

**CHINESE SOCIETY IN 2017:
UNDER TIGHTENED AND
“SMART” CONTROL**

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Executive Summary

1. The year 2017 was generally a “stable” year for China, with no major violent incidents or large-scale social unrest.
2. To guarantee a “successful” 19th Congress of the Communist Party held in October 2017, the regime had mobilised all its resources to maintain stability all year long.
3. With sophisticated internet censorship and artificial intelligence and big data technology, social control mechanism in China has been becoming “smarter” and more effective.
4. The year featured unprecedented tight control of cyberspace. A new regulation has been enforced to forbid new social media apps from conducting news reporting. Group chat owners are required to monitor and censor chats in their group.
5. Foreign companies in China must store their big data in the country and allow data surveillance by the government. Software that could bypass the Great Firewall has been completely banned.
6. A “social credit code system” is under construction to record each Chinese citizen’s financial, social and political behaviour with big data and artificial intelligence technology.
7. The role of the Communist Party in private enterprises and foreign companies has also been strengthened. Foreign companies are now under pressure to allow the party to have more say in their business decisions.
8. A major reform in the security apparatus has taken place. The paramilitary armed police, which previously could be deployed by local leaders to handle social unrest, now reports only to the Central Military Commission, or Xi Jinping himself.
9. Overall, the Chinese government has been working on a more sophisticated social control system and a “smart” authoritarian regime with the help of new technology.

So far the system has been quite successful in maintaining social stability. In the long term, however, the regime may face challenges due to value changes in society.