

善治



多边主义



公共外交



主权



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# THE DECODING CHINA DICTIONARY

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EDITED BY MALIN OUD AND KATJA DRINHAUSEN

## **The Decoding China Dictionary**

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# INTERPRETING CHINA IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DIPLOMACY

China's new position as a major global power is having a profound impact on international relations and global governance. China has long abandoned its previous foreign policy of "keeping a low profile and biding one's time", instead becoming an active international actor and norm entrepreneur. European public and civil-society actors encounter China at every turn. The country has become a major player in the global development sphere through both aid and development-focused investment.<sup>1</sup> All major international NGOs are active in countries that are part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is also an increasingly important security actor.

China's growing economic and political power has spurred a debate in the West about how best to engage with the country on a range of issues, from human rights to climate cooperation, science innovation and nuclear non-proliferation. The European Union sees China as a necessary partner in addressing global challenges such as climate change, global health and reducing global inequalities, but also views it as a "strategic competitor" and a "systemic rival".<sup>2</sup> A central conundrum for policy-makers in liberal democracies is that, while four decades of "reform and opening up" has transformed China from an impoverished nation into the

world's second largest economy, the country has shown no inclinations to embark on political reform but remains an authoritarian one-party state.

Unfortunately, Europe's recognition of China's rise to global-power status has not been matched by much investment in knowledge about the country. An article by *The Economist* from November 2020 queried whether democracies can compete with China without understanding it and warned of a "gradual hollowing out" of expertise on the country.<sup>3</sup> The numbers of students taking Chinese languages or area studies at universities are falling, and European diplomats and policy-makers who are proficient in Chinese are as rare today as they were thirty years ago.

That expertise is needed more than ever. Chinese ideas are increasingly making their way into UN documents, where international norms and principles such as the rule of law, human rights and democracy are imbued with new meaning and "Chinese characteristics". Chinese diplomats often lament that the West misunderstands China. President and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed the importance of "telling China's story well" and boosting its voice in order to "create a favourable climate of international public opinion".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A., Dreher, A., Fuchs, B., Parks, A., M. Strange, M., J. Tierney, 'Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset', *Aiddata*, 2017, <https://www.aiddata.org/publications/aid-china-and-growth-evidence-from-a-new-global-development-finance-dataset>

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, High Representative of The Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 'EU-China – A strategic outlook', *Publications Office of the European Union*, 2019, [https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/external-investment-plan/34728/eu-china-relations-factsheet\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/external-investment-plan/34728/eu-china-relations-factsheet_en)

<sup>3</sup> The Economist, 'As China's power waxes, the West's study of it is waning', *The Economist*, 26 November 2020, <https://www.economist.com/china/2020/11/26/as-chinas-power-waxes-the-wests-study-of-it-is-waning>

<sup>4</sup> People's Daily, '不断提升中华文化影响力——论学习贯彻习近平总书记在全国宣传思想工作会议重要讲话精神' ['Continuously improving the influence of Chinese culture: Studying and implementing the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speech at the National Propaganda and Ideological Work

The Chinese government spends significant efforts both internationally and domestically on promoting a “correct understanding” of China, i.e. one aligned with the Chinese Party-State's priorities.

The Chinese leadership strives to present the PRC as a benevolent and responsible international power, a champion of fair multilateralism and a leader of the developing world.<sup>5</sup> China's discourse of peace, development and democracy is framed around the notion of a global anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle, which positions China as a developing country in the Global South that is challenging the hegemony of the Global North. This debate is not new at the UN, where member states have been divided along different ideological north, south, east and west lines since its founding in 1945. When human rights concerns are raised, China accuses its critics of “politicization” and of having an “imperialist” or “Cold War mentality”. Instead it calls for democracy at the UN, respect for China's right to development, and mutually beneficial cooperation over “shared interests”.

A notable difference can be discerned in the messaging for domestic audiences compared to what occurs on the international stage. For example, in his recent statements at the UN General Assembly in 2020 and at the World Economic Forum in 2021, Xi Jinping called for the world to “join hands to uphold the values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy

and freedom shared by all of us and build a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind.”<sup>6</sup> By contrast, in an article in the Party's leading theoretical journal *Qiushi* in 2019, Xi Jinping stated that China “must never follow the path of Western ‘constitutionalism,’ ‘separation of powers,’ or ‘judicial independence’”. Instead, Xi said, China should follow its own path and “be adept at using law when participating in international affairs. In the struggle against foreign powers, we must take legal weapons, occupy the high ground of the rule of law [...]. We must actively participate in the formulation of international rules and act as participant, promoter, and leader during the changing process of global governance.”<sup>7</sup>

A similar ambiguity of treatment becomes apparent in a deeper reading of Chinese official sources. While ostensibly invoking the same concepts of freedom, democracy, rule of law and human rights, there are fundamental differences in the definitions and underlying political priorities and social values of these concepts in liberal democracies compared to China. While there is common ground with regard to strengthening legal predictability, effective governance and sustainability, the Chinese leadership prioritizes Party-State stability as a collective interest, legitimizing even repressive measures. For example, the crackdowns in Xinjiang and Hong Kong are routinely

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Conference’]  
<http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0902/c40531-30266428.html>

<sup>5</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘China remains a responsible power around the world, says Chinese FM’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 23 October 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/23/c\\_138497103.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/23/c_138497103.htm)

<sup>6</sup> See for example the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, ‘Xi Jinping Delivers an Important Speech at the General Debate of the

75th Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly’, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, 22 September, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1817766.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1817766.shtml)

<sup>7</sup> Xi Jinping, ‘加强党对全面依法治国的领导’ [‘Strengthen the Party's leadership over comprehensive rule by law’], *Qiushi*, April 2019, [http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2019-02/15/c\\_1124114454.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2019-02/15/c_1124114454.htm)

framed in terms of human rights protection and good governance.<sup>8</sup>

This conceptual framing is no coincidence, but the outcome of coordinated initiatives by the Chinese leadership to develop China's own discursive system and to build its discursive power.<sup>9</sup> Domestically, the Chinese government has always paid close attention to propaganda and how to “do things with words”.<sup>10</sup> The influx of Western liberal values in the 1980s, such as democracy and human rights, were seen as a root cause of the protests of 1989 and a threat to the survival of the CCP. China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping stated in a speech in 1989 that he considered insufficient ideological and political education to be the biggest reform failure of the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> But the long-term approach taken by the Party-State was not the blanket repression of terms, but rather integrating them into the CCP's ideological canon and redefining them in a way that makes them harmless to its claim on power.

Many of the concepts discussed in this “Decoding China Dictionary” project filtered into the Chinese official CCP language in the decades of “reform and opening” that commenced in 1979, were accelerated after Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour in 1992, and laid the

ground for China's accession to the WTO in 2001. When Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, it was hoped that a further convergence of values and systems would occur. And indeed, the term human rights was introduced in the Chinese Constitution in 2004, hailed as a new era of constitutional rights protection.<sup>12</sup> Democracy, freedom and the rule of law are now part of the canon of core socialist values being promoted under Xi Jinping.

At the same time, these concepts have undergone a major revamp to make them compatible with the CCP's political and ideological system. Under Xi, measures to define and safeguard a Chinese value system not reliant on liberal ideas have intensified. Document No. 9, issued by the party leadership in 2013, was a mission statement to guard against constitutional democracy, universal values and civil society in their liberal sense.<sup>13</sup> The concern that liberal or “Western” values are a threat to China's unity and political stability is equally reflected in a set of security-related laws and regulations introduced in the last decade, most recently the Hong Kong National Security Law.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, China's economic success and role as a motor of global growth in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and, most recently, the

<sup>8</sup> See for example: ‘The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang’, *china.org.cn*, [http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node\\_8011005.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_8011005.htm)

Xinhua News Agency, ‘National security law to boost good governance in Hong Kong: experts’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 9 July 2020, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/09/c\\_139200480.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/09/c_139200480.htm)

<sup>9</sup> M., Ohlberg, ‘Boosting The Party's Voice, China's quest for global ideological dominance’, MERICS Mercator Institute for China Studies, 2016, [https://merics.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/China\\_Monitor\\_34\\_Ideological\\_dominance\\_EN.pdf](https://merics.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/China_Monitor_34_Ideological_dominance_EN.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> M., Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies*, Center for Chinese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992

<sup>11</sup> Zhen Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, 2012, Columbia University Press, p.96

<sup>12</sup> State Council Information Office, ‘Progress in Human Rights over the 40 Years of Reform and Opening Up in China’, 13 December 2018, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/37884/Document/1643472/1643472.htm>

<sup>13</sup> ChinaFile, ‘Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation, How Much Is a Hardline Party Directive Shaping China's Current Political Climate?’, *ChinaFile*, 8 November 2013, <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>

<sup>14</sup> Global Times, ‘US 'black hands' behind HK education shows need for national security law’, 17 April 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1185959.shtml>



Covid-19 pandemic has boosted confidence in China and its governance system as an alternative and superior model. As Xi Jinping [has called for](#) on numerous occasions since 2013, the “ecosystem” of “Chinese values” discussed in this dictionary is increasingly being promoted internationally, most prominently the concept of “a community of shared destiny for mankind” (人类命运共同体).<sup>15</sup> The foreign-policy concept of “shared destiny” had a mixed global reception when it was first introduced in 2013, which is likely why later official Chinese translations into English refer to a “shared future” rather than the more evocative “shared destiny”.<sup>16</sup> As the CCP’s centenary on July 1 approaches, the global outreach to communicate a correct understanding of the party and its role in the world will only intensify. A new campaign was just kicked off to instill a correct and positive understanding of the history of the party and the PRC. The campaign calls for proper ideological work when facing changes and challenges in the global arena.<sup>17</sup>

While the space for international exchange and cooperation within China declined after the [passing of the Foreign NGO law](#) in 2017, there are more opportunities for cooperation in third countries and international organizations.<sup>18</sup> Chinese institutions and non-governmental organisations are “going global.” Among these organisations, there is a wide spectrum of state, private-sector and civil-society

actors with different interests that align sometimes more, sometimes less, with official positions. Yet, they are also tasked with strengthening China’s “discourse power” and defending its “right to speak”. Some of the most prominent Chinese organizations on the global stage are closely affiliated with the Chinese state and better characterized as GONGOs (government-organised NGOs). But also, more independent social actors and NGOs often frame their work in accordance with officially sanctioned terms and CCP priorities.

This “Decoding China Dictionary” was developed with the aim of providing policy-makers and practitioners with a simple and practical tool to help them decipher the official Chinese narrative, or “[New China Newspeak](#)”.<sup>19</sup> To enable informed engagement with their Chinese counterparts, European actors need to be able to understand the official Chinese meaning of frequently invoked concepts and key terms in international relations and development cooperation. Despite widely different understandings of these concepts, they are frequently referred to as if they had fixed, normative meanings. China’s rise as a global power in a multipolar world means increasing competition over international values and standards. The rules-based world order and multilateralism rely on a global consensus on what the norms underpinning the international system entail. When the meaning of terms like the rule of law, human rights,

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<sup>15</sup> F., Guo, ‘当代中国价值观念的文化自信’ [‘Cultural self-confidence in China’s contemporary value system’], *Xinhua News Agency*, 5 August 2015, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-08/05/c\\_128096228.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-08/05/c_128096228.htm)

<sup>16</sup> E. Zhou, ‘Xi Jinping, Headline Columnist’, *China Media Project*, 20 January 2021, <https://chinamediaproject.org/2021/01/20/xi-jinping-headline-columnist/>

<sup>17</sup> China Daily, ‘Xi calls for efforts to study Party history’, *China Daily*, 22 February 2021,

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202102/22/WS6030f76ea31024ad0baa9f21.html>

<sup>18</sup> ChinaFile, ‘Fact Sheet on China’s Foreign NGO Law’, *ChinaFile*, 1 November 2017, <https://www.chinafile.com/ngo/latest/fact-sheet-chinas-foreign-ngo-law>

<sup>19</sup> G., R. Barmé, ‘On New China Newspeak’, *China Heritage*, 9 January 2018, <http://chinaheritage.net/journal/on-new-china-newspeak/>

democracy and sovereignty become blurred, international norms are undermined.

