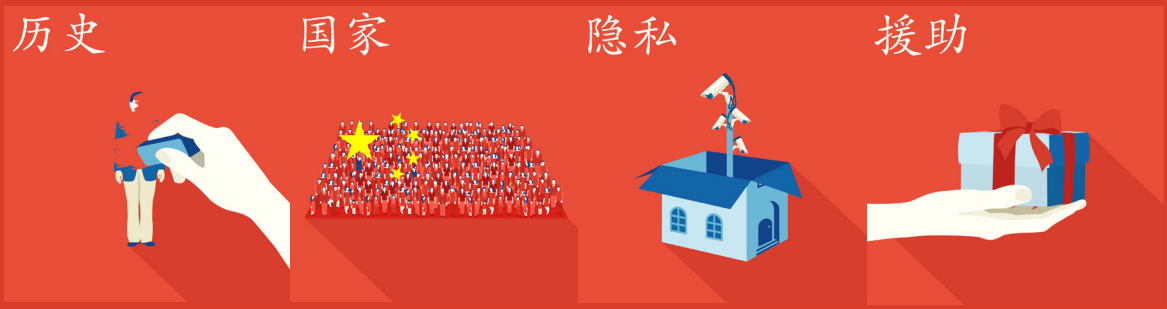

DECODING CHINA DICTIONARY

SECOND EDITION

Edited by Malin Oud and Katja Drinhausen

Contributions by David Bandurski, Katja Drinhausen, Jerker Hellström, Malin Oud and Marina Rudyak

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Second Edition, 2023

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Decoding China Dictionary is an independent non-profit project started by a group of China specialists with extensive academic and practical experience working on the Chinese political system, law, media, and international relations, as well as engagement with Chinese counterparts.

The main purpose of the project is to strengthen China expertise by explaining how key terms in international relations are understood and used by the Chinese government and affiliated party-state actors, and how that differs from their common understanding in the normative framework of the EU and UN. We draw primarily on and reference official sources in Chinese or in English.

Content in the dictionary is authored and compiled by the founding members and draws on previous work and feedback from scholars in the field. You can find the background of each member below.

The Decoding China Dictionary provides the content free of charge via our website http://www.decodingchina.eu and in PDF form. To be able to do this, we are grateful for the financial assistance to develop, host and expand the dictionary, organize events, pay our illustrator, graphic designers, web designers and editors, as well as translators to make the Decoding China Dictionary available in more languages.

If you want to support the project or invite us to speak about our work, please write to info@decodingchina.eu.

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You can find an overview of all supporters and their contributions on our website.

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INTERPRETING CHINA IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DIPLOMACY

China has long abandoned its previous foreign policy of "keeping a low profile and biding one's time". Instead, it has become an active international actor and norm entrepreneur in the UN and at other multilateral fora.[1] China's new position as a major global power is having a profound impact on international relations and global governance. European policymakers, business representatives, 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.[2] All major transnational NGOs are active in countries that are part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. The PRC is also an increasingly important security actor.

These ambitions were renewed and reformed when Xi Jinping announced China's new Global Development Initiative at a UN General Assembly in September 2021. Xi followed up with a proposal for a new Global Security Initiative (GSI) in April 2022 at the Boao Forum for Asia, which was further elaborated upon in a February 2023 concept paper.[3] Both initiatives strive to establish China as a provider of global goods through aid, opportunities for development and geopolitical rebalancing.[4] They also promote the Party State's vision for an international order that is more aligned with the political values and priorities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), especially its understanding of security and sovereignty.

