

Contemporary China Timeline

1949 – On October 1st Mao Zedong, having led the Communists to victory against the Nationalists after more than 20 years of civil war, proclaims the founding of the People's Republic of China atop Tiananmen Gate in the center of Beijing. The Nationalists retreat to the island of Taiwan and set up a government-in-exile.

1950 - China intervenes in the Korean War on the side of North Korea. The U.S. responds by moving its Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straights, preventing any PRC offense against regaining Taiwan.

1958 - Mao launches the "Great Leap Forward", a five-year economic plan. Farming is collectivized and labor-intensive industry is introduced. The drive produces economic breakdown and is abandoned after two years. Disruption to agriculture is blamed for the deaths by starvation of upwards to 30 million people following poor harvests over the next two years—the largest man-made natural disaster in history.

1959 - Chinese forces suppress large-scale revolt in Tibet. The Dalai Lama flees to India where he sets up a government-in-exile.

1966-76 - "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," a 10-year political and ideological campaign aimed at reviving revolutionary spirit, produces massive social, economic and political upheaval.

1972 - US President Richard Nixon visits China. Both countries declare a desire to normalize relations.

1976 - Mao dies. "The Gang of Four," including Mao's widow Jiang Qing, jockey for power but are arrested and convicted of crimes against the state. From 1977 Deng Xiaoping emerges as the dominant figure among pragmatists in the leadership. Under him, China undertakes far-reaching economic reforms.

1979 - Diplomatic relations established with the US.

Government imposes one-child policy in effort to curb population growth.

1986-90 - China's "Open-door policy" opens the country to foreign investment and encourages development of a market economy and private sector.

1989 - Troops open fire on supporters of demonstrators who camped for weeks in Tiananmen Square initially to demand the posthumous rehabilitation of former CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang, who was forced to resign in 1987. The official death toll is 200. International outrage leads to sanctions.

1989 - Jiang Zemin takes over as Chinese Communist Party general secretary from Zhao Ziyang, who refused to support martial law during the Tiananmen demonstrations.

Stockmarkets open in Shanghai and Shenzhen.

1992 – At the age of 88, Deng Xiaoping tours central and southern China in order to spur further economic reforms. In October, the 14th CCP Congress endorses Deng's policies against leftist hardliners who desire a return to central state planning.

China's largest Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is established at Pudong area in Shanghai.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) ranks China's economy as third largest in the world after the US and Japan.

1993 - Jiang Zemin officially replaces Yang Shangkun as president.

Preliminary construction work on the Three Gorges dam begins. It will create a reservoir almost 375 miles long, displace upwards of 1.3 million people, and submerge dozens of cultural heritage sites by the time it is completed in 2009.

1994 - China abolishes the official renminbi (RMB) currency exchange rate and fixes its first floating rate since 1949.

1995 - China tests missiles and holds military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, apparently to intimidate Taiwan during its first democratic presidential elections held in 1996.

1996 - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - dubbed the Shanghai Five - meet in Shanghai and agree to cooperate to combat ethnic and religious tensions in each others' countries.

1997 - Deng Xiaoping dies, aged 92. Rioting erupts in Yining, Xinjiang and on day of Deng's funeral Xinjiang separatists plant three bombs on buses in Urumqi, Xinjiang, killing nine and injuring 74.

Hong Kong reverts to Chinese control.

1998 - Zhu Rongji succeeds Li Peng as premier, announces reforms in the wake of the Asian financial crisis and continued deceleration of the economy. Thousands of state-owned enterprises are to be restructured through amalgamations, share flotations and bankruptcies. About four million civil service jobs are terminated.

Large-scale flooding of the Yangtse, Songhua and Nenjiang rivers.

1999 - NATO bombs the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, souring Sino-US relations.

Falun Gong, a quasi-religious sect, outlawed as a threat to stability after staging a 15,000 member rally in Tiananmen Square on April 27.

Fiftieth anniversary of People's Republic of China on October 1st.

Macao reverts to Chinese rule.

2000 - Crackdown on official corruption intensifies, with the execution of a former deputy chairman of the National People's Congress for taking bribes.

Bomb explosion kills up to 60 in Urumqi, Xinjiang.

2001 April - Diplomatic stand-off over the detention of an American spy plane and crew after a mid-air collision with a Chinese fighter jet on Hainan Island.

2001 June - Leaders of China, Russia and four Central Asian states launch the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and sign an agreement to fight ethnic and religious militancy while promoting trade and investment. The group emerges when the Shanghai Five - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - are joined by Uzbekistan.

2001 June - China carries out military exercises simulating an invasion of Taiwan, at the same time as the island's armed forces test their capability to defend Taiwan against a missile attack from China.

2001 November - China joins the World Trade Organization.

2002 February - US President George W Bush visits, on the 30th anniversary of President Nixon's visit to China - the first by a US president.

2002 July - The US says China is modernizing its military to make possible a forcible reunification with Taiwan. Beijing says its policy remains defensive.

2002 November - Vice-President Hu Jintao is named head of the ruling Communist Party, replacing Jiang Zemin, the outgoing president. Jiang is re-elected head of the influential Central Military Commission, which oversees the armed forces.

2003 March - National People's Congress elects Hu Jintao as president. He replaces Jiang Zemin, who steps down after 10 years in the post.

2003 March-April - China and Hong Kong are hit by the pneumonia-like SARS virus, thought to have originated in Guangdong province in November 2002. Strict quarantine measures are enforced to stop the disease spreading.