The idea for this dictionary came from discussions at a roundtable event entitled “Engaging with China: Challenges and the Way Forward in Higher Education, Human Rights and Public Diplomacy”, organised in Stockholm in 2019. The intended users of the dictionary are policy-makers and institutions in Europe who are engaged in dialogue and exchanges with China. Co-authored by a group of China specialists, the dictionary tackles a selection of frequently used terms with widely different interpretations between EU member states and China in both how they are defined and their underlying political priorities and values. It is our hope that this dictionary will serve as a point of reference for strategy development and communication with Chinese counterparts. As the dictionary is a living document, we welcome comments and suggestions for how it can be improved and developed further.

Although focused on Party-State discourse, the evolution of these concepts within China also tells a story

of contestation and different views on many of these terms and associated practices. In this context, it deserves to be mentioned that the Chinese philosopher and diplomat Peng-Chun Chang, then Vice-Chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights, played an instrumental role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>20</sup> The dictionary does not attempt to introduce the reader to the wealth of Chinese scholarship and debates on these issues, which is both rich and diverse. We have, however, included a list of English-language references and resources for the reader who would like to learn more about different Chinese perspectives on these ideas and concepts.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the sinologists and decoding experts whose work has informed and inspired this project. We have included some key works in the list of references and thank Courtney Fung, Isabel Hilton, Eva Pils, Nadège Rolland, Joshua Rosenzweig and Marina Svensson for their insightful, generous and encouraging comments on our drafts.

**Malin Oud and Katja Drinhausen**

Stockholm and Berlin

3 March 2021

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<sup>20</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld Library, ‘Drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, *Dag Hammarskjöld Library*, 2019, <https://research.un.org/en/undhr/draftingcommittee>





**CIVIL SOCIETY**  
公民社会

# CIVIL SOCIETY

## 公民社会

Katja Drinhausen

### BRIEF

Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution grants Chinese citizens the right to freedom of assembly and association. The language is strikingly similar to Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which sets the precondition for the development of a civil society comprised of non-governmental organizations, which the [EU defines as](#) “all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the state”.<sup>21</sup> This independence is not to be found in China, as it would contravene the overarching political maxim that the CCP leads in respect of everything codified in Article 1 of the Chinese Constitution. This principle is reflected in both vocabulary and types of actors. The Chinese leadership has never embraced the term “civil society” in domestic political communication. Despite the proliferation of private-run NGOs and foundations since the 1980s, party- and government-organized organizations (GONGO) still play a major role. The policy focus has been on regulating this growing sector and making sure all social organizations (社会组织) are supervised and tied to party and state organs. They are meant to form a cooperative relationship with the government and serve the state’s policy agenda, rather than being independent actors.

### ANALYSIS

Xi Jinping has stressed that [social organizations should participate in all aspects of social affairs](#) as part of a new innovative approach to governing society.<sup>22</sup> Yet one would be hard-pressed to find Xi or any other high-ranking official talking about “civil society” (公民社会 / 民间社会), as the concept has never gained a hold in official discourse. Although official organizations may use the term “civil society” in international communications, the Party-State’s view on this is clear: its vision is for a [state-guided civil society](#).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> EUR-Lex, ‘Civil Society Organisation’, *EUR-Lex*,

<sup>22</sup> L., Qing, ‘习近平总书记创新社会治理的新理念新思想’ [‘Secretary-general Xi Jinpings new concepts and thoughts for the creation of a new form of social governance’], *people.cn*, 17 August 2017, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0817/c83859-29476974.html>

<sup>23</sup> Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, ‘关于改革社会组织管理制度促进社会组织健康有序发展的意见’ [‘Opinion on reforming the governance system of social organizations, in order to promote healthy and the orderly development of social organizations’], *Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China*, 21 August 2016, [http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2016/content\\_5106178.htm](http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2016/content_5106178.htm)

Before the policy of reform and China's opening kicked off in the 1980s, the major party-led people's organizations such as the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and party-led grassroots organizations, dominated the field. These still play a prominent role today, essentially having a monopoly on a range of issues and nationwide coordination. The establishment of [independent labour unions](#) or religious organizations is still off limits.<sup>24</sup>



However, the rise of modernization of the early 1990s led to a host of social issues and a rising demand for services and self-organization where the state had retreated. Civil society has been growing in China, though the composition of its actors has shifted. NGOs and private foundations now play an increasingly important role within the country and abroad.

The late 2000s and early 2010s saw the rapid professionalization of advocacy work, a proliferation of human rights lawyers, and cooperation with international actors. Internet and social media provided a platform for cross-regional and thematic networking. This triggered concerns that civil society might emerge as a threat to regime stability. As [Document No. 9](#) stated: “For the past few years, the idea of civil society has been adopted by Western anti-China forces [...]”<sup>25</sup>

The mid- to late 2010s were then marked by repeated crackdowns, especially on rights-advocacy organizations. Legal and institutional reforms focused on reining in self-organization and bringing a sector that had largely developed outside the CCP's control back under its guidance. The primary goal today is to mobilize and guide social resources and actors to achieve the CCP's agenda, with the government procuring services from societal actors (政府购买社会服务).

It is a tight embrace: non-state-affiliated NGOs require supervision by a state organization. Compliance is monitored through rating systems. Since 2015, there has

<sup>24</sup> China Labour Bulletin, 'Workers' rights and labour relations in China', *China Labour Bulletin*, 13 August 2020, <https://clb.org.hk/content/workers%E2%80%99-rights-and-labour-relations-china>

<sup>25</sup> ChinaFile, 'Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation, How Much Is a Hardline Party Directive Shaping China's Current Political Climate?', *ChinaFile*, 8 November 2013, <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>

been an ongoing [campaign to establish party cells](#) in and ensure party members are recruited to social organizations to tie them to the Party-State and communicate its expectations to them.<sup>26</sup> This has been accompanied by strict regulation of international actors.

The [Foreign NGO Law](#), in effect since January 2017, placed foreign NGOs under a dual-supervision system by a state supervisory unit and the public security administration.<sup>27</sup> The *National Security Law for Hong Kong* has further dampened international exchanges and cooperation since coming into effect on July 1, 2020 by introducing the highly ambiguous offense of "collusion" with foreign actors. At the UN, China is [working to limit the role of NGOs](#) in line with its view of the state as the sole representative of social interests.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Office of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, '关于加强社会组织党的建设工作的意见' [Opinion on strengthening the establishment of party cells in social organizations], *people.cn*, 29 September 2015, <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n/2015/0929/c117092-27645046.html>

<sup>27</sup> ChinaFile, 'Fact Sheet on China's Foreign NGO Law', *ChinaFile*, 1 November 2017, <https://www.chinafile.com/ngo/latest/fact-sheet-chinas-foreign-ngo-law>

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'The Costs of International Advocacy, China's Interference in United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms', *Human Rights Watch*, 5 September 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/05/costs-international-advocacy/chinas-interference-united-nations-human-rights#>



COOPERATION  
合作

# COOPERATION

## 合作

Marina Rudyak

### BRIEF

“Building a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation” is the core of Xi Jinping’s thoughts on diplomacy.<sup>29</sup> “Win-win cooperation” (合作共赢) is presented as an alternative to the prevailing “old” (i.e. Western-dominated) type of international relations, which top Chinese diplomats see as dominated by a Cold War mentality and confrontational zero-sum game thinking. China argues that, instead, cooperation should respect the “diversity of cultures of development paths”, while international affairs should be handled through “policy coordination” on the basis of shared or common interests. Cooperation should be “mutually beneficial” and contribute to “common development”. While in the UN’s discourse cooperation is understood as a means of pursuing an *existing* common goal, contemporary Chinese political thought views cooperation as a way to *uncover* shared interests and build “friendly relations” based on the principle of “seeking common ground while maintaining differences”. Internally, building shared interests is seen as key to “removing the obstacles to China’s peaceful development in the world”.

### ANALYSIS

The narrative that cooperation between states should be friendly, mutually beneficial and promote common development has been central to China’s foreign-policy discourse ever since the founding of the PRC. This rhetoric of solidarity is not uniquely Chinese but is the rhetoric of the Global South. In China, however, it carries a particular connotation of relationality and reciprocity. The Chinese international relations scholar Qin Yaqing argues that, in Chinese political thought, cooperation is understood as a means to find “common interests” in order to create *relational power*, which rests on the power of human relations.<sup>30</sup> This is why summit diplomacy – such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summits or the various BRI fora – plays a central role in how China conducts foreign policy. The underlying assumption here is that shared interests always exist: they just need to be found. Therefore, “pragmatic cooperation” is always possible. Behind the language of mutual benefit, particularly in the context of “friendly cooperation” with countries of the Global South through foreign aid or loans, stands the belief that recipients will reciprocate with political support, e.g., by not giving Taiwan political recognition or by

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, ‘Build a New Type of International Relations Featuring Win-Win Cooperation’, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, 20 June 2016, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjb\\_663304/wjbz\\_663308/2461\\_663310/t1376908.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/2461_663310/t1376908.shtml)

<sup>30</sup> Y. Qin, *A Relational Theory of World Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 258.



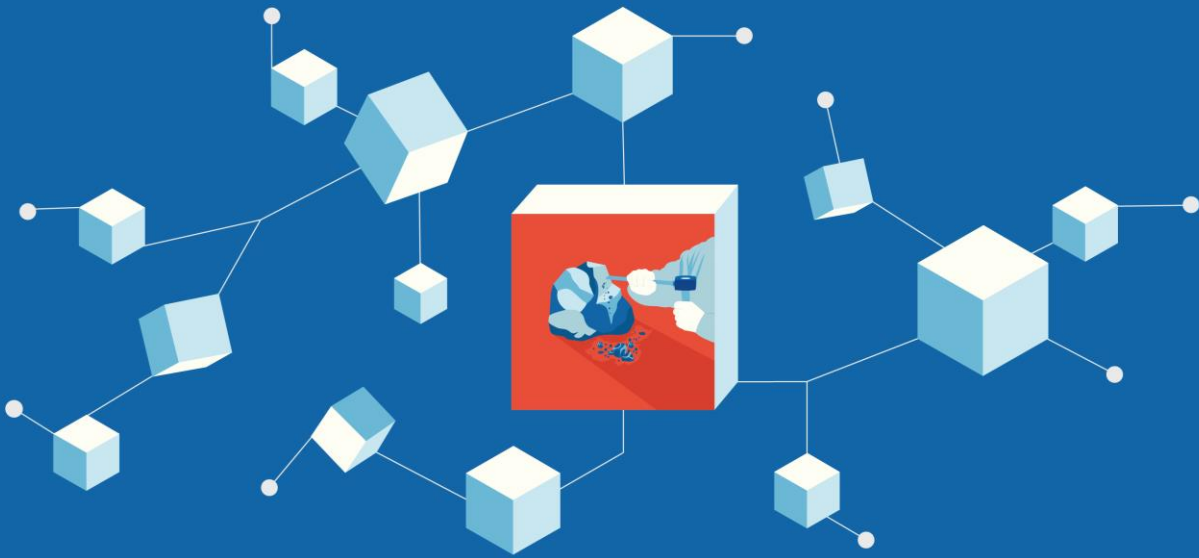
voting with China at the United Nations. Calls to “strengthen international cooperation” often come with a call to strengthen “multilateralism” (多边主义).

