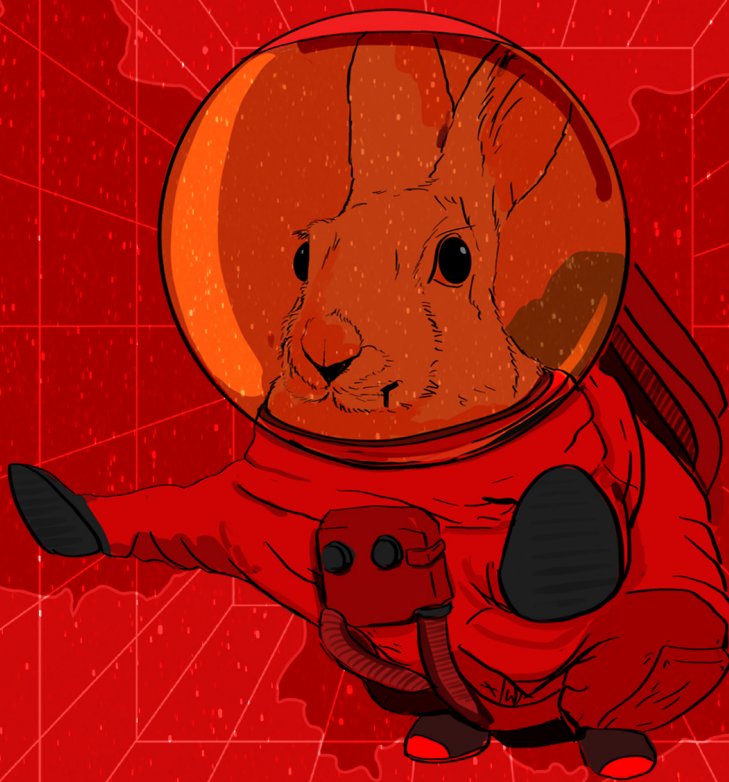


THE
CHINA
PROJECT



RED PAPER 2023

YEAR OF THE WATER RABBIT



The China Project publishes from-the-ground reporting, up-to-the-minute news summaries and informed opinions on China and its place in the world. We aim to give you a diverse range of views, and cover China without fear or favor.

This Red Paper 2023 — our sixth since 2018 — summarizes the most important news event of 2022 and makes some predictions about what will happen in 2023.



PREDICTIONS

— Jeremy Goldkorn, Editor-in-Chief of The China Project

Predictions are a fool's game, but that's not going to stop us from trying to make some again this year. In the past, we've been right about several events:

>> [For 2019](#), we predicted that there would be “new contagious diseases and epizootics” in China, and indeed, COVID-19 began spreading just before the end of the year in Wuhan.

>> [For 2020](#), we correctly forecast that Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文 Cài Yīngwén) would be reelected as Taiwan's president with an overwhelming majority.

>> [For 2021](#), we said that Hong Kong media mogul Jimmy Lai (黎智英 Lí Zhìyīng) and a number of other opposition figures would receive lengthy jail sentences on charges related to business activities as well as violations of the new national security law, and this has indeed happened.

>> [For 2022](#), we predicted that Russia would invade Ukraine, and that China would offer silent support, both of which turned out to be accurate. We also predicted that COVID zero would last until the fall of 2022 — although you may quibble and say it lasted until winter.

Click through to the links above to see some other predictions that turned out to be accurate, and some that did not come true, or read on for our look into the crystal ball for 2023:

ELON MUSK IS GOING TO HAVE A CHINA PROBLEM.

Tesla is the No. 2 electric car company in China after BYD. But it's a very crowded market where more than half of existing electric vehicle (EV) startups are going to go out of business or merge with their rivals in the coming year, which will lose a lot of money for some very powerful people.

Tesla already has former customers who are haters. In 2023, a fatal accident caused by software, or a deadly fire caused by an exploding car, or some other mishap, could stir up some real popular anger at a time when the one type of public protest the government

does not mind is against foreign companies.

The People's Liberation Army is no fan of Tesla either. In early 2021, the Chinese military banned Tesla cars from entering its compounds over concerns that the vehicles' cameras and sensors posed a security risk.

Of course, the problem could be with Twitter: What will Musk do if the Chinese government objects to content on the platform, and nudges the Shanghai Tesla factory? At what point will American journalists and politicians begin to ask questions about all the paid and unpaid propaganda for the Chinese government that is on Twitter?



COVID-19 WILL SPREAD UNCONTROLLABLY FOR THE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF THE YEAR,

sickening millions of people and killing a large number of elderly people. But thanks to masking, self-isolation, a stepped-up vaccination campaign, and a much better understanding of the coronavirus than anyone had in 2020, the death toll will not be as dire as the gloomiest predictions that exceed 2 million.

