

New book shows global audience China through Xi's eyes

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A worker from the Foreign Languages Press puts the second volume of Chinese President Xi Jinping's book "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China" in order, in Beijing, capital of China, Nov. 7, 2017. The second volume of Chinese President Xi Jinping's book on governance has been published in both Chinese and English, the publisher said Tuesday. (Xinhua/Chen Yehua)

BEIJING, Nov. 22 (Xinhua) -- Inside a spacious factory building in the southern outskirts of Beijing, printing machines have been roaring and running around the clock for two weeks to publish a new book by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"About 500 of us workers have been working extra hours since Nov. 4," said Zhao Qing, an employee at Beijing Shengtong Printing.

The company was contracted to print 1 million copies of the second volume of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China," a collection of 99 of Xi's speeches, conversations, instructions and letters, as well as 29 photos of the Chinese leader from between Aug. 18, 2014 and Sept. 29, 2017.

Since the Chinese and English versions of the book hit the market on Nov. 7, major bookstores in Beijing, including those in the city's busiest shopping areas of Wangfujing and Xidan, have displayed them prominently.

"The first print run is about 5.46 million copies," said Xu Bu, president and chief editor of Foreign Languages Press, the book's publisher. "In the past few days, orders have flooded in and we expect more to come."

Sales are likely to exceed those of the first book, which was published in September 2014 and has sold about 6.6 million copies worldwide in 24 languages.

In addition to Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Arabic, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese versions from the Chinese publisher, another 15 languages versions of the first book were translated and published by local publishing houses, with Chinese editors supervising the final draft.

Cooperation with local publishers helped make the book suitable for diverse cultures and traditions, Xu said.

"Such a global promotion plan is rare for books by Chinese leaders. The second volume will follow suit," he said.

According to Xu, Foreign Languages Press has worked with international publishing house Lagardere Services to distribute the book through bookshops at major international airports and will promote it through Chinese embassies and other Chinese organizations abroad.

"We would also like to attract foreign readers who live in China or travel here," he added.

Although they have the same title and almost identical covers, the second volume comes at a different time -- "a new era."

For David Ferguson, English editor of both books with Foreign Languages Press, the fundamental difference is that the second volume has been brought under a single overarching philosophy: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

"Western audience sometimes do not quite understand how important aphorisms and axioms are in Chinese political discourse," he said. "When a Chinese leader comes up with a new idea, it matters to everybody in the Party and the wider society."

Citing the subtle difference between "for a new era" and "in a new era," Ferguson said that the former suggests China is in control, while the latter indicates that it is reacting to something imposed by external forces.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn, U.S. expert on China studies and chairman of the Kuhn Foundation, shared Ferguson's observation about China's political discourse, noting that articulation between theory and practice in China is greater than other major countries.

"A founding theory of the Party is needed to develop certain specific policies that emerge out of it," he said.

The two books by Xi have offered outsiders a resource to understand China's new guiding philosophy.

"Within the books, you can see the historical development of Xi's idea," Kuhn said. "You can see it inducing itself as these ideas come together, building up to what has been crystallized as Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era."

The two books give readers "a rich exemplification" of the specific elements that compose the thought, Kuhn added.

"The new book is not only well received by our institutional clients but by many ordinary readers," said Xu Jin, employee at the Beijing Xidan Book Building.

"I am touched by General Secretary Xi Jinping's words in this book. I find some of his expressions appealing, and the language he uses is charming, gentle and approachable," a college student surnamed Lyu told Xinhua at the Xidan bookstore.

Although the two books are mostly collections of Xi's speeches and written instructions, they are organized by topic and include only the most important articles or the most essential excerpts, with footnotes helping foreign readers to understand the cultural context, according to editors.

"The main reason why foreigners should read these books is that they are the first time that a Chinese leader has sought to capture his whole philosophy and communicate it to the international audience in so many languages," Ferguson said. "There is everything you need to know about where China is now and where China is trying to go."

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