Beyond that, the Chinese term for “cooperation”, *hezuo* (合作), can refer to nearly any kind of transaction or interaction between two or more parties, which probably makes it the most mistranslated and misunderstood term in Sino-Western relations. For Chinese state-owned enterprises, participating in “international cooperation” means foreign trade and investment. “International cooperation departments” within ministries are mostly concerned with protocol and ceremony, maintaining liaison and organising conferences. “International cooperation centres” in Chinese provinces are mostly export-trade promotion organisations. In the context of COVID19, “pragmatic cooperation in the field of health” with France referred to selling masks and ventilators.

“Solidary cooperation”, on the other hand, was frequently used by Xi Jinping to highlight China’s support to the Global South and counter criticism of China’s early cover-up of the pandemic. “Cultural cooperation” has the goal of promoting “mutual” appreciation, understanding and respect, which in the official context is part of the effort to “tell the China Story well” (讲好中国故事). However, “cultural cooperation” can also mean providing digital TVs to African villages or establishing joint TV stations. China’s “international development cooperation” includes both foreign aid and development lending in the context of the BRI. Its purpose is to promote the construction of the “community of shared future of mankind” (人类命运共同体), that is, the Chinese vision of multilateralism.

合作





CULTURE  
文化

# CULTURE

## 文化

David Bandurski

### BRIEF

UNESCO defines culture broadly as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”<sup>31</sup> For the Chinese Communist Party, however, culture is first and foremost deeply political, one of a number of “fronts” in the Party’s struggle against its enemies and critics, both internal and external.<sup>32</sup> In his remarks to the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942, Mao Zedong made it clear that “art and literature [must] follow politics.”<sup>33</sup> While China’s cultural industry has grown by leaps and bounds in the post-Mao period of reform and China’s opening, the Party’s claim to be the political heart of culture has remained. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping since late 2012, culture has been renewed as a political priority around such notions as “building [China as] a cultural power” (建成文化强国), ensuring “cultural security” (文化安全) and mobilizing against the “cultural hegemony” of the United States and the West.<sup>34</sup> Culture is a means both to advance the power and legitimacy of the Party and to strengthen the CCP against threats to its legitimacy globally.

### ANALYSIS

For much of the modern era, China’s relationship with culture has been fraught with contradictions. During the New Culture Movement of the 1920s, a new brand of scholars, writers and activists sought to throw off the influence of traditional Confucian ideas, which they blamed for China’s weakness, and create a new society based on the western ideals of science and democracy. But even as China looked to the West, notions of culture were closely tied up with the experience of imperialism since the mid-eighteenth century. An influential article written in 1923, in the wake of the May Fourth Movement, sounded a warning about “cultural invasion,” characterized as the last of

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<sup>31</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ‘UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity’, UNESCO, 2 November 2001, [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13179&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>32</sup> B., Wang, ‘迈出文化建设坚实步伐，提升国家文化软实力’ [‘Construct culture robustly striding forward, elevate our nations cultural soft power’], *Guangmingwang*, 9 November 2020, [https://www.gmw.cn/xueshu/2020-11/09/content\\_34352493.htm](https://www.gmw.cn/xueshu/2020-11/09/content_34352493.htm)

<sup>33</sup> Mao Zedong, ‘在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话’ [‘Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art’], 1942, *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/marxist.org-chinese-mao-194205.htm>

<sup>34</sup> Renmin Ribao, ‘大搞文化霸权，威胁全球文化安全：美方威胁全球安全的真面目’ [‘Doing cultural hegemony vigorously, threatening cultural security globally: the true colours of the US threat to global security’], *people.cn*, 1 November 2020, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2020-11/01/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20201101\\_6-03.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2020-11/01/nw.D110000renmrb_20201101_6-03.htm)

four means by which Western imperialism was visited upon China.<sup>35</sup> In his remarks to the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942, [Mao Zedong famously spoke](#) of the power “of the pen and of the gun,” and the importance of the cultural as well as the military front.<sup>36</sup> During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), zealous bands of so-called Red Guards went on a national rampage of cultural destruction in a campaign to crush the “Four Olds” – old ideas, old culture, old habits and old customs. This inaugurated successive waves of destruction that spanned a decade, resulting in untold cultural and human costs.



The end of the Cultural Revolution came with a growing recognition that the political excesses of the prior decade had stemmed in large part from Mao Zedong’s overwhelming dominance of cultural and political messaging. The relative openness of the 1980s brought about an environment of “culture fever”, with more creativity and [truth-seeking in media](#) and the arts.<sup>37</sup> This came to a dramatic halt with the violent crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations in China in June 1989. The focus for the CCP turned to a combination of maintaining the Party’s political control over culture and the media while pushing commercial development and “[a culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics](#)”.<sup>38</sup> The idea that culture is “an important component of comprehensive national power” (综合国力的重要标志) was introduced in 1997.<sup>39</sup> A decade later, China began prioritizing public diplomacy and the development of “soft power,” though only [with limited results](#), and initiated [a global](#)

<sup>35</sup> Q., Qu, ‘帝国主义侵略中国之各种方式’ [‘The different ways imperialism invades China’], first published 26 May 1923, *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/quqiubai/mia-chinese-qqb-19230526.htm>

<sup>36</sup> Mao Zedong, ‘Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature And Art’, 1942, *Marxists Internet Archive*, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3\\_08.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm)

<sup>37</sup> S., Ma, ‘The Role of Power Struggle and Economic Changes in the ‘Heshang phenomenon’ in China’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2008, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Fangxian Renmin Zhengfu, ‘新中国 70 年社会主义文化建设及其经验’ [‘70 years experience of establishing socialist culture in the New China’], *Fangxian Renmin Zhengfu*, 10 July 2019, [http://www.fangxian.gov.cn/xwzx\\_31730/lwz\\_31742/201907/t20190710\\_1777753.shtml](http://www.fangxian.gov.cn/xwzx_31730/lwz_31742/201907/t20190710_1777753.shtml)

<sup>39</sup> Jiang Zemin, ‘江泽民：在中国共产党第十五次全国代表大会上的报告’ [‘Jiang Zemin’s Political Report to the 15th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party’], *Fudan Daxue*, <http://dangxiao.fudan.edu.cn/59/a1/c9736a88481/page.htm>

[media drive](#) in which the government spent an estimated 45 billion yuan to expand state media overseas.<sup>40</sup>

Since 2012, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, Chinese culture as a resource of comprehensive national power has been a major priority for the leadership. Xi Jinping has [spoken about the need](#) to “strengthen cultural confidence and build a socialist cultural power” (坚定文化自信，建设社会主义文化强国).<sup>41</sup> China’s leaders and [state-run media argue](#) that China’s global cultural strength, which includes its capacity to offset criticism and “tell China’s story well,” is key to “breaking through Western cultural hegemony” (打破西方文化霸权) and to changing the “[unequal relationship](#)” with the West.<sup>42</sup> This interpretation of culture and its political value is closely tied to the nationalistic Xi-era notion of the “Chinese dream” of the “[great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation](#)” and the CCP’s promise to return China to the centre of global affairs.<sup>43</sup> In his political report to the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CCP in 2017, Xi Jinping said: “Without a high level of cultural confidence, without a glorious and flourishing culture, there can be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See: D., Bandurski, ‘A softer touch on soft power’, *China Media Project*, 26 January 2015, <https://chinamediaproject.org/2015/01/26/a-softer-touch-on-soft-power/>, and South China Morning Post, ‘Beijing in 45b yuan global media drive’, *South China Morning Post*, 13 January 2009, <https://www.scmp.com/article/666847/beijing-45b-yuan-global-media-drive>

<sup>41</sup> Renmin Ribao, ‘坚定文化自信，建设社会主义文化强国’ [‘Strengthen cultural confidence and build a socialist cultural power’], *People’s Daily*, 16 October 2017, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2017/1016/c40531-29588374.html>

<sup>42</sup> W., Li, ‘建设社会主义文化强国的世界意义’ [‘The global significance of building a socialist cultural power’], *People’s Daily*, 27 October 2016, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2016/1027/c40531-28811363.html>

<sup>43</sup> CGTN, ‘Xi Jinping vows ‘strong determination, solid national strength’ to overcome challenges amid COVID-19’, *CGTN*, 31 July 2020, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-07-30/Xi-urges-thorough-reforms-when-meeting-non-Communist-party-personages-SyaqEAfKOA/index.html>

<sup>44</sup> Xi Jinping, ‘习近平在中国共产党第十九次全国代表大会上的报告’ [‘Xi Jinping’s Political Report to the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party’], *People’s Daily Online*, 28 October 2017, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2017/1028/c64094-29613660-9.html>



DEMOCRACY  
民主



# DEMOCRACY

民主

Katja Drinhausen

## BRIEF

In the PRC, democracy refers to the Marxist-Leninist system of democratic dictatorship (人民民主专政) and democratic centralism (民主集中制), in which the CCP is the ultimate representative of the peoples. This political system of “socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics” is explicitly distinguished from Western liberal democracy, which is seen as incompatible with China’s unique conditions. While citizens in China can vote for their local representatives, the CCP is constitutionally defined as the sole ruling party, preventing any transfer of power. It has guiding power over all legislative and state organs, allowing top-down policy implementation. Despite the lack of a pluralistic system of political parties, in which access to power is based on periodic elections by universal suffrage, the party defines itself as inherently democratic. Through “consultative democracy” (协商民主), the CCP formally incorporates the interests of various social groups, but legitimacy is mainly derived from ensuring order, prosperity, and security. Emboldened by successes in the delivery of economic growth and most recently of public health, the Party-State increasingly presents this as the superior model internationally. As Xi Jinping stated in 2017: “China’s socialist democracy is the most comprehensive, genuine and effective democracy”.<sup>45</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology, the Chinese term “democracy” (民主) has been deeply embedded in party language since the founding of the CCP, which set itself the mission to build a “people’s democracy”. In 2019, Xi coined the term “whole-process democracy”, in which the CCP gathers all voices from within and outside of the party, “enabling people to exercise their right to be masters of the state”.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘China’s socialist democracy the most effective: Xi’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 18 October 2017, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/18/c\\_136688445.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/18/c_136688445.htm)

<sup>46</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘习近平：中国的民主是一种全过程的民主’ [Xi Jinping: China’s democracy is a whole-process democracy], *Baidu*, 3 November 2019, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1649154966826521697&wfr=spider&for=pc>

The conceptualization of China as a democratic state has three pillars:

**The CCP is democratic, hence China must be too.** Under “democratic centralism”, major policy decisions are taken by central party organs, but are discussed at all administrative levels in formalized “[democratic life meetings](#)”.<sup>47</sup> New work regulations [define the “center”](#) even more clearly and prescribe *Xi Jinping Thought* as the baseline, thus restricting divergence from central ideological guidance.<sup>48</sup>

**Chinese citizens can vote.** Article 2 of the *Constitution* allows citizens to elect delegates to People’s Congresses, China’s legislative organs, on the county and district levels. However, Articles 1 and 3 make it clear that the PRC is a socialist state under the sole leadership of the CCP, whose hold on power was further strengthened in the 2018 constitutional revisions. All government institutions work under the guidance of CCP organs, and candidates for people’s congresses are generally pre-selected.

**The CCP considers other stakeholders and interests.** Formally, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conferences serve as the main channel for consultative democracy. Under the label of multiparty cooperation with eight democratic block parties and gathering of feedback, including online, the CCP does solicit opinions from various stakeholders, as long as they do not openly contest the CCP’s policy priorities.

