Introduction

The year 2008 can be said to be a pivotal year for China, a year in which the country is challenged not only with the Summer Olympic Games, but also with the ‘coming-of-age’ of the Communist Party of China. The year also marks the 30th anniversary of the country’s economic reform, which began in earnest in 1978, after the third plenum session of the 11th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, held in Beijing. The decisions made at that historic meeting changed both China and the world. Under the pragmatic leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China opened its doors and marched into a new era. As noted by Sull (2005), the successful yet bumpy reform drive can be divided into two periods: (1) economic liberalization (1978–89), and (2) the resumption of growth after Tiananmen Square (1992 to the present). Over the past three decades, the transition from a planned to a market economy has unleashed an extraordinary series of changes in China: private enterprises have sprouted, foreign investment has soared, the standard of living has improved, regional disparities have grown, the urban–rural divide has widened, and, by some standards, the level of corruption has increased (Alon and McIntyre, 2008).

Another result of economic reform has been the creation of a new class – China’s new business elite – which includes private property owners, former government officials, factory directors, village leaders, and professional and technocratic managers. These so-called first-generation modern Chinese entrepreneurs have become the elite driving economic progress. One epoch that many of today’s business leaders and entrepreneurs had to live through was the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), but despite their suffering during the ten-year turmoil, many of today’s business leaders have risen to the top on the basis of their intelligence, determination and business acumen. A few have built on their political and social connections (also called *guanxi*), on questionable dealings and/or have achieved success through other illegitimate means.

Since the 1990s, when the government reaffirmed its commitment to market reform while still retaining political control, a new generation of Chinese entrepreneurs has emerged. These new entrepreneurs are not only better educated than their forebears, but are also globally ambitious and have a firm understanding of China’s position in the global economy. These notable business leaders and players have reshaped the country’s economic landscape, and have begun to play a more active role in the social and political arenas as well. As agents of change, their actions will have a profound impact on China and the rest of the world in years to come.

This is the first book of its kind to review, summarize and compile extensive biographical information on a list of important business and economic leaders and entrepreneurs in China. Surprisingly, despite their undoubted influence, very little can be found about the lives of these individuals in typical reference publications. What information there is tends to be scattered across a variety of sources and media, such as newspapers, magazines, web pages, journals, and scholarly books that may not be readily accessible. Much of the available data is in Chinese, making wide accessibility difficult.

China’s rising global influence has inspired increasing interest in the study of the country’s economy and the fast-growing class of Chinese entrepreneurs. Among the

recent English titles are Sull's *Made in China: What Western Managers Can Learn from Trailblazing Chinese Entrepreneurs*, Dickson's *Red Capitalists in China: The Party, Private Entrepreneurs, and Prospects for Political Change*, and Pearson's *China's New Business Elite: The Political Consequences of Economic Reform*. A large number of academic researches have also been conducted on Chinese entrepreneurship and reports published in scholarly journals and conference papers. For example, Xiang and Teng (2007) classified Chinese entrepreneurs into three generations: the first was in the manufacturing sector, the second was concerned with the service sector and business model innovation, and the third undertook the consolidation of global resources; Li and Yeh (2007) examined Mao's pervasive influence on Chinese CEOs; and Li (2005) studied the Chinese young and urban yuppie executives. Our current compilation of information on Chinese business leaders and entrepreneurs is more extensive, descriptive and personal than any of the previous published research. We also reviewed the career and life of some among the business elite who had great influence, but later failed to meet the regulatory or political structures to sustain their position. Some have ended their careers in jail.

As a biographical dictionary, this book focuses exclusively on business leaders and key figures in modern China. The book strives to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive coverage of major players in the Chinese economy since the reform era began in 1978, highlighting notable individuals from both the initial economic liberalization period and the period of renewed growth from the early 1990s to the present time. With a core emphasis on the movers and shakers of China's new economy, the selection criteria were based mainly on people's roles in the larger economic development of China, and were less concerned with the positions that individuals may hold at a particular moment. Thus we include executives of manufacturing powerhouses such as Zhang Ruimin of Haier Group, township entrepreneurs such as Wu Renbao of Huaxi village, powerful individuals such as media mogul Wang Zhongjun of Huayi Brothers, and directors of China's high-tech start-ups such as Liu Chuanzhi of Lenovo. Besides successful executives, the book also includes some influential Chinese economists such as Li Yining of Peking University and Fan Gang of Tsinghua University, and high-ranking business officials such as Li Jinhua and Zhou Xiaochuan. Representing not only large state-owned enterprises and collective companies but also private firms, joint ventures and family operations, the subjects range from Chinese business pioneers and veteran businessmen to innovators and new urban elites, covering the full spectrum of the Chinese economy from banking, finance and investment, real estate, transportation and infrastructure, to manufacturing, telecommunication, media, agriculture, automobile, pharmaceutical, food, trade, service, and retail industries.

With a geographic focus on mainland China, the majority of the subjects are mainland Chinese, although a few people from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia who conduct significant business in the People's Republic of China are also included, such as Wang Yung-Ching of Formosa Plastics Corporation. In addition, a very few high-profile government officials are included in the dictionary as well, such as vice premier Wu Yi and former commerce minister Bo Xilai, because of the key roles they played in the development of the Chinese economy. While a few individuals have been selected for their historical contributions, such as Rong Yiren of CITIC, the vast majority of the subjects are alive and still active in Chinese economic reforms. Furthermore, the editors

made special efforts not to shun controversial figures whose actions have had profound impacts on the Chinese economy, even though they are either out of power or ran into trouble with the law, such as Lai Changxing of the Yuanhua Group. It is our genuine hope that readers and users of the dictionary will therefore gain a comprehensive understanding of the turbulent and ever-changing nature of Chinese economic development over the past 30 years. Precisely because of this constant changing of the Chinese economic landscape, however, it is very likely that we have omitted some individuals who arguably belong in this type of dictionary. While this work is breakthrough in its breadth and scope, future editions are likely to consider other influential business leaders worth covering.

The dictionary is the result of collaborative efforts across the globe. Over 40 scholars from the United States, mainland China and Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Norway, Israel, and Malaysia contributed over 200 entries. Depending on the importance and complexity of the individual entry, contributions are roughly 400–1000 words in length, both briefly summarizing an individual's life and career, with a central focus on his or her accomplishments and the key roles played in the new Chinese economy. Sources are provided at the end of each entry. The book is arranged in alphabetical order by the last names of the subjects. It should be noted that all Chinese personal names in the dictionary are listed following the East Asian custom, with family name first, followed by the given name (for example, Deng Xiaoping). For typical Westerners, the romanization of Chinese words has generated confusing variations in spelling over recent decades. This book follows the current common practice by listing all personal and place names in the standard Chinese Pinyin system, except for people from Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas, whose names are spelled following the traditional Wade-Giles system or their preferred Western names (for example, Li Ka Shing). When a company uses an alternative spelling in their official English language documents, we adopt the company's preferred spelling. For clarification and cross-reference purposes, Chinese names are provided in both the contents list and individual entries.

It is a daunting task to compile a biographical dictionary of business people from the world's most populous country while the nation is still undergoing rapid and unprecedented economic development. In consideration of the swift changes in China's economic landscapes, we will make rigorous efforts to update and revise the dictionary in subsequent editions.

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