However, this is going to be a very difficult prediction to verify: We will never know the true death toll of COVID-19 in China in 2023 because many of the mortalities will be attributed to other diseases or simply not counted in any official statistics.

THE ECONOMY WILL RECOVER IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR,

and be healthy enough by year end for the government to claim an annual GDP growth rate of 5%. China's middle class will continue to grow, and the economy will be buoyed by "revenge spending" as young consumers enjoy post-pandemic life. But there will not be a return to the optimistic vitality that large numbers of the population enjoyed from the early 2000s till 2020.

CHINA'S BIRTH RATE WILL CONTINUE TO DECLINE, AND APPLICATIONS TO EMIGRATE WILL GO UP.

The psychological and political toll of the pandemic and long years of lockdowns and mass testing are going to lead to high numbers of mental health issues, and long term damage to the Communist Party's perceived legitimacy.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS GOING TO BE TESTED IN WAYS THAT IT HAS NOT EXPERIENCED SINCE 1989, BUT IT WILL STAY IN POWER.

There will be mass grumbling about the economy and the Party's handling of COVID. There will also be grumbling amongst the political, economic, and intellectual elites about Xi Jinping's rule. The dissatisfaction might spark protests from a citizenry emboldened by the anti-COVID-lockdown demonstrations of late 2022.

THE BROMANCE BETWEEN VLADIMIR PUTIN AND XI JINPING WILL REMAIN STRONG

but China will never again use the phrase "no limits partnership," which is how the two leaders [described their country's relationship](#) in February 2022, just before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. China will continue to buy Russian oil and gas at good prices, but it'll bring enough money money for Russia to sustain its war in Ukraine. Do Ukrainian people will pay the price Chinese companies will largely avoid sanctioned financial activities that could get them into trouble with the global financial system.



CHINA WILL NOT SUBSTANTIALLY CHANGE ITS REPRESSIVE POLICIES AGAINST UYGHURS

other minorities, and religious groups in China. The U.S. and the European Union will enact further sanctions and rules about supply chains.

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SUBSIDIZE THE DOMESTIC SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY

as U.S. export controls on chips and the equipment needed to make them continue.

CHINA WILL NOT INVADE TAIWAN.

The question I was personally most frequently asked in 2022 by people who don't normally pay much attention to China was: "Is China going to invade Taiwan?" It's not going happen on 2023: Xi Jinping 习近平 has too much on his plate, namely:

>> The worst-performing economy in decades, with roughly 20% of the youth unemployed;

>> A growing population of elderly people and not enough babies to replenish the work force;

>> The uncertainty of China's COVID situation that will last at least into the summer;

>> The lessons learned from the Ukraine invasion, both in terms of the difficulty of taking over the country and the toll of the sanctions that followed Russia's war.

TIKTOK WILL BE BANNED OR REGULATED STRICTLY IN THE U.S.

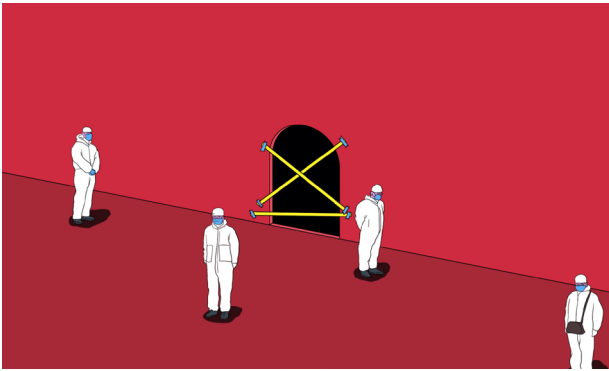
both because of accusations that it is affecting the American political process in the run up to the 2024 presidential elections, and by fears that the Chinese government will gain access to use the data of U.S. citizens and organizations via ByteDance servers in Beijing. The European Union regulators will also start making noises about TikTok. Ecommerce companies Shein and Pinduoduo's new global app Temu will also come under scrutiny in the U.S.



POLITICS AND CURRENT EVENTS.

— *Nadya Yeh, Senior Newsletter Editor*





FROM COVID ZERO TO COVID CHAOS

This year was a rollercoaster of speculation over China's COVID-zero policy: Rumors [at the beginning of the year](#) of an ease in COVID measures, in part fueled by closed-loop trials during the Winter Olympics in Beijing, ended with the chaotic [months-long lockdown of Shanghai](#).

A [carousel of pandemic control measures](#) continued as China's economy limped along. [Widespread shortages](#) of crucial items like food and medicines ensued, workers [fled](#) the world's largest iPhone plant in fear of lockdown measures, and there were numerous (and potentially avoidable) [deaths of locked-in residents](#).