This collective and consensus-oriented ideal of democracy under centralized party leadership is juxtaposed to the confrontational, competitive style of Western democracy. Although now presented as the only suitable system for China, it has not always gone uncontested. The 1989 student protests called for a reform of the Chinese political system, including elements of liberal democracy. In the aftermath of this movement, the term largely disappeared from political debates in China.

In 2002, the 16th Party Congress included<sup>47</sup> the statement that “inner-party democracy is the life of the party”. Leading party thinkers [brought the concept back into play](#).<sup>49</sup> Though limited to a vision of democracy that is compatible with one party rule, in the late 2000s and early 2010s, officials, media and citizens publicly discussed

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<sup>47</sup> The State Council of The People's Republic of China, ‘Constitution of the People's Republic of China’, *English.gov.cn*, 20 November 2019,

[http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/lawsregulations/201911/20/content\\_WS5ed8856ec6d0b3f0e9499913.html](http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/lawsregulations/201911/20/content_WS5ed8856ec6d0b3f0e9499913.html)

<sup>48</sup> H., Snape, ‘New Regulations for the Central Committee: Codifying Xi Era Democratic Centralism’, *China Law Translate*, 1 December 2020, <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/new-regulations-for-the-central-committee-codifying-xi-era-democratic-centralism/>

<sup>49</sup> China News, ‘《学习时报》刊载署名文章：民主是个好东西’ [Signed article in “Xuexi Shibao”: Democracy is a Good Thing], *China News*, 5 January 2007, <https://www.chinanews.com/gn/news/2007/01-05/849263.shtml>

[strengthening inner-party democracy](#) and liberalizing local elections so as to allow a pluralism of positions and include more non-party members.<sup>50</sup> Independent candidates stood for election and had some success. In the 2011 local elections, pro-civil rights candidates attempted to enter the race under the motto “[One person, one vote, together we change China](#)”.<sup>51</sup>



After Xi rose to power in 2012, “democracy” was included as one of the [12 core socialist values](#).<sup>52</sup> However, this did not mark a more liberal

conceptualization of democracy. Experiments in participation were shut down, and independent candidates were arrested. In 2013, *Document No. 9* defined liberal democracy as a threat to regime stability. Concepts such as constitutional democracy, separation of powers and judicial independence are regularly dismissed as “[incorrect ideological thinking](#)” that must be met with resolute resistance.<sup>53</sup> Liberal values were recently characterized as the root cause of unrest in Hong Kong.<sup>54</sup>

At the same time, China is advocating a “[democratization of the UN system](#)”, which means a bigger say for countries from the Global South, though it also entails equal acceptance of authoritarian forms of governance and values.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> C., Wang, ‘不要误读党内民主与人民民主的关系’ [‘Do not misinterpret the relationship between inner-party democracy and popular democracy’], *people.cn*, 28 August 2014, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2014/0828/c83861-25555061.html>

<sup>51</sup> D., Bandurski, ‘Changing China: one vote, one person’, *China Media Project*, 8 June 2011, <https://chinamediaproject.org/2011/06/08/changing-china-one-vote-one-person/>

<sup>52</sup> B., Han, ‘How Much Should We Read Into China’s New “Core Socialist Values”?’, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 6 July 2016, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/how-much-should-we-read-chinas-new-core-socialist-values>

<sup>53</sup> Z., Zhang, ‘周强：要敢于向西方“司法独立”等错误思潮亮剑’ [‘Zhou Qiang: Dare resist “judiciary independence” and other mistaken Western ideological trends’], *The Paper*, 14 January 2017, [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_1600659](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1600659)

<sup>54</sup> People’s Daily, International Edition, ‘香港教育“杀毒”，不能再等了’ [‘Extinguishing the virus in Hong Kong’s cannot wait any longer’], *People’s Daily, International Edition*, 7 August 2020, <http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/images/2020-07/08/03/rmrhwb2020070803.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> K., Drinhausen, M., Huotari, ‘Advancing liberal multilateralism’, *Mercator Institute for China Studies*, 15 September 2020, <https://merics.org/de/studie/fuer-einen-prinzipientreuen-ansatz-europas-china-politik/4-liberalen-multilateralismus-foerdern>



DEVELOPMENT  
发展

# DEVELOPMENT

## 发展

Marina Rudyak

### BRIEF

In the Euro-American context, “development” is commonly understood as a multidimensional socio-economic process with political, economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions. In this regard, the political dimension (in particular, democracy) is seen as essential to realising the others, which is why development cooperation emphasises good governance, respect for human rights and corruption prevention, often making respective efforts by recipients a condition for aid. The Chinese discourse views “development” primarily as a process of technology-centred “modernisation”. “Economic development” by means of investment in transport, energy and digital infrastructure construction, trade-related infrastructure, production capacities and innovative technology is thought to go hand-in-hand with “social development”. “Economic and social development” are seen as the necessary precondition for both improving the “people’s livelihood” – a term that refers to education, medical and health services, and public welfare facilities – and for “green development”, to be achieved through technological innovation. China criticizes Western donor countries for making improvements in good governance, anti-corruption efforts and human rights a condition for development assistance, arguing that these aspects should not be put above development issues on the economic and technical level, such as infrastructure building or industrial and agricultural development.

### ANALYSIS

China therefore rejects the conditionality approach and argues that donors should respect the developing countries’ “right to independently choose their development path” and focus on “strengthening the capacity for independent development”.<sup>56</sup> As a process, development should be “self-reliant” (自力更生, literally translated as: “regeneration through one’s own efforts”) and “independent”.

The concept of development as technology-led modernization can be traced back to Sun Yat-sen, since when has been perceived as a means to overcome the

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<sup>56</sup> Xi Jinping, ‘中国国家主席习近平 26 日在纽约联合国总部的南南合作圆桌会上致辞’ [‘The speech of the Chinese president Xi Jinping at the South-South Cooperation Roundtable meeting at the United National headquarters in New York on the 26th’], *United Nations Radio*, 26 September 2015. <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/chinese/archives/239165/#.WCSIMtx8Se8> (last accessed on 10 November 2016, source no longer online)

“underdevelopment” and “backwardness” that caused China to lose the Opium Wars.<sup>57</sup> Following the Bandung Conference of 1955, China’s premier and foreign minister Zhou Enlai [argued](#) that China considered economic independence to be a prerequisite for political independence.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, while focusing on its own development, China would also provide assistance to other developing countries – implying that helping the latter in their economic development would foster their political



independence from the US-led capitalist bloc. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded Mao Zedong as the paramount leader of the CCP, declared that China’s development required “Four Modernizations” – in agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology. Shortly afterwards, the human rights activist Wei Jingsheng wrote an essay displayed on the democracy wall in Beijing, calling on the CCP to add “democracy” as a [“Fifth Modernization”](#), for which he was arrested and later exiled to the US.<sup>59</sup>

Under Xi Jinping, development has become linked to the “two centenary goals”: the centenary of the founding of the CCP in 2021, at which point China should have become a “moderately well-off society”; and the centenary of the founding of the PRC in 2049, at which point China should have achieved the “China Dream” of national “rejuvenation” and reclaiming the central position it lost through the Opium Wars.

Since the times of Zhou Enlai, China’s policy of international development cooperation can be seen as an externalization of its domestic development agenda. The language used to describe the objectives of China’s foreign aid – to [“enrich and improve their peoples’ livelihood, and promote their economic growth and social progress”](#) – is nearly

<sup>57</sup> Sun Yat-sen, *The International Development of China*, Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1920, <https://archive.org/details/internationaldev00suny>

<sup>58</sup> Zhou Enlai, ‘周恩来总理兼外交部长关于目前国际形势、我国外交政策和解放台湾问题的发言’ [‘The speech of prime minister and minister of foreign affairs Zhou Enlai on the current international situation, China’s foreign policy and the issue of liberating Taiwan’], *People’s Daily*, 28 June 1956, p. 1. <http://www.people.com.cn/item/lianghui/zlhb/rd/1jie/newfiles/c1060.html>.

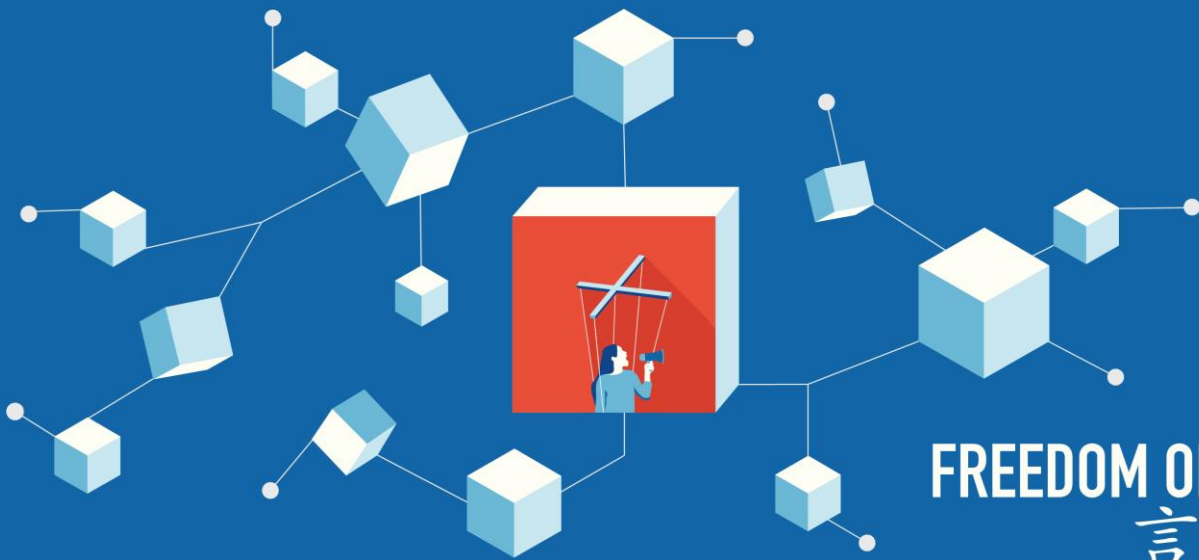
<sup>59</sup> “The Fifth Modernization: Democracy” (1978) By Wei Jingsheng’, in: W. de Bary and R. Lufrano (Ed.), *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 497-500. [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/wei\\_jingsheng\\_fifth\\_modernization.pdf](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/wei_jingsheng_fifth_modernization.pdf).



identical with the language employed when talking about the development needed to overcome the “relative backwardness” of China’s western and national minority regions.<sup>60</sup> The “China Dream” has been extended to a “World Dream” of “common development” (共同发展). Yet, for a long time, China has maintained that its “foreign aid” (对外援助) to developing countries was not “development aid” (发展援助). The latter term was almost exclusively used to describe Western donor’s aid, including to China. This practice has changed under Xi Jinping: the “Right to Development” (发展权) White Paper states that China has been providing “development aid” for sixty years; the name of the aid agency CIDCA recently established in 2018 stands for “China International Development Cooperation Agency”, implying that China now sees itself as a development provider.

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<sup>60</sup> China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), ‘《中国的对外援助》白皮书’ [“China’s foreign aid” White paper], CIDCA, April 2011, [http://www.cidca.gov.cn/2018-08/06/c\\_129925064.htm](http://www.cidca.gov.cn/2018-08/06/c_129925064.htm)



**FREEDOM OF SPEECH**  
言论自由

# FREEDOM OF SPEECH / FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

## 言论自由

David Bandurski

### BRIEF

Article 35 of [China's Constitution](#) states that “[c]itizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration.”<sup>61</sup> Formally speaking, this language seems to accord with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.”<sup>62</sup> In practice, however, the ruling Chinese Communist Party places substantial restrictions on the exercise of freedom of speech, which is regarded as potentially destabilizing to the regime. This essentially negates the second half of the freedom of expression clause in the UDHR, which states that “this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” The CCP has developed a vast human and technological apparatus to ensure that it can monitor and control information through all channels, both online and offline, and this means constant, even real-time interference in Chinese nationals' right to enjoy freedom of speech, even beyond China's borders.

