but periodic anti-corruption campaigns that have led to the arrests and jailing some of the most senior leaders points to continuing ruptures.

With Xi having concentrated power in himself and extended his term in the highest office, many younger leaders will be disgruntled at being deprived of the opportunity to rise to the top. Meanwhile, although the armed forces are under the party's command, they are always a source of worry for the leadership.

Long-time China-watcher and academic Willy Wo-lap Lam says: "That Xi's hold on China's security forces including the PLA leadership is less than ironclad was recently demonstrated by the unexpected leadership changes of the pivotal Western Theatre Command (WTC) – China's largest military region that covers the strategic border regions of Xinjiang and Tibet as well as overseeing military relations with India and Afghanistan – four times in less than a year."

Tensions with US, Taiwan, India, Japan, Australia and Europe some Southeast Asian countries will persist, albeit with ups and downs and with China pursuing its divide and rule policy. While much depends on President Joe Biden's policies towards China, Beijing's own aggressive postures on a range of issues including Taiwan, trade dispute and the arms race could hold back rapprochement. Similar would be the situation as regards relations with other countries mentioned above. It is only with the Vladimir Putin regime in Russia that China now seems to enjoy cordial relations.

### **Arms race**

In July 2021, China tested a nuclear-capable hypersonic glide vehicle signalling its intention to not hold back from joining an arms race. US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in October: "What I can tell you is that we watch closely China's development of armaments and advanced capabilities and systems that will only increase tensions in the region. China is a challenge, and we're going to remain focused on that."

### **New Party Secretary for Xjnjiang (East Turkestan)**

Ma Xingrui, governor of Guangdong province, has replaced Chen Quanguo, who had occupied the post of Xinjiang Party Secretary since 2016 and under whose reign the notorious concentration camps were built for Uyghurs and other Muslim peoples. It is too early to tell whether the change of guard would lead to an easing or further hardening of policies or more of same.

### **Quest for water: Colonisation of Africa, Latin America**

China, accounting for 18 percent of the world's population, but just seven percent of global water resources. It lacks water despite having encroached on the origins of the Brahmaputra and the Mekong. By importing soyabean and other high water consuming crops, it is indirectly importing water. With rising population and economic development, albeit at a lower pace than in previous decades, this could have major consequences for global climate.

## **III**

### **Forecast**

Xi Jinping is widely expected to remain at the helm in the near term. How the economy fares might have a bearing on the level of resistance he faces within the Party and from society at large. Unless major economic crises intervene, he is likely to weather any opposition given the saturation control over not only the vast law and order machinery

at his command but also the online policing network that has served the regime well thus far.

Given the Chinese regime's current overt display of confidence, if not outright arrogance, in taking on all powers, big and small, it would be safe to say that several episodes of diplomatic frictions and tensions loom.

In its immediate neighbourhood, with Japan in the East China Sea and with Taiwan as well as with states bordering the South China Sea and with India, not to mention Vietnam (tensions with the last named having gotten relatively quiet in recent years, thanks both to the Covid 19 pandemic and perhaps their shared desire to avoid attention over massive human rights violations).

Tensions with Taiwan will Persist as will relentless crackdowns in Hong Kong. Here, it needs to be noted that there is a direct contradiction between the way the Beijing regime has ridden over the "One-Country, Two Systems" formula Deng Xiaoping had promised for Hong Kong and extended to Taiwan, regarded as a province awaiting 'peaceful reunification'.

As noted earlier, the nature of relations with the United States and Europe will depend on both China's ability to play countries off against each other and their ability to counter such moves. For the present, China is prevailing given the disarray in Europe and US preoccupation with a range of domestic issues.