But [the deadly apartment fire](#) in Urumqi that killed 10 people and ignited rare protests [in Shanghai, Beijing, and around the world](#) seems to have been [the last straw](#) and Beijing abandoned its long held COVID-zero policy. As the barriers that kept the country of 1.4 billion people in isolation for the past three years are being dismantled at an unprecedented speed, however, [are millions at risk?](#)

JANUARY 11

China starts the year locking down Xi'ans, Tianjin, and central cities in Henan ahead for the 2022 [Beijing Olympics](#).

MARCH 19

The first COVID-19 deaths in more than a year are [reported in Jilin province](#).

MARCH 28

Shanghai begins a [city-wide lockdown](#) of its 26 million residents that will en up lasting well into the summer and bring the repeated failures of the system to the forefront of international media.

AUGUST 10

Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, begins what will become China's [longest lockdown of 2022](#), lasting over 110 days.

SEPTEMBER 1

Chengdu [is placed under lockdown](#), and anger grows after authorities [would not budge](#) on lockdown measures after a 6.6-magnitude earthquake nearby.

SEPTEMBER 18

A bus shuttling people to a COVID-19 quarantine site in Guiyang [crashes in the early morning](#), killing 27, injuring 20 others, and causing many to question if the cure isn't deadlier than the disease.

OCTOBER 13

The rare site of [a protest banner in Beijing](#) is seen off the side of a highway, proclaiming amongst other phrases, "*We don't COVID test. We want to eat*".

NOVEMBER 23

A video of security officers in haz-
mant suits [violently attacking wor-
kers at Foxconn's iPhone factory](#) in
Zhengzhou protesting over COVID
measures spreads like wildfire across
the Chinese internet.

NOVEMBER 27

After a fire in Xinjiang's capital city
Urumqi [resulted in the dead of 10 re-
sidents](#) and the injury of nine more,
[protests against lockdown measures
erupt in major cities](#) across China.

DECEMBER 13

Quite suddenly, China's COVID-trac-
king app and database, which has
been a constant in the daily lives of
citizens for the last three years, [takes
itself offline](#).

DECEMBER 19

China reports its [first two new COVID
deaths](#), as hospitalizations swell and
crematoriums announce they are
full.



THE 20TH PARTY CONGRESS ENDED WITH XI LARGE AND IN CHARGE

In a surprise to no one, Xí Jìnpíng 习近平 [secured his third term](#) as General Secretary at the 20th Party Congress this past October. The awkward exit of Xi's predecessor, Hú Jǐntāo 胡锦涛, from the meeting left the world wondering exactly what had happened, while his leadership picks in the Politburo [are mostly men](#) who have proven themselves loyal to him.

[While](#) observers — including panda huggers, panda sluggers, and those in between — indulged [in a feast](#) of Party politics punditry, many investors began to fear [the fate of private business](#) under China's [most powerful leader](#) since Chairman Máo Zédōng 毛泽东.

After the [recent death](#) of former president Jiāng Zémín 江泽民 at 96, a [wave of nostalgia](#) has washed over the country and the world, [thinking back to an era](#) before Xi. Former senior official and later critic of the Communist Party Bào Tóng 鲍彤 died at 90.





Damien Ma, head of the Paulson Institute's MacroPolo think tank, elaborated on a particularly interesting theory:

We're focusing on the strength of Xi Jinping. But I think another way to think about it is – is it the person or is it the institution? In other words, is it really the strength of Xi Jinping or the weakness of the CCP because of what transpired in the last decade?

Meanwhile, Lizzi Lee, host of The China Project's [Live with Lizzie Lee](#), broke down the new Politburo's resumes, including half a dozen backgrounds in science and technology – including space, environmental engineering, and public health:

We have all those experts. So what does it mean? I think one thing that works in the nerd's favor is that they don't have strong political coalitions in political affiliations growing up, and they are considered relatively clean in terms of factional affiliations. Also, scientists, I think, well by default are not that corrupt. And that's something that Xi Jinping values a lot.

And more importantly, China perceives itself as locked into this rivalry, especially over high tech with the United States. So, to the extent that China wanted to really turbocharge its STEM program, those scientists, and technocrats are probably going to be coming in handy.

Regardless, a stable featuring expert technocrats was not enough to abate [fear of the fate of private business](#) under China's [most powerful leader](#) since Chairman Máo Zédōng 毛泽东.

After the [recent death](#) of former president Jiāng Zémín 江泽民 at 96, a [wave of nostalgia](#) has washed over the country and the world, thinking back to an era before Xi. Former senior official and later critic of the Communist Party Bào Tóng 鲍彤 died at 90. Our Editor-in-Chief Jeremy Goldkorn cautioned against [forgetting too much about Jiang's legacy](#) in the wake of Xi's rule. Jiang had lead the country during his reign and:

...for the next decade, Jiang would breathe over the shoulder of Hu Jintao, a president and Party general secretary who never really succeeded in marking out his own political turf. This meant that the first decade of the 21st century, the Naughty Aughties, when China went from third-page news to front-page story in the Wall Street Journal, was really the time of Jiang's Communist Party.