China's growing economic and political power has spurred debates around the world about how best to engage with the country on a range of issues, from human rights to climate cooperation, science, 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".[5] A central conundrum for policymakers in liberal democracies is that, while four decades of 'reform and opening up' have transformed China from an impoverished nation into the world's second largest economy, the current leadership has rolled back previous political reforms of cautious liberalization and separation of party and state. China remains an authoritarian one-party state. At the 20th Party Congress in late 2022, Xi Jinping was reaffirmed as Party, and thus, state leader. Under his leadership, China continues to expand CCP control over all aspects of society, seeks modernisation through technological and scientific progress, and demands a major role on the world stage as part of the country's "rejuvenation".[6]

Unfortunately, Europe's recognition of China's rise to global-power status has not been matched by adequate investment in knowledge about the country. *The Economist* queried whether democracies can compete with China without understanding it and warned of a "gradual hollowing out" of expertise on the country.[7] The numbers of students choosing to study Chinese languages or area studies at universities are falling, and European diplomats and policymakers who are proficient in Chinese are as rare today as they were thirty years ago. Lack of exchange and insights have been amplified through pandemic-related travel restrictions and the increasing controls China's government imposes on international engagement with scholars and policymakers.[8]

That expertise is needed more than ever. Ideas promoted and endorsed by the Party State 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 CCP General Secretary 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".[9] The Chinese government spends significant efforts both internationally and domestically on promoting a "correct understanding" of China, i.e., one aligned with the priorities of the Chinese Party State.

China's leadership strives to present the country as a benevolent and responsible international power, a champion of fair multilateralism and a leader of the developing world.[10] 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 lines of north, south, east and west since its founding in 1945. When human rights concerns are raised, China accuses its critics of "politicisation" 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 based on "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 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."[11] By contrast, in an article in the Party's leading theoretical journal *Qiushi* in 2019, Xi Jinping vowed 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."[12]

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 prioritises party-state stability – as the collective interest of the 'people' – over the rights of the individual, and uses it to legitimise repressive measures.. For example, the crackdowns in Xinjiang and Hong Kong are routinely framed in terms of human rights protection and good governance.[13]

This conceptual framing is no coincidence. It is the outcome of decades of coordinated initiatives by the Chinese leadership to develop China's own discursive system and to build its discourse power.[14] Domestically, the Chinese government has always paid close attention to propaganda and how to "do things with words". 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 1989 that he considered insufficient ideological and political education to be the biggest reform failure of the 1980s.[15] But the long-term approach taken by the Party State was not the blanket repression of terms, but rather their integration into the CCP's ideological canon and redefinition in a way that renders them harmless to its claim on power.

Many of the concepts discussed in this volume filtered into 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. Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 sparked hopes that a further convergence of values and systems would occur. And indeed, the term human rights was introduced in the Chinese *Constitution* in 2004, initially hailed as a new era of constitutional rights protection.[16] Democracy, freedom and the rule of law are now part of the canon of core socialist values being promoted under Xi Jinping, whose musings on human rights, diplomacy, security and modernisation have been published in an ever-expanding canon of Xi Jinping Thought.[17]

But 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 independent of 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.[18] 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, such as the *Hong Kong National Security Law*.[19]

China's economic success and role as a motor of global growth in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and, more recently, its management of the Covid-19 pandemic boosted confidence in China's governance system as an alternative and superior model. Around the CCP's centenary on 1 July 2021, China's global outreach intensified. A new campaign was initiated to instil a correct and positive understanding of the Party and China's role in the world, calling for proper ideological work in facing changes and challenges in the global arena.[20]

The ultimate goal is to establish China's viewpoints and practices in the international order. As Xi Jinping has called for on numerous occasions since 2013, "Chinese values" and "solutions" should be promoted internationally, most prominently the concept of "a community of shared future for mankind" (人类命运共同体), where countries follow their own path, cooperate where desired and refrain from criticising each other.[21] China's government wants to establish itself as model that other countries emulate. This is evident in its efforts to present China as a "democracy that works" in a White Paper in December 2021 and at various events.[22] It is equally apparent in China's rhetoric around its partnership with Russia, portraying both as "progressive forces" against Western hegemony and as defenders of peace and sovereignty.[23]

The space for international exchange and cooperation within China has shrunk significantly after the passing of the *Foreign NGO Law* in 2017.[24] Conflicts over human rights issues and China's verbal support for Russia's interests after its invasion of Ukraine have further deepened the divide. But opportunities for engagement and cooperation in international organisations and third countries remain. Chinese institutions and non-governmental organisations are "going global". They, too, are tasked with strengthening China's "discourse power" and defending its "right to speak". Some of the most prominent Chinese organisations on the global stage are closely affiliated with the Chinese state and better characterised as GONGOs (government-organised non-governmental organisations). Even more independent social actors and NGOs also often frame their work in accordance with officially sanctioned terms and CCP priorities for strategic reasons.