### References:

1. "CCP 100: Xi warns China will not be 'oppressed' in anniversary speech." [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58812100), 1 July 2021,
2. "China faces new COVID outbreak as first Omicron case is reported." [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/14/chinas-zhejiang-fights-new-covid-outbreak-amid-omicron), 14 Dec. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/14/chinas-zhejiang-fights-new-covid-outbreak-amid-omicron>
3. "China warns of return to Cold War tensions." [dw.com](https://www.dw.com/news/2021/11/10/china-warns-of-return-to-cold-war-tensions), 10 Nov. 2021
4. "China: #MeToo journalist and labour activist facing 'subversion' charge must be released." [amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/china-metoo-journalist-and-labour-activist-facing-subversion-charge-must-be-released/), 9 Nov. 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/china-metoo-journalist-and-labour-activist-facing-subversion-charge-must-be-released/>
5. "China: UN experts gravely concerned by enforced disappearance of three human rights defenders." [ohchr.org](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25735&LangID=E), 23 March, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25735&LangID=E>
6. "China's hypersonic missile: Could it spark a new arms race?" [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58812100), 24 Oct. 2021,
7. "China-Taiwan military tensions 'worst in 40 years.'" [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58812100), 6 Oct. 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58812100>
8. "Editorial: Trouble at the top in China." [taipeitimes.com](https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2021/06/25/2003759760), 25 June 2021, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2021/06/25/2003759760>
9. "Hui Muslims and the 'Xinjiang Model' of State Suppression of Religion." [cecc.gov](https://www.cecc.gov/publications/commission-analysis/hui-muslims-and-the-%E2%80%9Cxinjiang-model%E2%80%9D-of-state-suppression-of), 29 March 2021, <https://www.cecc.gov/publications/commission-analysis/hui-muslims-and-the-%E2%80%9Cxinjiang-model%E2%80%9D-of-state-suppression-of>
10. "India ramps up Himalayan border security after clashes with China." [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/3/india-china-himalayan-border-security-deadly-clashes), 3 Nov. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/3/india-china-himalayan-border-security-deadly-clashes>
11. "India-China dispute: The border row explained in 400 words." [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58812100), 25 Jan. 2021,

12. "International Day of the Disappeared 2021: China ramps up disappearances." safeguarddefenders.com, 30 Aug. 2021, <https://safeguarddefenders.com/en/blog/international-day-disappeared-2021-china-ramps-disappearances>
13. "MJ Akbar: India ex-minister loses #MeToo defamation case to Priya Ramani." bbc.com, 17 Feb. 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56006498>
14. "Projected GDP Ranking." statisticstimes.com, International Monetary Fund, 26 Oct. 2021,
15. "Understanding Chinese "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy." nbr.org, 22 Oct. 2021, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/understanding-chinese-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/>
16. "US diplomats to boycott 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics." bbc.com, 7 Dec 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-59556613>
17. "Workers' rights and labour relations in China." clb.org.hk, 30 June 2020, <https://clb.org.hk/content/workers%E2%80%99-rights-and-labour-relations-china>
18. Andersen, Robin. "Beijing's Movie War Propaganda—and Washington's". fair.org, 31 Dec. 2021, <https://fair.org/home/beijings-movie-war-propaganda-and-washingtons/>
19. Associated Press. "What drives high-profile disappearances in China." pbs.org, 19 Nov. 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/what-drives-high-profile-disappearances-in-china>
20. Bajpai, Prableen. "The 5 Largest Economies In The World And Their Growth In 2020." nasdaq.com, 22 Jan, 2020, <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/the-5-largest-economies-in-the-world-and-their-growth-in-2020-2020-01-22>
21. Bugos, Shannon. "China Tested Hypersonic Capability, U.S. Says." armscontrol.org, Nov. 2021, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2021-11/news/china-tested-hypersonic-capability-us-says>
22. Bush, Richard C. and Hass Ryan, "The Biden administration is right to include Taiwan in the Summit for Democracy." brookings.edu, 1 Dec. 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/12/01/the-biden-administration-is-right-to-include-taiwan-in-the-summit-for-democracy/>
23. Carmichael, Flora. "How a fake network pushes pro-China propaganda." bbc.com, 5 Aug. 2021,
24. Cheung, Evelyn. "Biden-Xi virtual meeting ends with both sides calling for more cooperation amid tensions." cnbc.com, 15 Nov. 2021, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/15/biden-xi-kick-off-virtual-meeting-with-calls-to-increase-communication.html>
25. China Briefing Team. "US-China Relations in the Biden-Era: A Timeline." china-briefing.com, 22 Dec. 2021, <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/us-china-relations-in-the-biden-era-a-timeline/>
26. Davidson, Helen. "'Instead I am the criminal': China's MeToo figure speaks out after case fails." theguardian.com, 7 Oct. 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/07/instead-i-am-the-criminal-chinas-metoo-figure-speaks-out-after-case-fails>
27. Duffy, Clare and Perez, Evan. "Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou reaches agreement with US to resolve fraud charges." cnn.com, 25 Sept 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/24/tech/meng-wanzhou-huawei-us-plea-deal/index.html>
28. Feng, Emily. "'Afraid We Will Become The Next Xinjiang': China's Hui Muslims Face Crackdown." npr.org, 26 Sept. 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/26/763356996/afraid-we-will-become-the-next-xinjiang-chinas-hui-muslims-face-crackdown>
29. Freeman, Carla and Scobell, Andrew. "What's Next for U.S.-China Relations Amid Rising Tensions Over Taiwan." usip.org, 9 Oct 2021, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/10/whats-next-us-china-relations-amid-rising-tensions-over-taiwan>