THE FOURTH TAIWAN STRAIT CRISIS?

SPAR19, the flight rumored to be carrying U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, became the [most tracked live flight](#) in the world by the time it landed in Taipei in August this year, as people around the globe worried about an escalation between the United States and China over Taiwan.

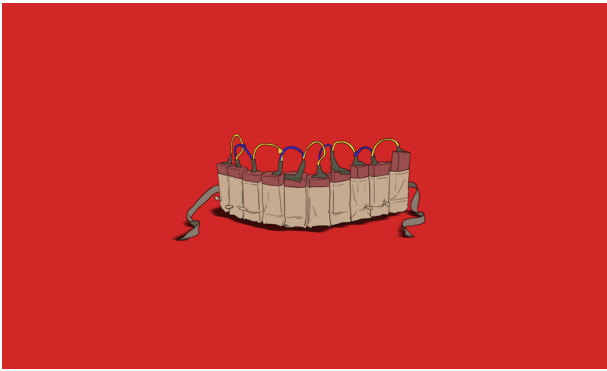
Global tensions over the self-ruled island were already brewing — given Beijing’s spat [with Lithuania](#) over a Taiwan office in Vilnius, [foreign](#) delegations paying visits to Taipei, and the [Biden administration’s](#) new [policies](#) and several comments made by Biden that appeared to indicate policy changes. But Pelosi’s [visit](#) unleashed a [chain of reactions](#) that poked at Beijing’s most sensitive foreign policy topic and which [some have called](#) the “Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis.”

China responded [with live-fire military drills](#), the [suspension of talks and sanctions](#) against U.S. officials, and the [first white paper](#) on Taiwan under Xi’s leadership. Though many of the island’s citizens [seem eerily calm](#) in the face of such high stakes, its military is [shoring up its defenses](#) (with the help of \$425 million worth of spare aircraft parts and weapons systems, [courtesy of the Biden administration](#)).

The Sinica Podcast hosted a conversation at the end of the year with Jude Blanchette, Freeman Chair at CSIS, and Ryan Hass of the Brookings Institute to discuss America’s role in the ongoing issue. Hass urged to remember that:

...Military options may not be the option of first resort in China’s efforts. What we’ve already seen is that China is engaged in a strategy of coercion without violence. This isn’t a future hypothetical. This is an everyday reality today, where China is using an abundance of tools to try to wear down the psychological confidence of the people of Taiwan; that resistance is futile; that there is no path to peace in prosperity that does not run through Beijing, and that the people of Taiwan’s best hope is to sue for peace now rather than invite pain later.

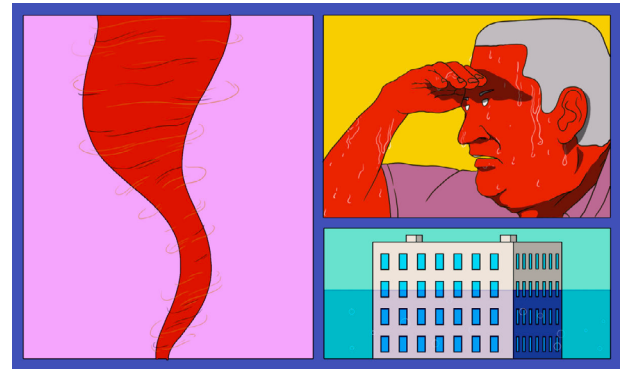
That’s what the people of Taiwan are facing. And if we become target locked on some future hypothetical invasion scenario and begin to treat it as an inescapable inevitability, we could find ourselves sort of driving down a path that may not be necessary. And beyond that, we are not addressing the problem that the people of Taiwan are feeling today.



CHINA IS STILL INVESTING IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH, BUT THERE'S PUSHBACK

Beijing is [inking a slew of new deals](#) and projects [in energy-rich Gulf states](#), building up infrastructure and expanding military aid [in Africa](#), securing ties under the term “South-South cooperation” [in Latin America](#), and strengthening its allegiances in [Southeast Asia](#) and [in the Indo-Pacific](#).

However, China has grown more cautious about overseas lending, particularly [in areas of political instability](#) and given its slowing economy at home. The [recent suicide attack in Kabul](#) has fanned concerns about the risks to Chinese nationals and projects [in Pakistan](#) and other areas where disgruntled locals have [many bones to pick](#) with Beijing.