### ANALYSIS

The story of the media and freedom of speech in China since the 1980s has essentially been about the constant efforts of the CCP leadership to balance the imperative of regime stability against the priorities of reform and development, the latter having resulted in a more complex and diverse society that has often sought ways to assert its rights and interests over and against those of the Party.

As the reform and opening policy took root in China after 1978, there was some reassessment of the extreme state of press control that had prevailed throughout the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), during which all press content was dominated by Mao Zedong. The term “[news reform](#)” (新闻改革) was used more readily in the early 1980s, and there was a strong conviction as reforms took hold that strict controls over the press and ideology had contributed decisively to the painful political extremes of

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<sup>61</sup> The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 'Constitution of the People's Republic of China', *The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China*, 2004, [http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Constitution/node\\_2825.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm)

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights', 1948, *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/#:~:text=Everyone%20has%20the%20right%20to%20freedom%20of%20opinion%20and%20expression.media%20and%20regardless%20of%20frontiers.>

the previous three decades.<sup>63</sup> It was in the context of this reform spirit that “freedom of speech” was [included China's 1982 Constitution](#).<sup>64</sup> Though the CCP continued to control the press in the 1980s, and journalism and publishing were embedded within the Party-State, there were moves to reassess its role.

This reform trajectory took a dramatic turn with the events of 1989, the crackdown on the democracy movement on June 4 resulting in a new regime of speech controls under Jiang Zemin around



a policy of “public opinion guidance” (舆论导向). Essentially this reflected a renewed conviction in the leadership that regime stability, and avoiding a Soviet-style collapse, depended upon “guiding” the ideas and opinions of the public through robust CCP control of all channels of expression. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, as economic development picked up pace, and as the rise of the internet offered new channels for expression, China went through an unprecedented era of media development. This resulted in a [notable rise in professional activity](#) among the Chinese media, and even the emergence of investigative reporting.<sup>65</sup> The mandate of “public opinion guidance” remained firmly in place, however, and journalists and media were constantly disciplined. Meanwhile, from the late 1990s, China developed a vast system of technical and legislative controls for the internet – collectively known as the [“Great Firewall”](#) – blocking to access the outside world, and censoring content domestically.<sup>66</sup> In the Xi Jinping era, controls on the press and the internet have intensified, as the CCP has sought to reassert its dominance over all channels of communication, including the internet and a new generation of social media. In large part this is due to a rise in more freewheeling media reporting and online engagement and criticism through the 2000s.

<sup>63</sup> F., Li, H., Zhang, '从文本到实践：传媒业变革背景下重建中国新闻事业的社会有机性' ['From text to practice: Rebuilding the social organics of China's journalism against the background of transforming the media industry'], *Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Zhuban*, 5 February 2020, [http://www.cssn.cn/xwcbx/xwcbx\\_xwll/202002/t20200205\\_5085170.shtml](http://www.cssn.cn/xwcbx/xwcbx_xwll/202002/t20200205_5085170.shtml)

<sup>64</sup> H., Chiu, 'The 1982 Chinese Constitution and the Rule of Law', *Occasional Papers, Reprint Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*, vol. 69, no. 4, 1985, p. 143

<sup>65</sup> S., L. Shirk (ed.), *Changing Media, Changing China*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2011

<sup>66</sup> J., Fallows, 'The Connection Has Been Reset', *The Atlantic*, March 2008, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/03/the-connection-has-been-reset/306650/>

In February 2016, [Xi Jinping re-asserted the CCP's supremacy over the media](#) in a speech in which he reiterated that the media must be “surnamed Party” (姓党), and asking them essentially to pledge their loyalty to the regime.<sup>67</sup> Under the powerful Cyberspace Administration of China, formed directly under the CCP's central leadership in 2014, controls on the internet and social media have intensified, and the mandate of “public opinion guidance” has been extended, even though codified in legal guidelines, [to all users](#).<sup>68</sup> Facing criticism of its media control policies, China insists domestically that they are necessary to maintain stability as a prerequisite for development. Officials often stress that “[Freedom of expression does not equal free expression](#),” by which they mean that speech must be curtailed in the interests of the general population.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> P., Zhang, 'China's top party mouthpieces pledge 'absolute loyalty' as president makes rare visits to newsrooms', *South China Morning Post*, 19 February 2016, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1914136/chinas-top-party-mouthpieces-pledge-absolute-loyalty>

<sup>68</sup> Cyberspace Administration of China, '互联网群组信息服务管理规定' ['Provisions on the Administration of Internet Group Information Services'], *Cyberspace Administration of China*, 7 July 2017, [http://www.cac.gov.cn/2017-09/07/c\\_1121623889.htm](http://www.cac.gov.cn/2017-09/07/c_1121623889.htm)

<sup>69</sup> J., Ge, '言论自由不等于自由言论' ['Freedom of expression does not equal free expression'], *Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China*, 9 October 2017, [http://www.mod.gov.cn/jmsd/2017-10/09/content\\_4794164.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/jmsd/2017-10/09/content_4794164.htm)



**GOOD GOVERNANCE**  
善治



# GOOD GOVERNANCE

## 良政善治

Katja Drinhausen

### BRIEF

The term “good governance” (善治) was first mentioned in a [high-level party document](#) in 2014.<sup>70</sup> Today, it is firmly established in the political vernacular. In Party-State discourse, the focus is on the efficient provision of public services, combating corruption and abuses of power within the CCP, and establishing law-based governance, i.e. codifying policies and measures in laws and regulations. The primary objectives are to increase prosperity and safeguard collective rights, most importantly public order and security, rather than the institutionalized political participation of independent non-governmental actors and citizens. Increased monitoring by digital means and laws and regulations that severely restrict individual liberties are regularly characterized as good governance. This is markedly different from the broader definitions of good governance set out by the [UN](#) and the [EU](#), which encompass factors such as efficiency, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness the rule of law, civic participation and the protection of social minorities.<sup>71</sup> The UN and EU frameworks explicitly envisage close cooperation with non-governmental actors and place a strong emphasis on the protection of human rights, including civil and political rights.

### ANALYSIS

Use of the term good governance in Chinese official discourse took off in the early 2000's, in step with global discussions around good governance. While in the UN framework the term has expanded to include civil rights protection, public participation and the involvement of non-governmental actors in all public affairs, party-affiliated academics and officials have [criticized this “catch all” approach](#) and argued for staying close to the concept's original definition in administrative science.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, ‘Communique of the 4th Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of CPC’, *China.org.cn*, 23 October 2014, [http://www.china.org.cn/china/fourth\\_plenary\\_session/2014-12/02/content\\_34208801.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/fourth_plenary_session/2014-12/02/content_34208801.htm)

<sup>71</sup> See: United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), ‘About Good Governance’, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Development/GoodGovernance/Pages/AboutGoodGovernance.aspx>, and

European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies, ‘Good Governance in EU External Relations: What role for development policy in a changing international context?’, *European Parliament*, 2016, [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO\\_STU\(2016\)578012\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578012/EXPO_STU(2016)578012_EN.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> K., Yu, ‘Governance and Good Governance: A New Framework for Political Analysis’, *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* volume, vol. 11, p. 1-8, 12 October 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-017-0197-4>



This means focusing on efficient governance, containing corruption and abuses of power and strengthening the legal and regulatory framework, rather than allowing institutionalized rights to citizens and non-governmental stakeholders to have a say.

The main focus instead is on the material benefits and the sense of [progress and individual gain](#) (获得感) for individual citizens granted by the state.<sup>73</sup>

Especially in the context of COVID-19, the Chinese system of governance has been promoted as a viable and ultimately superior alternative in safeguarding and providing public goods such as safety and health, one not constrained by a focus on individual rights and interests. This focus on output legitimacy is also reflected in the terminology (良政善治). The most often used word *shanzhi* (善治) might be better translated as “benevolent” governance. The term is derived from traditional political philosophy and is [framed by the political leadership](#) as a continuation of Chinese schools of thought.<sup>74</sup> The term *lianzheng* (廉政), often used synonymously or in conjunction with *shanzhi*, specifically connotes incorrupt or “clean” governance.

This narrow interpretation is in line with the politico-ideological discourse of the CCP that emphasizes absolute party leadership, which was further encoded in the Chinese constitution in 2018. The primary goal is to ensure that the CCP fulfils its role in governing the country well. Public order, social stability – i.e. the absence of protests – and provision of economic growth are seen as key benchmarks of success. The strong emphasis on the higher common goods of public order and security means that even laws that heavily restrict civil liberties are seen as important pillars of good governance.

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<sup>73</sup> P., Wang, C., Li, ‘新时代国家治理的良政基准与善治标尺——人民获得感的意蕴和量度’ [‘The standard and benchmark of good governance in the new era of governance: meaning and evaluation of the peoples’ sense of gain’], *PKU Research Center for Chinese Politics*, 23 January 2019, <https://www.rccp.pku.edu.cn/mzyt/90515.htm>

<sup>74</sup> P., Li, ‘中国传统文化与“善治”理论创化’ [‘Chinese traditional culture and the creation of a theory of “good governance”’], *Qiusi*, 30 March 2019, [http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuangu/bkxj/2019-03/30/c\\_1124304757.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuangu/bkxj/2019-03/30/c_1124304757.htm)

For example, the introduction of the *National Security Law for Hong Kong* and of coercive re-education measures in Xinjiang were [hailed as steps towards good governance](#), despite conflicts with international human rights norms.<sup>75</sup>

The concept of good governance is also closely tied to new initiatives expanding the use of digital technologies. [Xi Jinping has been promoting](#) the new concept of monitoring-based “smart governance”, i.e. tight, digitally supported supervision and disciplinary governance by the CCP and public institutions, as well as companies and citizens.<sup>76</sup> This drive to modernize governance emphasizes technocratic, data-based control under centralized CCP leadership and supervision, rather than sharing watchdog responsibilities with non-governmental actors or the media. [presented](#) as a more efficient and superior model to the Western approach to governance and its focus on the rule of law and the supervision of state power through the separation of powers and press freedom.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘National security law to boost good governance in Hong Kong: experts’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 9 July 2020, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/09/c\\_139200480.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/09/c_139200480.htm)

<sup>76</sup> C., Fu, ‘全面推进智慧治理 开创善治新时代’ [‘Comprehensively promote smart governance and create a new era of good governance’], *People’s Daily Online*, 27 April 2021, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0427/c40531-29953671.html>

<sup>77</sup> W., Zhang, ‘西方之乱与中国之治的制度原因’ [‘Institutional Causes of Disorder in the West and China’s Firm Rule’], *Qiushi*, 2 August 2017, [http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2017-08/02/c\\_1121422337.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2017-08/02/c_1121422337.htm)



HUMAN RIGHTS  
人权

# HUMAN RIGHTS

人权

Malin Oud

## BRIEF

Human rights are rights intrinsic to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in 1948 as a “common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations”.<sup>78</sup> International human rights law lays down the obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts in order to promote, protect and fulfil the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. For political reasons, when the rights listed in the UDHR were codified into legally binding instruments, they were divided into two separate covenants: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). China has ratified the ICESCR, but not the ICCPR, maintaining that sovereignty and non-interference trump the notion of universal human rights. Instead China considers human rights to be a country’s “internal affairs” rather than a legitimate concern of the international community. China promotes a state-centric and relativist conception of human rights “with Chinese characteristics”, according to which stability, harmony, subsistence and economic development take precedence over human rights, especially civil and political rights.<sup>79</sup>