30. Gan, Nectar and George, Steve. "China wants to return to 'zero-Covid.' But cases have been above zero for seven weeks." *cnn.com*, 6 Dec 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/12/06/china/china-covid-inner-mongolia-mic-intl-hnk/index.html>
31. Gan, Nectar and McKeehan, Brett. "China's propaganda machine is intensifying its 'people's war' to catch American spies." *cnn.com*, 18 Oct. 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/10/18/china/cia-spies-mic-intl-hnk/index.html>
32. Heseltine, Colin. "Xi Jinping's CPC centenary speech: Is there cause for alarm?" *Asialink*, University of Melbourne, 6 July 2021, <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/insights/xi-jinpings-cpc-centenary-speech-is-there-cause-for-alarm>
33. Hilton, Isabel. "How China's strategy of repression has led to decades of violence in Tibet." *newstatesman.com*, 9 Sept. 2020, <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2020/09/how-chinas-strategy-of-repression-has-led-to-decades-of-violence-in-tibet>
34. <https://statisticstimes.com/economy/projected-world-gdp-ranking.php>
35. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53062484>
36. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59001850>
37. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-57648236>
38. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58062630>
39. <https://www.dw.com/en/china-warns-of-return-to-cold-war-tensions/a-59783764>
40. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/22/china-dismantling-hong-kongs-unions>
41. Jayaram, N. "Authoritarianism Undiminished in China." *Deccan Herald*, 30 June 2021, <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/main-article/authoritarianism-undiminished-in-china-1003018.html>
42. Jayaram, N. "On Taiwan: Sabre-rattling China, ambiguous America." *Deccan Herald*, 3 Nov. 2021, <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/on-taiwan-sabre-rattling-china-ambiguous-america-1047157.html>
43. Jennion, James. "China's Repression of the Hui: A Slow Boil." *thediplomat.com*, 15 June 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/chinas-repression-of-the-hui-a-slow-boil/>
44. Jin, Iris and Wan, Sandy. "China Eco-City Tracker: The Upstream Battle for Drinkable Water." *asiapacific.ca*, 8 May 2018, <https://www.asiapacific.ca/blog/china-eco-city-tracker-upstream-battle-drinkable-water>
45. Kine, Phelim. "Xi's Mao moment at the Sixth Plenum." *politico.com*, 11 Nov. 2021, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-china-watcher/2021/11/11/xis-mao-moment-at-the-sixth-plenum-495058>
46. Krastev, Ivan and Leonard, Mark. "What Europeans think about the US-China Cold War." *ecfr.eu*, 22 Sept. 2021 <https://ecfr.eu/publication/what-europeans-think-about-the-us-china-cold-war/>
47. Kumar, Raksha. "How China uses the news media as a weapon in its propaganda war against the West." *reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk*, 2 Nov. 2021, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/how-china-uses-news-media-weapon-its-propaganda-war-against-west>
48. Kuo, Kaiser. Labor unrest and how China balances repression and responsiveness. *supchina.com*, 30 Sept. 2021, <https://supchina.com/2021/09/30/labor-unrest-and-how-china-balances-repression-and-responsiveness/>
49. Kuo, Lily. "In China, they're closing churches, jailing pastors – and even rewriting scripture." *theguardian.com*, 13 Jan. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/13/china-christians-religious-persecution-translation-bible>
50. Lim, Benjamin Kang and Martina, Michael. "China's Xi anointed 'core' leader, on par with Mao, Deng." *reuters.com*, 27 Oct, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-politics-idUSKCN12R1CK>