FLOODS, DROUGHTS, HEAT WAVES, AND COAL

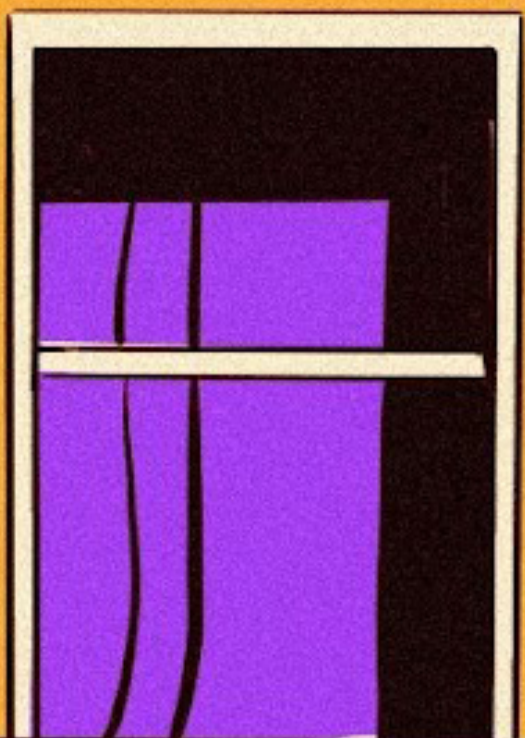
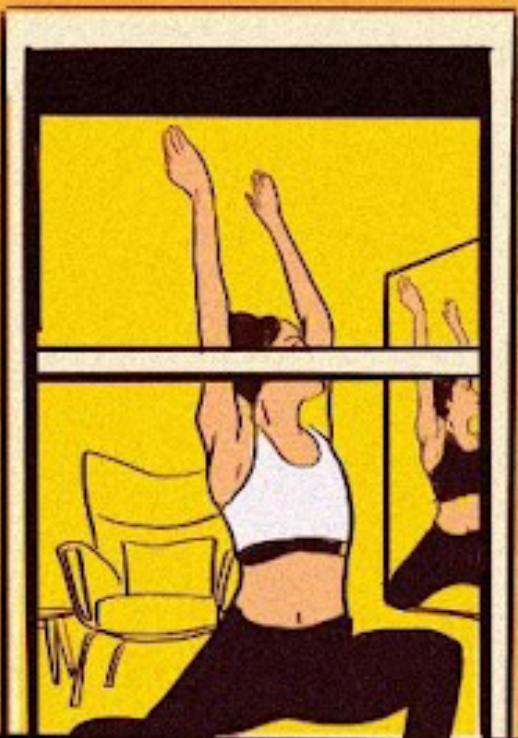
It was a summer of extremes for China. Scorching heat waves [drained water reserves](#), ignited forest fires, and [strained the nation's power supply](#) — to a point where it grew so hot in some cities that some residents [took shelter in Wi-Fi-equipped underground bunkers](#) to stay cool. Crops were parched from record-breaking droughts in some regions, while others were submerged in torrential rainfall and floods that destroyed homes and left [scores of people dead](#).

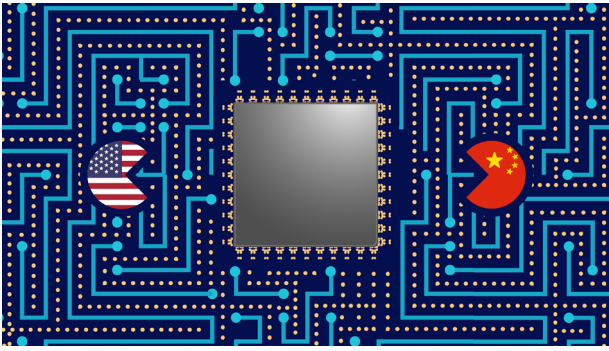


But Beijing is [ramping up policy measures](#) to combat climate change and achieve its [ambitious carbon neutral goals](#) — though it constantly finds [itself wedged](#) between [securing a stable source of energy](#) and slashing its carbon footprint.



BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY





THE ECONOMY IS BATTERED BY CRACKDOWNS AND LOCKDOWNS

In March and again in May, regulators signaled that the crackdown on China's large technology companies that began in 2020 may finally be coming to an end. In July, regulators in China finally concluded a long probe into ride-hailing platform Didi, slapping the company with a fine of over 8 billion yuan (\$1.28 billion), and in November, Alibaba affiliate Ant Group was fined roughly the same amount which many observers saw as signs that the regulators have ended their campaign.

But gloom had already set into the tech industry, and along with real estate doldrums and the increasingly severe COVID curbs in 2022, especially the Shanghai lockdown in the spring, the stage was set for China's worst annual economic performance in decades. Ongoing lockdowns throughout the year snarled up supply chains.

Beijing launched a stimulus package at the end of May, and there have been dozens of local and central government measures to encourage consumption and get the economy going again. But even the bankers and usually bullish investors have remained pessimistic.

Said Joyce Chang, global head of research for J.P. Morgan:

We have actually taken down the full year China forecasts to 4.3% GDP growth. That is more than one full percentage point below the official government target of five and a half percent. And if you look at just the history of China's growth over the last decades, it's only the second time that we think the government will miss its official targets. The last time being 2020, the year that the pandemic broke out. So this is a fairly serious slowdown.