2003 June - Sluice gates on Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower scheme, are closed to allow the reservoir to fill up.

2003 June - Hong Kong is declared free of SARS. Days later the World Health Organization lifts its SARS-related travel warning for Beijing.

2003 June - China, India reach de facto agreement over status of Tibet and Sikkim in landmark cross-border trade agreement.

2003 July/August - Some 500,000 people march in Hong Kong against Article 23, a controversial anti-subversion bill. Two key Hong Kong government officials resign. The government shelve the bill.

2003 October - Launch of China's first manned spacecraft: Astronaut Yang Liwei is sent into space by a Long March 2F rocket.

2004 September - Former president Jiang Zemin stands down as army chief, three years ahead of schedule.

2004 November - China signs a landmark trade agreement with 10 south-east Asian countries; the accord could eventually unite 25% of the world's population in a free-trade zone.

2005 January - Former reformist leader Zhao Ziyang dies. He opposed violent measures to end 1989's student protests and spent his last years under virtual house arrest.

Aircraft chartered for the Lunar New Year holiday make the first direct flights between China and Taiwan since 1949.

2005 March - Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa resigns. He is succeeded in June by Donald Tsang.

New policy law towards Taiwan calls for use of force should Taipei declare independence from mainland China.

2005 April - Relations with Japan deteriorate amid sometimes-violent anti-Japanese protests in Chinese cities, sparked by a Japanese textbook which China says glosses over Japan's World War II record.

Taiwan's National Party leader Lien Chan visits China for the first meeting between Nationalist and Communist Party leaders since 1949.

2005 August - China and Russia hold their first joint military exercises.

2005 October - China conducts its second manned space flight, with two astronauts circling Earth in the Shenzhou VI capsule.

2005 November - Explosion at a chemical plant poisons the Songhua river, cutting off water supplies to millions of people.

2006 May - Work on the structure of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower project, is completed.

2006 July - New China-Tibet railway line, the world's highest train route, begins operating.

2006 August - Official news agency says 18 million people are affected by what it describes as the country's worst drought in 50 years.

2006 November - African heads of state gather for a China-Africa summit in Beijing. Business deals worth nearly \$2bn are signed and China promises billions of dollars in loans and credits.

Government says pollution has degraded China's environment to a critical level, threatening health and social stability.

2007 January - Reports say China has carried out a missile test in space, shooting down an old weather satellite. The US, Japan and others express concern at China's military build-up.

2007 February - President Hu Jintao tours eight African countries to boost trade and investment. Western rights groups criticize China for dealing with corrupt or abusive regimes such as The Sudan.

2007 April - During a landmark visit, Wen Jiabao becomes the first Chinese prime minister to address Japan's parliament. Both sides agree to try to iron out differences over their shared history.

2007 June - New labor law introduced after hundreds of men and boys were found working as slaves in brick factories.

2007 July - China's food and drug agency chief is executed for taking bribes. Food and drug scandals have sparked international fears about the safety of Chinese exports.

2007 September - A new Roman Catholic bishop of Beijing is consecrated - the first for over 50 years to have the tacit approval of the Pope.

2007 October - China launches its first moon orbiter.

2008 January - The worst snowstorms in decades are reported to have affected up to 100 million people.

2008 March - Anti-Han protests escalate into the worst violence the Tibetan region has seen in 20 years, five months before Beijing hosts the Olympic Games.

Pro-Tibet activists in several countries focus world attention on the region by disrupting progress of the Olympic torch relay.

2008 May - A massive earthquake hits Sichuan province, killing tens of thousands.

2008 June - China and Taiwan agree to set up offices in each other's territory at the first formal bilateral talks since 1999.

Japan and China reach a deal for the joint development of a gas field in the East China Sea, resolving a four-year-old dispute.

2008 July - China and Russia sign a treaty ending 40-year-old border dispute which led to armed clashes during the Cold War.

2008 August - Beijing hosts Olympic Games.

2008 September - Astronaut Zhai Zhigang completes China's first spacewalk during the country's third manned space mission, Shenzhou VII.

Nearly 53,000 Chinese children fall ill after drinking tainted milk, leading Premier Wen Jiabao to apologise for the scandal.

2008 November - The government announces a \$586bn (£370bn) stimulus package to avoid the economy slowing. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao says the effect of the global financial crisis on China is worse than expected.

2009 February - Russia and China sign \$25bn deal to supply China with oil for next 20 years in exchange for loans.

Hillary Clinton calls for deeper US-China partnership on first overseas tour as Secretary of State.

2009 March - Chinese official reveals plans to step up patrols in disputed waters in South China Sea to combat illegal fishing and ward off other countries' "unfounded claims".

China's central bank calls for new global reserve currency run by International Monetary Fund to replace the US dollar.

China denies any involvement in alleged electronic spy network affecting government computers around the world.

2009 July - Scores of people are killed and hundreds injured in the worst ethnic violence in decades as a protest in the restive Xinjiang region turns violent.

First sign of relaxation of strictly enforced one-child policy, as officials in Shanghai urge parents to have a second child in effort to counter effects of ageing population.

Leaders of China and Taiwan exchange direct messages for the first time in more than 60 years.

2009 October - China stages mass celebrations to mark 60 years since the Communist Party came to power.

Six men are sentenced to death for involvement in ethnic violence in Xinjiang.