51. Lindberg, Kari Soo. "Hong Kong Imposes Sweeping Pro-China Curriculum on Schools." bloomberg.com, 5 Feb. 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-05/hong-kong-orders-schools-to-teach-sweeping-pro-china-curriculum>
52. Ljunggren, David and Yew, Lun Tian. "UK, Canada join diplomatic boycott of Beijing Winter Games." reuters.com, Dec. 9, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/australia-joins-diplomatic-boycott-beijing-winter-games-2021-12-08/>
53. Ni, Vincent. "'Making China great again': pomp and propaganda as CCP marks centenary." theguardian.com, 30 June, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/30/making-china-great-again-pomp-and-propaganda-as-ccp-marks-centenary>
54. Ni, Vincent. "China replaces Xinjiang party boss associated with Uyghur crackdown." theguardian.com, 26 Dec, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/26/china-replaces-xinjiang-party-boss-associated-uyghur-crackdown>
55. Peach, Sam. "Why did Alibaba's Jack Ma disappear for three months?" bbc.com, 20 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-56448688>
56. Pin, Lü. "What Peng Shuai's Story Tells Us About #MeToo in China." thediplomat.com, 5 Nov. 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/what-peng-shuais-story-tells-us-about-metoo-in-china/>
57. Reuters. "Hong Kong tycoon Jimmy Lai sentenced over banned Tiananmen vigil.", theguardian.com, 13 Dec. 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/13/hong-kong-jimmy-lai-and-activists-jailed-up-to-14-months-for-tiananmen-vigil>
58. Reuters. "IOC says it has held second video call with Peng Shuai." espn.in, 2 Dec. 2021, [https://www.espn.in/tennis/story/\\_/id/32768599/ioc-says-held-second-video-call-peng-shuai](https://www.espn.in/tennis/story/_/id/32768599/ioc-says-held-second-video-call-peng-shuai)
59. Richardson, Sophie. "UN to Release Much-Anticipated Rights Report on China." hrw.org, 14 Dec. 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/14/un-release-much-anticipated-rights-report-china>
60. Ripley, Will; Cheung Eric and Westcott, Ben. "Taiwan's President says the threat from China is increasing 'every day' and confirms presence of US military trainers on the island." cnn.com, 28 Oct. 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/10/27/asia/tsai-ingwen-taiwan-china-interview-intl-hnk/index.html>
61. Roth, Kenneth. "China: Events of 2021." hrw.org, 15 Jan. 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/china-and-tibet>
62. Roy, Denny. "China's hegemonic intent increasingly hard to deny." asiatictimes.com, 5 Jan. 2022 <https://asiatictimes.com/2022/01/chinas-hegemonic-intent-increasingly-hard-to-deny/>
63. Ruwitch, John and Feng, Emily, "Not invited to Biden's democracy summit, China launches a propaganda blitz." npr.org, 9 Dec. 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/09/1062530356/china-biden-democracy-summit>
64. Sharma, Ashok. "India Slams China's New Boundary Law Amid Border Tensions." thediplomat.com, 28 Oct. 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/india-slams-chinas-new-boundary-law-amid-border-tensions/>
65. Siddiqui, Imran Ahmed. "Chinese army builds highways and roads in eastern Ladakh", telegraphindia.com, 14 Dec. 2021, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/chinese-army-builds-highways-and-roads-in-eastern-ladakh/cid/1843234>
66. Smith, Alexander. "Xi Jinping looks to secure his political future by reinterpreting China's past." nbcnews.com, 11 Nov. 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/chinas-xi-jinping-historical-resolution-entrench-rule-party-plenum-rcna4796>
67. Stone, Mike. "'National pride is at stake.' Russia, China, United States race to build hypersonic weapons." reuters.com, 1 Dec 2021,