China's rise as a global power in a multipolar world means increasing competition over international values and standards. Policymakers worldwide must come to terms with the fact that China, like other great powers, uses its growing economic and political clout to shape the international order. But a rules-based world order relies on a global consensus on what the underpinning norms entail. When the meaning of terms like rule of law, human rights, democracy, and sovereignty become blurred, international norms are undermined. Simply brushing aside China's efforts to reinterpret established norms and promote an alternative value system won't suffice to meet this challenge. Instead, liberal democracies need to strengthen and protect their core democratic values, and counter China's rhetoric – by making a compelling argument for why international norms in their liberal, universal sense matter and what benefits they hold for citizens.

The "Decoding China Dictionary" was developed by a group of China specialists with the aim of providing policymakers and practitioners with a simple and practical tool to help them decipher the official Chinese narrative, or "New China Newspeak".[25] To enable informed engagement with Chinese counterparts, actors in Europe and elsewhere need to understand the official meaning of frequently invoked concepts and key terms in international relations. It is our hope that this dictionary will serve as a point of reference for com-

munication and strategy development. 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 many of these concepts within China also tells a story of contestation and differing views 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*.[26] 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.

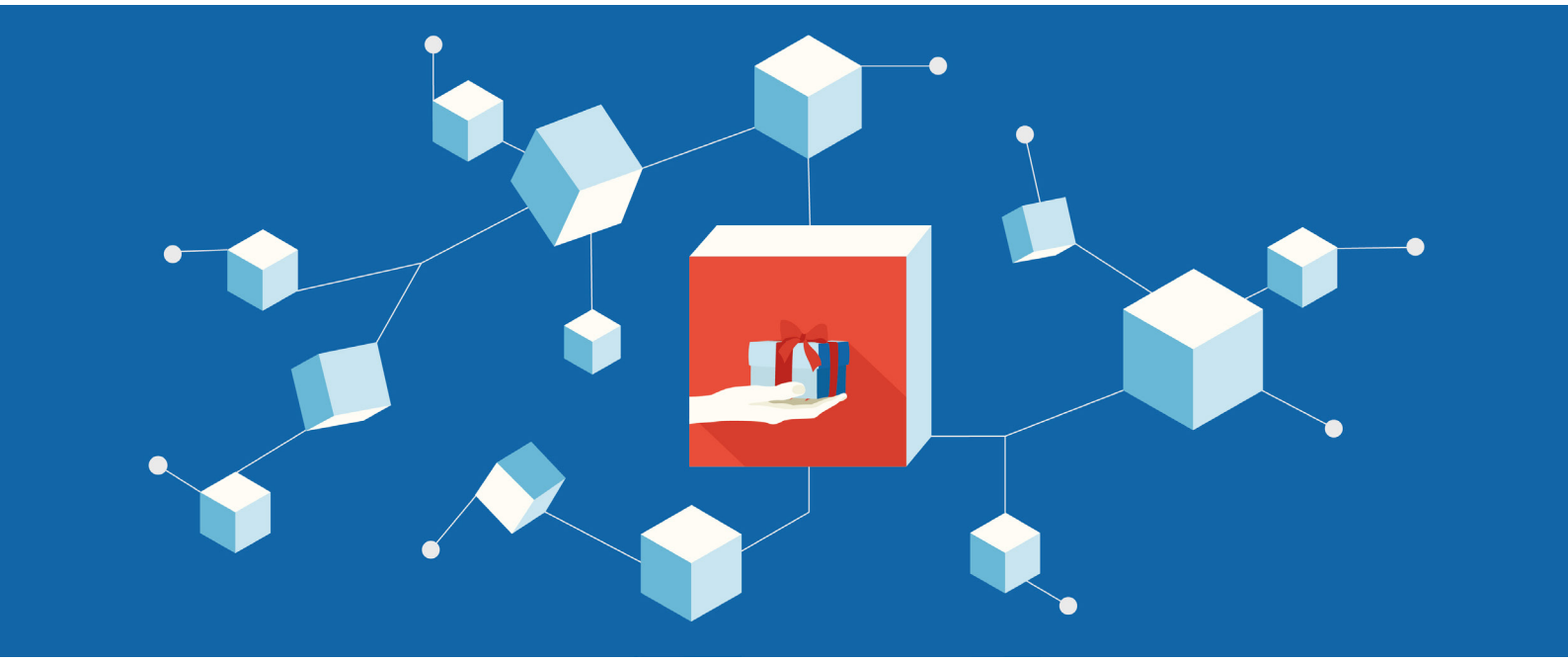
Finally, we would like to acknowledge the sinologists and decoding experts whose work has informed and inspired this project. We have included some key works in the list of references and thank Geremie Barmé, Magnus Fiskejö, Lars Fredén, Courtney Fung, Fredrik Fällman, Hurst Hannum, Isabel Hilton, Manoj Kawalramani, James Miles, Eva Pils, Nadège Rolland, Joshua Rosenzweig, Rolf Schwartz, Marina Svensson, and Jörg Wuttke for their insightful, generous, and encouraging comments on our drafts.