The implications of this on the global economy are stark.

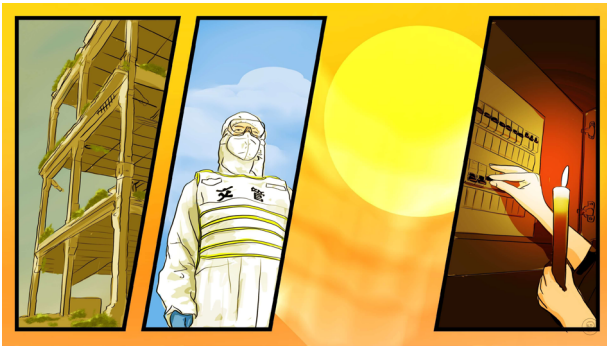
Economist and author Stephen Roach noted that, for a long time, China's growth had been propping the world up since the Global Financial Crisis:

...I performed the following thought experiment by removing [China's] rapid GDP growth from the world economy to see what the world would have looked like without China. Specifically, over the five-year 2012–2016 period, actual global GDP growth averaged 3.5%.

Without China, the growth trend would've been reduced to just 2.3%, which is fractionally below the 2.5% threshold that we normally associate with outright recession in the world economy...

The resilience of China, or the China cushion, was the only thing that stood between a weak post-GFC recovery and a relapse back into global recession during that earlier period.

Fast-forward to today: The cushion has no air in it. I mean, China's growing at well below the post-GFC pace, if it's growing at all, and you show me another source of resilience.



CHINA'S SUFFERING REAL ESTATE SECTOR

Between 2010 and 2020, home prices doubled and developer profits quadrupled in China. But from the summer of 2021, real estate prices began to slide, and China's property developers began to struggle to repay their loans. By August 2022, home sales by value were down nearly 21% year-on-year, there were several developer defaults, angry buyers who had prepaid for their homes threatened to stop paying their mortgages, and local government revenue from land sales plummeted.

The government may in fact be content for large and over leveraged property developers like Evergrande (which has about \$275 billion of debt) to be cut down to size. But given that the real estate market accounts for a quarter to a third of China's GDP, and that most Chinese people's wealth is in property, even a managed slowdown will be painful.



CHINA DOMINATES THE ELECTRIC VEHICLE AND BATTERY INDUSTRIES

In June, CATL, the world's largest battery manufacturer, launched its third-generation Qilin battery for electric vehicles (EVs), which will be mass produced in 2023 and will give cars a range of at least 621 miles. The company is pioneering other new battery technologies like sodium-ion batteries, and — together with other Chinese companies — now dominates the entire supply chain from mining of lithium and other metals to batteries ready to be installed in vehicles.

China is also home to dozens of companies making EVs, including startups, established traditional auto companies, joint ventures with foreign car brands, and Tesla, which so far still controls 100% of its Shanghai-based company. China produced about 6 million EVs vehicles in 2022, and in the first half of the year, Shenzhen-based BYD became the world's leading EV company with global sales of 640,748 units. China's EV and battery companies are now entering new markets around the world.





THE TUSSLE FOR SEMICONDUCTORS

Tensions between the U.S. and China and a global semiconductor shortage in 2022 turned the industry into a geopolitical battleground. The U.S. passed the CHIPS and Science Act to promote its indigenous semiconductor industry and cut China off from the most advanced chips and the equipment needed to make them, although this legislation is not going to make the U.S. independent of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC).

U.S. restrictions on sales of high-end chips to China will likely profoundly impact semiconductor, cloud, and AI companies and technologies all over the world.

In China, the headlong rush for semiconductors resulted in the arrest of various “chip madmen” for corruption in 2022, and the industry is in a slow-burn crisis as the effects of U.S. legislation kick in.



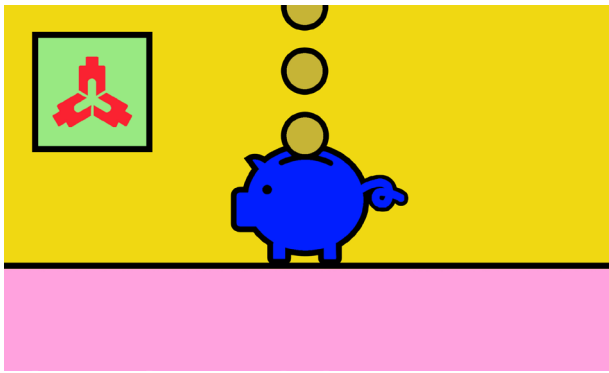
CHINESE ECOMMERCE GOES GLOBAL AND LIVE STREAMING GOES MAINSTREAM

China’s ecommerce industry remained strong despite the tough times, and in fact may have benefitted from the COVID stay-at-home economy. The country’s ecommerce companies also expanded aggressively internationally, particularly into southeast Asia. In the U.S., fast fashion clothing brand Shein earned the company billions in 2022, and in September, Pinduoduo’s new global ecommerce app Temu launched a price war with Shein.