## ANALYSIS

China published its first [White Paper on Human Rights in 1991](#).<sup>80</sup> Issued in response to international criticism of the government crackdown on protesters on Tiananmen Square in 1989, the paper states that China has a different understanding of human rights than the West due to its different national and historical conditions. The paper nevertheless marked a shift in government policy away from outright rejection of human rights as a “bourgeois” concept to a position of partial and reluctant acceptance of international human rights standards and principles. China has ratified six of the nine core human rights conventions, but has at the same time always maintained that the “right to subsistence” (生存权, a right which does not exist in international human rights

<sup>78</sup> United Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, 1948, *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

<sup>79</sup> See China Society for Human Rights Studies website for the Chinese government view on human rights, <http://chinahumanrights.org/>

<sup>80</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, ‘Human Rights in China’, *Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China*, November 1991, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/7/index.htm>

law) and the right to development (发展权) are the “foremost human rights”. At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna at the end of the Cold War to affirm the universality and indivisibility all human rights, China stated:

“For the vast number of developing countries to respect and protect human rights is first and foremost to ensure full realization of the rights to subsistence and development. The argument that human rights is the precondition for development is unfounded. When poverty and lack of adequate food and clothing are commonplace and people’s basic needs are not guaranteed, priority should be given to economic development. Otherwise, human rights are completely out of the question.”<sup>81</sup>

Confidence in “the Chinese model” was boosted by the global financial crisis in 2008. At the same time, so-called “colour” revolutions in a number of countries in the early 2000s gave rise to a heightened sense of external threat in Beijing. In 2013, a notice issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China’s General Office called for strengthened Party leadership and management of the “ideological battlefield”. The document, commonly referred to as [Document 9](#), cautioned against seven perils seen as threatening to undermine the Communist Party, including the promotion of universal values.<sup>82</sup>

In the last ten years, Beijing’s approach to the international human rights system has shifted from a defensive attitude to a more proactive strategy. China has become an international norm entrepreneur that is seeking to “break Western human rights hegemony” (打破西方人权霸权) and change “international human rights governance”.<sup>83</sup> In a series of high-profile [speeches](#) at the World Economic Forum in Davos and the United Nations in Geneva and New York in 2017, Xi Jinping launched the concept of “a community of shared destiny for mankind” (人类命运共同体), a vision for a world order that emphasises sovereignty, respect for different political systems, and “win-win cooperation” (合作共赢) among states.<sup>84</sup> In 2017, the concept of a “community of shared future” was inserted into a resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council entitled [“The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of All](#)

<sup>81</sup> Liu Huaqiu, Vienna Conference Statement, *The Chinese Human Rights Reader: Documents and Commentary 1900-2000*, ed. Stephen C. Angle and Marina Svensson (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), p. 392.

<sup>82</sup> ChinaFile, ‘Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation, How Much Is a Hardline Party Directive Shaping China’s Current Political Climate?’, *ChinaFile*, 8 November 2013, <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>

<sup>83</sup> R., Danhong, ‘Establish an International Communication Platform for Human Rights and Promote China’s Discourse Power on Human Rights — A Review on Ten Years of Beijing Forum on Human Rights’, *China Society for Human Rights Studies*, 17 May 2019, [http://www.chinahumanrights.org/html/2019/MAGAZINES\\_0517/13211.html](http://www.chinahumanrights.org/html/2019/MAGAZINES_0517/13211.html)

<sup>84</sup> Xi Jinping, ‘Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind’, 18 January 2017, *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 January 2017, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-01/19/c\\_135994707.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-01/19/c_135994707.htm)

Human Rights.<sup>85</sup> In June 2020, the council adopted a China-sponsored resolution entitled “Promoting Mutually Beneficial Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights”, advocating an international human rights system based on cooperation between states, rather than accountability and the rights of individuals.<sup>86</sup>



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<sup>85</sup> Human Rights Council resolution 41/19, *The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights*, A/HRC/RES/41/19, 17 July 2019, *United Nations Digital Library*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3834575>

<sup>86</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘UN rights body adopts China-sponsored resolution on mutually beneficial cooperation’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 23 June 2020, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-06/23/c\\_139159324.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-06/23/c_139159324.htm)





MULTILATERALISM  
多边主义

# MULTILATERALISM

## 多边主义

Marina Rudyak

### BRIEF

In the UN context, “multilateralism” is commonly defined as coordinated diplomatic interaction by three or more states (or other actors) carried out within the framework of international organisations and in accordance with their rules. Often, “multilateralism” is used as a synonym for “multilateral system”, mainly referencing the system that evolved after World War II consisting of organisations like the UN, NATO, WB, IMF and EU. As such, “multilateralism” is the source of rules and standards for international cooperation (such as the SDG Agenda 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement), while “multilateral system” in essence describes the liberal world order.

The Chinese government, in particular in its English-language communications, frequently highlights China’s commitment to “multilateralism”, citing the BRI as an example and stating that “more than 160 countries and international organisations have signed BRI cooperation documents with China”.<sup>87</sup> Internally, however, China’s leaders describe the existing rule-based multilateral system as not “fair and just”, but as “safeguarding the narrow interests of a group”.<sup>88</sup> The BRI, in turn, is presented as an alternative, “joint consultation”-based “Multilateralism with Chinese Characteristics”, where interaction with other countries is based not on universally binding rules for international cooperation but on bilateral agreements. China’s vision of multilateralism is hence rather a “multi-bilateralism”.

### ANALYSIS

After assuming power in 2013, Xi Jinping initiated a foreign-policy shift to a more proactive “major power diplomacy”, of which the BRI is the most visible manifestation. Originally aimed at increasing cooperation with neighbouring countries, the scope was quickly expanded to become a globally oriented initiative. In English-language communication, the Chinese leadership and CCP outlets frequently highlight that China is a “champion of multilateralism”, that China will “adhere to multilateralism” or that China is committed to “upholding multilateralism”. For Xi Jinping, the objective of multilateralism is to construct a “community of a shared future of mankind” (人类命运共同体). Accordingly, multilateralism [“should not take the old road of safeguarding the](#)

<sup>87</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘Xi Jinping - A Champion of Multilateralism in a World of Contradictions’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 November 2019. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/19/c\\_138567337.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/19/c_138567337.htm).

<sup>88</sup> Qiushi, ‘以习近平外交思想为指引深入推进中国特色多边主义’ [‘Using Xi Jinping Thought as guidance to promote multilateralism with Chinese characteristics’], *Qiushi*, 25 October 2019, [http://www.qstheory.cn/llwx/2019-10/25/c\\_1125151043.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/llwx/2019-10/25/c_1125151043.htm)

[narrow interests of a group](#)".<sup>89</sup> Its underlying statement is that "international rules should be written by all countries together", implying that the present multilateral system is unjust and that its rules need to be re-written. The Chinese state media have denoted this approach "Xiplomacy" (习式外交).

In October 2019, an article entitled "Using Xi Jinping Thought as guidance to promote multilateralism with Chinese characteristics", authored by the MFA Policy Planning Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, appeared in the CCP journal *Xuexi Shibao* (*Study Times*). It [argued](#) that "international affairs should be handled by all countries through consultation, in accordance with rules agreed by all countries, and taking into account the legitimate interests and legitimate concerns of all countries".<sup>90</sup> In addition, the MFA traced the roots of China's approach to multilateralism back to China's antiquity: "In ancient China, there existed the Kuqiu League and the Zhangye League, which reflected the traditional political culture of seeking common ground while maintaining differences, respecting treaties and keeping promises, and cooperation through consultation".



In his report to the 19<sup>th</sup> NPC, Xi Jinping [described](#) his vision of multilateralism as "dialogue without confrontation, partnership without alliance" (对话而不对抗、结伴而不结盟), indicating that China opposes universally binding rules for international

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

cooperation, but will interact with other countries through bilateral consultations.<sup>91</sup> A most recent example is the G20's attempt to agree on a multilateral solution for debt relief for COVID-19 affected countries in Africa. China [stated](#) that it supports multilateral decisions to help low-income countries respond appropriately to debt risk issues *and* is ready to maintain communication with the affected countries through *bilateral* channels.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Xinhua News Agency, '习近平提出，坚持和平发展道路，推动构建人类命运共同体' ['Xi Jinping puts forward: persist on the road of peaceful development, promote the construction of a community of a shared future of mankind'], *Xinhua News Agency*, 18 October 2017, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/19cpcnc/2017-10/18/c\\_1121821003.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/19cpcnc/2017-10/18/c_1121821003.htm)

<sup>92</sup> Huanqiuwang, '中方是否将减免非洲最贫穷国家债务？外交部回应' ['Will China cancel the debts of the poorest African states? Response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs'], *Huanqiuwang*, 7 April 2020, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/3xk2j94JzGf>



PEACE  
和平

# PEACE

和平

Jerker Hellström

## BRIEF

“The love for peace is in the DNA of the Chinese people,” Xi Jinping, General Secretary of China’s Communist Party, has repeatedly asserted.<sup>93</sup> This narrative, proclaiming that its subjects are harmonious, non-violent and benevolent by nature, rhymes well with the Party’s conviction that it is always morally correct. While the UN charter does not explicitly define the term “peace”, it is generally understood as a state where war, non-state sanctioned hostility and violence are absent. Moreover, the Chinese leadership’s notion of peace involves social stability, “harmony”, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit – but also the absence of interventionism and colonialism. Not surprisingly, the CCP’s rhetoric often emphasizes its own “peaceful” nature. As the Party characterizes China as peaceful by definition and the Chinese nationality (or *race*) as genetically peace-loving, its defence policy is also portrayed as defensive in nature. Speaking in Berlin in March 2014, Xi said that the pursuit of peace, amity and harmony was “an integral part of the Chinese character, which runs deep in the blood of the Chinese people”, and that it represented “the peace-loving cultural tradition of the Chinese nation over the past several thousand years”.<sup>94</sup> In Xi’s rhetoric, China’s fondness for peace is explained with reference to factors related to Chinese ethnicity, tradition and history.

## ANALYSIS

While Mao Zedong came to the same conclusion, his explanation was purely ideological in nature. According to Mao, all socialist countries, including China, want peace; “The only ones who crave war and do not want peace are certain monopoly capitalist groups in a handful of imperialist countries that depend on aggression for their profits.”<sup>95</sup>

A government White Paper issued in 2011, “China’s Peaceful Development,” explains that China’s love for peace is based on lessons drawn from history: “From their bitter sufferings from war and poverty in modern times, the Chinese people have learned the

<sup>93</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, ‘Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech in City of London’, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, 22 October 2015, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/xjpdygjxgsfw/t1309012.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdygjxgsfw/t1309012.shtml)

<sup>94</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, ‘Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People’s Republic of China at the Körber Foundation’, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, 28 March 2014, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/t1148640.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1148640.shtml)

<sup>95</sup> Mao Tse Tung, ‘Opening Address at the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China’, 15 September 1956, *Marxists Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch05.htm>

value of peace and the pressing need of development.” As a result, China “never engages in aggression or expansion, never seeks hegemony, and remains a staunch force for upholding regional and world peace and stability.”<sup>96</sup>



The White Paper stresses the importance of preserving social stability, which is tightly linked to China’s notion of peace and one of the CCP’s core objectives. In fact, “preserving peace” could also refer to the suppression of peaceful protest movements, let alone violent social unrest. The Chinese regime perceives peace and stability as the bases of its legitimacy, and therefore witnessed the “colour revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan in the 2000s [with great concern](#).<sup>97</sup> “Preserving peace” in this context is as much about protecting the regime from its people as it is about protecting the ruling party from real or imagined [foreign hostile forces](#).<sup>98</sup> Such concerns also explain China’s investment in technologies of mass surveillance as part of its overall security apparatus.