- <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-hypersonic-weapon-arms-race-with-china-air-force-secretary-2021-11-30/>
68. Stone, Mike. "U.S. in hypersonic weapon 'arms race' with China -Air Force secretary." reuters.com, 1 Dec. 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-hypersonic-weapon-arms-race-with-china-air-force-secretary-2021-11-30/>
  69. Stone, Richard. "'National pride is at stake.' Russia, China, United States race to build hypersonic weapons." science.org, 8 Jan. 2020, <https://www.science.org/content/article/national-pride-stake-russia-china-united-states-race-build-hypersonic-weapons>
  70. Tabeta, Shunsuke. "Rising stars give hope to China's marginalized Youth League faction." asia.nikkei.com, 10 Aug. 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Rising-stars-give-hope-to-China-s-marginalized-Youth-League-faction>
  71. Tiezzi, Shannon. "China's Foreign Minister Tries Again to Win Europe Back." thediplomat.com, 29 Oct. 2021, <https://thedi diplomat.com/tag/china-eu-relations/>
  72. Tiezzi, Shannon. "Elizabeth Economy on 'The World According to China'." thediplomat.com, 4 Jan. 2022, <https://thedi diplomat.com/2022/01/elizabeth-economy-on-the-world-according-to-china/>
  73. Walker, Tony. "China's sixth plenum will consolidate Xi Jinping's power and chart the country's ambitions for the next 5 years." theconversation.com, 9 Nov. 2021 <https://theconversation.com/chinas-sixth-plenum-will-consolidate-xi-jinpings-power-and-chart-the-countrys-ambitions-for-the-next-5-years-171395>
  74. Wang, Maya. "China Is Dismantling Hong Kong's Unions." hrw.org, 22 Sept. 2021,
  75. Williams, Gemma. "China's LGBTQIA+ trust can't be bought." campaignasia.com, 21 June, 2021, <https://www.campaignasia.com/article/chinas-lgbtqia-trust-cant-be-bought/470455>
  76. Williams, Ian. "China could be more dangerous than ever in 2022." spectator.co.uk, 31 Dec. 2021, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/how-great-a-threat-will-china-be-in-2022->
  77. Williams, Sophie. "Why China's LGBT hide their identities at Lunar New Year.", bbc.com, 25 Jan. 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-51199309>
  78. Wu, Kane and Zhu, Julie. "Billionaire Alibaba founder Jack Ma reappears in Hong Kong – sources." reuters.com, 13 Oct. 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/billionaire-alibaba-founder-jack-ma-reappears-hong-kong-sources-2021-10-12/>
  79. Yuan, Shawn. "LGBTQ in China lament 'dark day' after social media crackdown." aljazeera.com, 13 July 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/13/china-lgbtq>

-----  
 This brief benefited from brief email consultations with Britain-based Peter W. Humphrey who has been a China specialist for nearly five decades and Manoj Kewalramani of the Takshashila Institution in Bangalore. However, the responsibility for the contents is entirely author's.