In 2022, live streaming ecommerce went mainstream in China, although rapid growth in the sector may already be over.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE



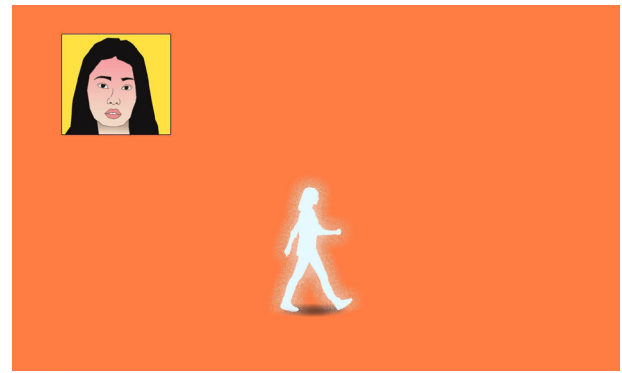


FRUGALITY BECAME ATTRACTIVE WITH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AT ALL TIME HIGH

Already struggling with high jobless rates before the COVID-19 pandemic, young people in China faced an even tougher labor market this year. The youth unemployment rate reached 19.9% in July, the highest since Beijing started publishing the index in January 2018, when it was 9.6%.



Broadly, there's been a shift in people's spending habits. Worried about China's economic downturn, more and more young Chinese have embraced frugality. On lifestyle apps and video-sharing sites, influencers who show off wealth are rapidly losing audiences while those who share money-saving tips are gaining followers.



TEN STEPS BACKWARD AND ONE STEP FORWARD FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

In January, grim footage of a Chinese mother of eight shackled by her neck in a freezing shed in Xuzhou sparked a soul-searching national conversation about human trafficking and forced marriage. In the summer, a group of men were caught on camera assaulting a woman and her female friends at a barbecue restaurant in Tangshan. These and other incidents of abuse of women focused public attention on women's rights despite Beijing's ongoing crackdown on feminist activism.

In an interview with The China Project, Dr. Leta Hong Fincher, the most influential writer and scholar working in the field of feminism and women's studies in China today, said that what's "particularly interesting" about the case of the Xuzhou woman was "the enormous amount of outrage" it aroused among the Chinese public.



It has been a viral topic on Weibo in spite of the very aggressive censorship, and it has also sparked a lot of different kinds of activism. Citizens, women, and men as well, citizen journalists going and trying to investigate for themselves more about this case,” she added. “A lot of citizens are being detained and prevented from finding out what’s happening. But nonetheless, all of these normal efforts to prevent independent reporting in China and to prevent activism have failed to kind of stem the tide of activist outrage. And that I find to be really interesting.



There was a mixed bag of updates on some of the country’s most high-profile #MeToo cases.

In September, a Chinese court rejected a lawsuit filed by Zhōu Xiǎoxuán 周晓璇, whose sexual harassment allegations against famous television host Zhū Jūn 朱军 had attracted national attention since 2018.

Outside China, a former University of Minnesota student accused Chinese tech billionaire Richard Liu (刘强东 Liú Qiángdōng) of rape, but she later reached an undisclosed settlement with him in the U.S.

But towards the end of the year, many feminists cheered when a Beijing court sentenced Chinese-Canadian pop star and actor Kris Wu (Wú Yifán 吴亦凡) to 13 years in jail for rape and other sexcrimes. On the policy front, China’s top legislative body updated its decades-old laws on women’s rights, adding new provisions to better safeguard the interests of women in the workplace and society as a whole.

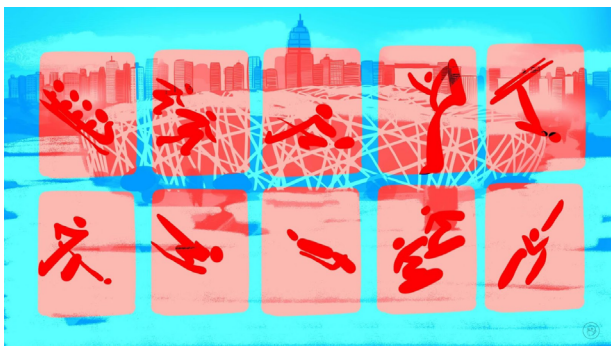
When it comes to women’s political representation, 2022 was a step backward: At the 20th Party Congress, no woman was selected for the Politburo, the first time this has happened in 25 years.