The 2011 White Paper also explains that the overall goal of China’s pursuit of “peaceful development” is to “achieve modernization and common prosperity.” Xi Jinping’s “[Thoughts on Diplomacy](#)”, published in early 2020, stresses that China “insists on the path of peaceful development based on mutual respect, cooperation, and mutual benefit.”<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, the “peaceful unification” (“和平统一”) of China is a euphemism for Taiwan’s incorporation in the People’s Republic by peaceful means. The term implies that unification could also occur by non-peaceful means, i.e. through a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. In fact, China has made it clear that it is ready to go to war if the current status quo, in which Taiwan is a *de facto* (but not *de jure*) independent state, is changed.

<sup>96</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, ‘China’s Peaceful Development’, *Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China*, 6 September 2011, [http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node\\_7126562.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_7126562.htm)

<sup>97</sup> T.C. Chen, ‘China’s Reaction to the Colored Revolutions: Adaptive Authoritarianism in Full Swing’, *APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper*, 19 July 2010, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1644372](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1644372)

<sup>98</sup> G. Qian, ‘Reading with Chinese Politics in 2014’, *China Media Project*, 30 December 2014, <https://chinamediaproject.org/2014/12/30/reading-chinese-politics-in-2014/>

<sup>99</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘《习近平关于中国特色大国外交论述摘编》出版发行’ [‘Excerpts from Xi Jinping on Great Power Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics’ Published], *Xinhua News Agency*, 5 January 2020, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2020-01/05/c\\_1125423757.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2020-01/05/c_1125423757.htm)



Through the adoption of the 2005 “[anti-secession law](#)”, China clarified that it “shall employ non-peaceful means ... to protect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” should “secessionist forces ... cause the fact of Taiwan’s secession from China” or if “possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted”.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, the CCP continues to claim that “peace is in the Chinese DNA”, that its defence policy is “[defensive in nature](#)”, and that it “poses no military threat to any other country”. The logic here is that Taiwan is actually not another country from the CCP’s perspective: rather, it is portrayed as an integral part of the PRC’s territory. Hence the Chinese government’s proclaimed adherence to “the principle of not attacking others unless it is attacked” rests on the definition of what constitutes an “attack”.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> People’s Daily Online, ‘Full text of Anti-Secession Law’, *People’s Daily Online*, 14 March 2005, [http://en.people.cn/200503/14/eng20050314\\_176746.html](http://en.people.cn/200503/14/eng20050314_176746.html)

<sup>101</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, ‘China’s Peaceful Development’, *Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China*, 6 September 2011, [http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node\\_7126562.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_7126562.htm)



**PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**  
公共外交

# PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

## 公共外交

David Bandurski

### BRIEF

From its modern origins in the 1960s, the notion of “public diplomacy”, which broadly involves the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries and intercultural communications, was meant to distinguish government-led international public relations efforts from the distasteful notion of propaganda. More recently, the idea of a “new public diplomacy” has emerged to encompass the activities of non-state actors, including NGOs. The trend in China in the reform era, and particularly since the 1990s, has likewise been to distance international public relations from so-called “external propaganda,” a mainstay of the Chinese Communist Party since the founding of the PRC. Since 2013, however, the re-centralization of CCP power under Xi Jinping and a renewed emphasis on ideological conformity have reinvigorated the focus on “external propaganda” around the conviction that state media and even quasi-private actors must work internationally to “tell China's story well” (讲好中国故事), thus enhancing the country's “international discourse power” (国际话语权) as a key aspect of its “comprehensive national power” (综合国力).

### ANALYSIS

In January 1991, still faced with sanctions from the EU and the United States as a result of its crackdown on pro-democracy protests on June 4, 1989, China established the State Council Information Office, a government office whose function is to “explain China to foreign countries.”<sup>102</sup> Chinese experts have regarded this institutional change as marking a move away from the influence of so-called “external propaganda” toward a “concept of modern public diplomacy.”<sup>103</sup> Marking a further attempt to rebrand its information activities, the CCP’s Central Propaganda Department – an office in fact overlapping with the Information Office (the former emphasizing internal controls, the latter external messaging) – issued a notice stating that the word “propaganda” (宣传) in the department’s official English translation would be formally changed to “publicity.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> G., Zhang, ‘对外宣传向公共外交的转型——从奥运会到世博’ [‘The change from external propaganda to public diplomacy: from the Olympics to the World Expo’], *People’s Daily Online*, 17 September 2010, [http://opinion.china.com.cn/opinion\\_7\\_9507.html](http://opinion.china.com.cn/opinion_7_9507.html)

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*



The ambiguous dual identity of these two offices at the present day can be seen as symbolizing the tension that persists in China between “external propaganda” as a more rigid notion of Party-controlled messaging, and the broader notion of “public diplomacy” as the need to engage more flexibly and credibly with foreign publics.

In late 2007, Joseph Nye’s term “soft power” was also [introduced into China’s official political discourse](#).<sup>105</sup> In 2008, as China prepared to host the Beijing Olympic Games, which

were regarded as a historic opportunity to showcase China’s development before the world and increase its soft power, the country faced a wave of criticism over its human rights abuses. Accordingly, much of the official CCP discourse turned to the relative weakness of China’s “discourse power” against the “soft containment” of the “biased” media of the West. Hu Jintao spoke of “cultural soft power” and increasing the influence of Chinese traditional culture as a key component of “comprehensive national power,” essential to maintaining the CCP’s global interests. Initiated in 2009, China’s “going out” strategy involved the investment of billions of dollars every year in the overseas expansion of Chinese media, an effort focused entirely on Party-state media, leaving out more vibrant Chinese commercial media. By 2012, China’s domestic media environment and non-governmental exchanges were already coming under much tighter Party control, and centralized CCP coordination remained the model when it came to public diplomacy.

Since 2013, the role of the Party in public diplomacy has become more pronounced than at any time in the reform era. In a speech to the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference on August 19, 2013, Xi Jinping emphasized the old model of “external propaganda” as he outlined his program for international messaging: “[We] must meticulously and properly conduct external propaganda, innovating external propaganda methods, working hard to create new concepts, new categories and new expressions that integrate the Chinese and the foreign, telling China’s story well,

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<sup>105</sup> Hu Jintao, ‘胡锦涛在党的十七大上的报告’ [‘Hu Jintao’s Political Report to the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party’], *The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China*, 26 October 2007, [http://www.scio.gov.cn/37231/Document/1566887/1566887\\_11.htm](http://www.scio.gov.cn/37231/Document/1566887/1566887_11.htm)

communicating China's voice well."<sup>106</sup> The core content of "telling China's story well," now the central concept in the CCP's orthodoxy on public diplomacy, centres on the Party's leadership. Within this concept, the chief objective of China's public diplomacy, or external propaganda, conducted through the state conglomerate China Media Group and other channels, is to "create an international public opinion environment favourable to China's development" under the Party's leadership.

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<sup>106</sup> Xi Jinping, '意识形态工作是党的一项极端重要的工作' ['Ideological work is of extreme importance for the Party'], *Xinhua News Agency*, 20 August 2013, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-08/20/c\\_117021464\\_2.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-08/20/c_117021464_2.htm)



**RULE OF LAW**  
法治

# RULE OF LAW

法治

Malin Oud

## BRIEF

The principle of the rule of law means that laws provide meaningful restraints on state power. The United Nations defines the rule of law as “a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards.”<sup>107</sup> In a rule of law system, every person is subject to the law and no one is above it. In liberal democracies, the rule of law is associated with civil and political rights and implies a separation of powers. The Chinese Communist Party’s conception of the rule of law – *fazhi* (法治) or *yifazhiguo* (依法治国), which literally means “law-based governance” or ruling the country in accordance with the law – has very little in common with the liberal democratic concept. In China’s “socialist rule of law system with Chinese characteristics” the legal system is under the Party’s leadership and supervision. The CCP ultimately sees the law as a tool to ensure stability and order, as well as being a means to justify and maintain Party rule. Arguably, *fazhi* is so different from the international principle of rule of law that it should perhaps not be translated as “rule of law”.

## ANALYSIS

The rule of law has been a recurring theme in China’s reform plans and official discourse ever since the early 1980s. The reconstruction of the legal system and the professionalization of the judiciary were important aspects of China’s modernization reforms in the aftermath of the political campaigns of Mao Zedong, which culminated in the Cultural Revolution. After Mao’s death, measures were put in place to prevent the over-concentration of power and to delegate authority from the Communist Party to government agencies. Key words like class struggle, contradictions and revolution were replaced with stability, harmony, and the rule of law. Legal institutions were created, entire new areas of legislation drafted, law schools established. As the country opened itself up to foreign investment and international cooperation, there was an assumption in the West that China would also be socialised into accepting international norms and that it was evolving from ‘rule by man’ under Mao Zedong to the rule of law in a liberal democratic sense.

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<sup>107</sup> United Nations, ‘What is the Rule of Law’, *United Nations and the Rule of Law*, <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/what-is-the-rule-of-law/>





Xi Jinping has stressed the importance of the rule of law since he rose to power in 2012 and pledged to catch both “tigers and flies” in a far-reaching anti-corruption campaign. The Fourth Plenum of the 18th Congress of the CCP in 2014 had the rule of law as its overall theme, which it [declared](#) would provide “a powerful guarantee for achieving the Two Centenary Goals and realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.<sup>108</sup>

However, if the first thirty years of legal reform and opening up saw

the de-politicization of the Chinese justice system, the last decade has seen its re-politicization or partyfication. Party organs have absorbed their government counterparts, and the law has been used to codify the Party’s leadership. In 2018, a constitutional amendment removed the term limits for the presidency introduced in 1982. A series of vague but sweeping security laws and regulations have been enacted, including most recently in Hong Kong. Illustrative of China’s instrumental use of law and selective compliance with international law, in June 2020 Beijing passed a “Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region”, bypassing Hong Kong’s local legislature and the “One Country Two Systems” principle of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

In November 2020, the CCP held a conference [declaring](#) the establishment of “Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law and its status as the guiding thought for law-based governance in China”.<sup>109</sup> Stressing the importance of upholding the leadership of the CCP in order to build China into a socialist country under the rule of law by the year 2035, the whole country was instructed to seriously study and understand [Xi Jinping’s Thought on the Rule of Law](#) (习近平法治思想) as “one of the pivotal pillars of the ideological complex that supports the country in the years to come”.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, ‘Communique of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China’ October 23 2014, *China.org.cn*, 2 December 2014, [http://www.china.org.cn/china/fourth\\_plenary\\_session/2014-12/02/content\\_34208801.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/fourth_plenary_session/2014-12/02/content_34208801.htm)

<sup>109</sup> Xinhua News Agency, ‘Xi Focus: Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law guides law-based governance in China’, *Xinhua News Agency*, 10 December 2020, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/10/c\\_139578646.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/10/c_139578646.htm)

<sup>110</sup> Z., Zhu, ‘Understanding Xi Jinping thought on the rule of law’, *CGTN*, 21 November 2020, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-11-19/Understanding-Xi-Jinping-thought-on-the-rule-of-law-VxugROqvV6/index.html>



SECURITY  
安全

# SECURITY

## 安全

Jerker Hellström

### BRIEF

For China, *national security* and *state security* are synonyms (both are translated as 国家安全), meaning that the two English terms can be used interchangeably. State security refers to the consolidation of the Chinese Communist Party's ruling position and to its protection from domestic and foreign threats. As such, threats to state security are perceived by the Party as existential in nature. State security covers political security, homeland security, military security, economic security, cultural security, social stability and information security, meaning that these can be understood as conditions for the regime's continued monopoly on power. In order to fully grasp the Party's notion of state security, it is relevant to understand the perceived threats to it, which are also threats to Party rule. An overarching threat, in the party's mind, is the ideological infiltration of "Western hostile forces", including foreign NGOs and international media. Rhetorically speaking, an individual's personal security will not be safeguarded if the regime is not secure. Meanwhile there is an underlying assumption in China that those who act in line with the interests of the ruling class should be kept safe.