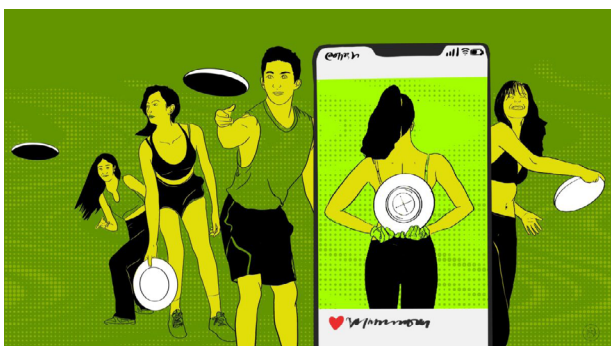
EILEEN GU AND THE BEIJING WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

The 2022 Winter Olympics kicked off in Beijing on February 4 and closed on February 20, making the city the first in history to host both a Winter and a Summer Olympics. The event played out inside a massive quarantine bubble because of the pandemic.





One of the most popular and simultaneously controversial stars of the Games was 18-year-old freestyle skiing prodigy Eileen Gu (谷爱凌 Gǔ Àilíng), who was born in the U.S. but chose to represent China in the Winter Olympics, which many Americans criticized. She won three medals — two gold and one silver — which made her a beloved and government-endorsed celebrity in China. Gu later faced a backlash from some of her Chinese fans when she returned to the U.S.



THE RISE OF OUTDOOR ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES

Once a niche activity for outdoor enthusiasts, camping became a national sensation this year, particularly popular among China's pandemic-fatigued youths who were looking for new ways to socialize, get fresh air, and stay healthy.

Ultimate Frisbee, a hybrid sport invented half a decade ago in the U.S., also exploded in popularity after being endorsed by fashionable Chinese influencers. Other outdoor athletic activities that saw a boom this year in China include cycling, skiing, trekking, and paddle boarding.

GLAMPING

The old-school form of camping — the type of outdoor experience defined by dirt, bugs, sweat, and general ickiness — is a niche in China. But glamping, the high-end and stylish cousin of traditional camping, has taken

ADULT CYCLING

As China grappled with an outbreak of the Omicron variant in the summer, an adult cycling craze swept through many cities including Beijing.

STAND-UP PADDLING

In cities like Shanghai and Suzhou, stand-up paddling, a water sport born from surfing with modern roots in Hawaii, had a big moment among young professionals in 2022.

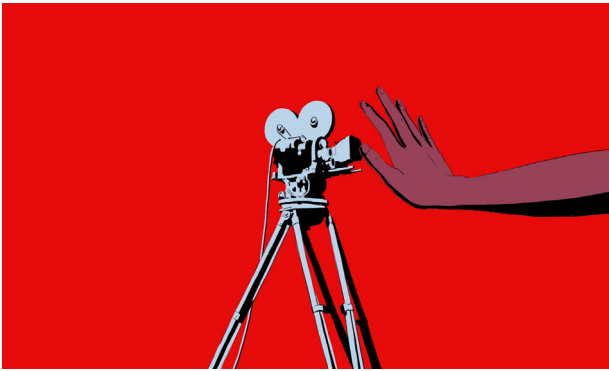
SNOW SPORTS

Fueled by the Beijing Winter Olympics, the popularity of snow sports such as skiing and snowboarding surged in China.

SURFSKATING

Surfskating, a novice-friendly breed of skateboarding that allows riders to experience the movement of surfing on the land, has seen rapid rise in popularity, especially among women, as younger generations in China seek solitary pandemic-inspired activities.





MEDIA CENSORSHIP INTENSIFIES, WITH NEW METHODS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Although it's not unusual for foreign films and TV series to undergo special edits in order to be shown in China, 2022 saw a new phenomenon of Hollywood movies creating alternate endings to please Chinese censors.



At the beginning of the year, the 1999 classic *Fight Club* streamed on Tencent Video and caused controversy as its iconic ending showing the destruction of a cluster of skyscrapers was altered to portray the film's antihero reforming his ways. The original ending was later resorted after the alternation prompted an intense backlash domestically and made international news.

In August, Chinese viewers discovered that the ending of *Minions: The Rise of Gru*, the latest animated film in the *Despicable Me* franchise, was given a China-exclusive addendum that completely changed the movie's original ending, turning it into a morality tale where no villains are left unpunished.



Meanwhile, elements of violence, same-sex relationships, or anything deemed offensive Chinese media censors remained the main targets of them. In January, major Chinese streaming platforms deleted an LGBTQ plotline in popular American TV series *Friends*, causing Chinese fans of the show to express their anger on social media. *Return to Dust* (隐入尘烟), a domestically produced arthouse title that was a surprise box-office hit in China, disappeared from all Chinese streaming services, likely due to its realistic and what officials saw as unflattering depiction of rural life in the country.

Censorship of all topics deemed sensitive by the government intensified on social media, while state media became even more homogeneous in its constant praise of Xi Jinping and the Communist Party's leadership.



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