### ANALYSIS

China's emphasis on the Party-State as the key beneficiary of state security, rather than highlighting, for example, social and individual freedoms, is reflected in Article 2 of the [National Security Law](#) (NSL) of 2015:

"State security refers to the relative absence of international or domestic *threats to the state's power to govern*, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, the welfare of the people, sustainable economic and social development and other major national interests, and the ability to ensure a continued state of security" (emphasis added).<sup>111</sup>

The NSL furthermore defines "the state" as ruled by the CCP: "[t]he State persists in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party".<sup>112</sup> Similar language can be found in

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<sup>111</sup> The State Council of The People's Republic of China, '中华人民共和国国家安全法（主席令第二十九号）' [National Security Law of the People's Republic of China (Order of the State Chairman No. 29)], *Gov.cn*, 1 July 2015, [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2015-07/01/content\\_2893902.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2015-07/01/content_2893902.htm)

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, Chapter 2 ('Tasks in preserving national security'), Article 15

China's constitution. Hence, "state security" should ultimately be understood as security for the Party.

The primary missions of China's civilian intelligence service, the Ministry for State Security (MSS), further reflect the Chinese concept of state security. In contrast to its equivalents in democracies, the MSS, for example, conducts espionage on dissidents with foreign connections at home, Uighurs, Tibetans, Taiwanese, democracy activists, and members of the Falungong movement, as well as their

supporters overseas. This reflects concerns within the Party that these groups could become security threats, including any advocacy against Beijing which could negatively affect China's international image.

An example of how the concept of 'security' is used by Chinese officials is Beijing's efforts to defend the establishment of re-education camps in Xinjiang from 2017. While detainees have not been charged with any crimes, the Chinese government has depicted the camps as part of its counter-terrorism efforts, thereby safeguarding state security.

**Cultural security** is aimed at protecting Chinese society from [cultural infiltration](#) by hegemonic powers, Westernization and cultural decay.<sup>113</sup> The concept of cultural security is intertwined with "ideological security", which involves threats including "Western-style democracy, Western cultural hegemony, the diversified dissemination of Internet information and public opinion, and religious infiltration". In 1994 Wang Huning, a member of the Politburo's Standing Committee and a prominent ideologue, asserted that globalization should be understood as Western cultural hegemony, which constituted an existential threat to the party.

**Food security** is [defined](#) as national food self-sufficiency and is also aligned with regime security.<sup>114</sup> This can be compared to the definition of the Food and Agriculture Organization, where food security is "a situation that exists when all people, at all times,



<sup>113</sup> H. Lin, quoted in M.D. Johnson, 'Safeguarding socialism: The origins, evolution, and expansion of China's total security paradigm', *Sinopsis*, 11 June 2020, <https://sinopsis.cz/en/johnson-safeguarding-socialism/>

<sup>114</sup> J. Zhou, 'China and (world) food security', *SIPRI*, 16 October 2016, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2016/china-and-world-food-security>

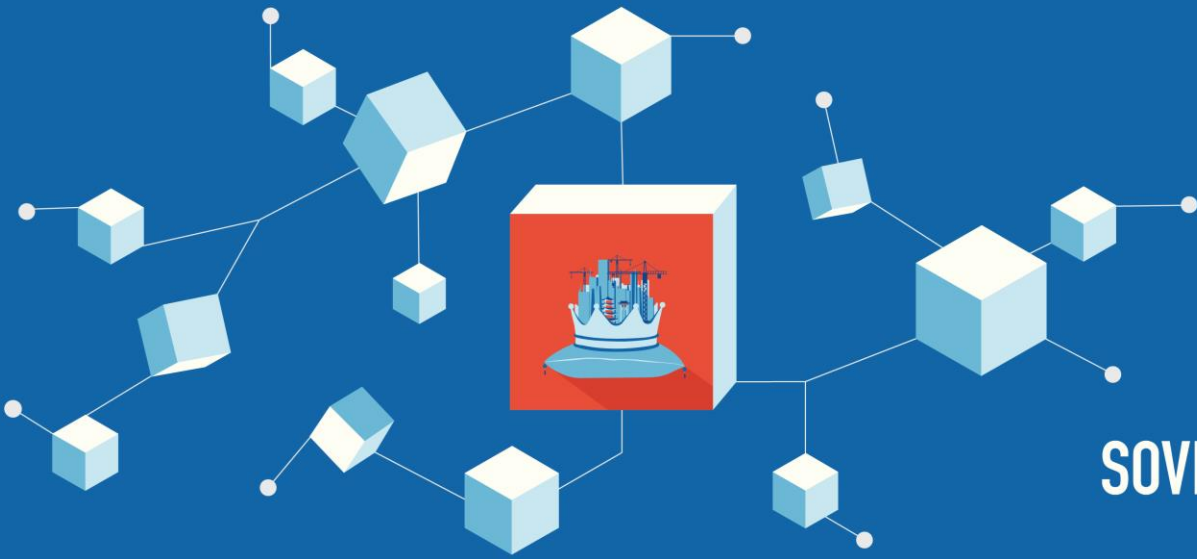
have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>115</sup>

**Human security** is understood in China as focused on the [collective humankind](#), rather than emphasizing security for individuals, which is normally at the heart of human security discourses. In the Chinese conception, the state is seen as the key guarantor of human security, rather than as a threat to it.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> World Food Programme, 'Rome Declaration on World Food Security', 13 – 17 November 1996, *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, <http://www.fao.org/3/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>

<sup>116</sup> S. Breslin, 'Debating human security in China: towards discursive power?', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 2015, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/29189887.pdf>



SOVEREIGNTY  
主权

# SOVEREIGNTY

主权, 国权

Jerker Hellström

## BRIEF

The concept of state sovereignty can be defined as the exclusive right of states to govern within their own territory. In China, sovereignty should be understood as absolute and perpetual state power, where the state is governed by the Chinese Communist Party. Moreover, it is intimately linked to China's emphasis on mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, as outlined in the (1954) Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.<sup>117</sup> China is a principled defender of a strong norm of sovereignty and includes state sovereignty as one of its non-negotiable "national core interests", of which the overarching interest is the Communist Party's continued monopoly on power. From the Communist Party's perspective, sovereignty includes the exclusive right of the government of a sovereign nation to exercise control over issues within its own borders, including, for example, its political, economic, cultural and technological activities. The CCP includes the territory within China's *de jure* borders, as well as its territorial claims, in its concept of state sovereignty. As such, Taiwan and land formations in the South China Sea, for example, set the outer geographical boundaries of its claims to state sovereignty.

## ANALYSIS

China bases its concept of state sovereignty on selective historical territorial claims. For example, the CCP claims to have sovereignty over Taiwan dating back to the Qing empire (1644-1911). While it does not claim parts of present-day Mongolia, which were once ruled by the Yuan empire (1271-1368) (and later the Qing empire), Beijing argues that parts of the South China Sea were under Chinese jurisdiction during the same period and should therefore be recognized as its sovereign territory. Despite a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 finding that China's "historical" claims in the South China Sea have no legal basis, Beijing continues to maintain this position.

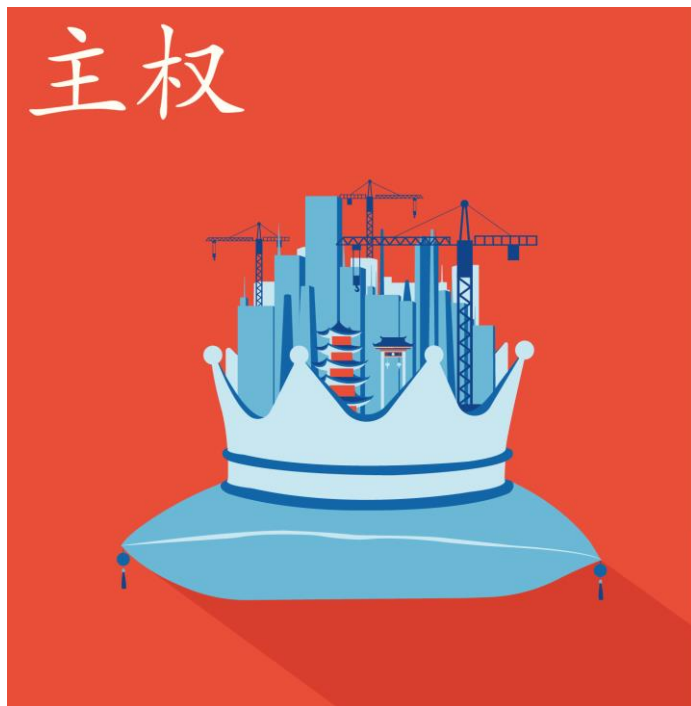
In 2009 China apparently won support from the United States for its sovereignty and territorial claims when a joint statement issued by the Obama-Hu Jintao summit included language suggesting that the parties has agreed to respect each other's "core interests".<sup>118</sup> As China's core interests include China's sovereignty over Taiwan, the statement could be interpreted as a recognition that Taiwan is a part of China, which

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<sup>117</sup> United Nations, 'Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on trade and intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India', 29 April 1954, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20299/v299.pdf>

<sup>118</sup> The White House, 'U.S.-China Joint Statement', *The White House*, 17 November 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/realitycheck/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>





would have been a major shift in America's China policy. The term "core interests" did not appear in the joint statement for the second Hu-Obama summit.<sup>119</sup>

China's adherence to Westphalian norms of sovereignty is another strong influence over its posture in the international human rights debate. China insists that a country's level of development, culture and values has to be taken into account, which places strict limits on international human rights monitoring and enforcement.

China tends to regard humanitarian intervention with great suspicion, arguing that it could serve as a pretext for Western countries to interfere in the domestic affairs of other states, thereby threatening their sovereignty.<sup>120</sup>

**Cyber sovereignty** should be understood as referring to China's efforts to control the flow of information available to internet users in China in order to ensure social stability and regime legitimacy, while playing a leading role in the global governance of cyberspace. As such, "cyber sovereignty" constitutes a pushback against ideas that cyberspace should be a free, open and global platform governed primarily by a bottom-up approach.

**Cultural sovereignty** can be defined as the state's right to promote its cultural interests independently, i.e. without external interference. The CCP claims jurisdiction over issues relating to Chinese culture in other countries, when official narratives are challenged. In October 2020, for example, the Chinese authorities attempted to censor an exhibition on Genghis Khan at a Museum in Nantes, France. [According to the museum](#), Chinese officials wanted to rewrite the history of Mongolia.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>119</sup> R.C. Bush, 'Uncharted Strait: The Future of China-Taiwan Relations', Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 2013, p. 222.

<sup>120</sup> Y., Zhu, 'China and International 'Human Rights Diplomacy', *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 09, No. 02, 2011, pp. 222-232, <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S0219747211000148>.

<sup>121</sup> K. Jhala, 'Chinese interference derails Genghis Khan exhibition in France', *The Art Newspaper*, 14 October 2020, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/genghis-khan-exhibition-nantes-cancelled-censorship-chinese-government>

**Religious sovereignty** is rarely invoked in Chinese discourse, but the fact that the Chinese Communist Party asserts sovereignty over religious affairs outside its borders makes it worth mentioning here. For example, Beijing claims to be the highest authority in Tibetan Buddhism, despite the Party's secular nature. While the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, the highest spiritual authority in Tibetan Buddhism, resides in India, the CCP insists that it has the sovereign right to identify and appoint the next Dalai Lama.

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