Malin Oud and Katja Drinhausen

Stockholm and Berlin

February 27, 2023

援助



AID
援助

Marina Rudyak

BRIEF

In Europe, like in other major industrialised donor countries, aid is broadly understood as the transfer of resources from rich (donor) to poorer (developing) countries, with the aim of promoting social and economic development. A commonly held view is that aid should be charitable, or at least with a gift element, even though in many cases aid demonstrably has been dominated by the political, strategic, and economic interests of donor countries.

In Chinese usage, "aid" is largely understood as mutual and reciprocal. Chinese official discourse distinguishes between "development aid" (发展援助) from the West and Chinese "foreign aid" (对外援助) to other states. This is to emphasize that China is not a "donor country" and does not provide "development aid". China defines its foreign aid as South-South Cooperation and frames it in terms of "equality" (平等), "friendship" (友谊) and "mutual benefit" (互利). While aid may be reciprocated directly through the exchange of goods or resources, politically, it is linked to an expected increase in relational power – namely, that having received Chinese aid, recipients will return the favour by politically supporting Chinese positions, e.g., in international organisations.

ANALYSIS

The first recipients of Chinese foreign aid were North Korea and North Vietnam in 1950. After the Bandung Conference of 1955, aid was extended to numerous recently decolonised countries. From the beginning, foreign aid was understood as a strategic tool to help China break through international isolation: in return for giving economic aid, China received diplomatic recognition. Zhou Enlai explained in 1956 that despite its own poverty China was helping other countries because "we have understood that economic independence

is fundamental to political independence" – meaning – from the West.[27] In 1964, Zhou toured ten African countries and promulgated the "Eight Principles of Chinese Foreign Aid", the core of which – namely, that aid should not be tied to any political conditions except for the non-recognition of Taiwan – is still valid today.[28] It was also thanks to foreign aid that the PRC was voted onto the China seat in the UN in 1971 with the votes of developing countries, while Taiwan was excluded.

With the onset of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, high foreign aid spending came under scrutiny, as China – ranked among the world's 20 poorest countries – needed the scarce resources for its ambitious development and modernisation program. However, Deng Xiaoping concluded that giving aid would always be a strategic necessity for China.[29] Thus, the State Council noted in 1980, referring to China's UN accession, that "China helped others, and they supported us [in return]. The international status China has achieved is inseparable from the support of friendly countries".[30]

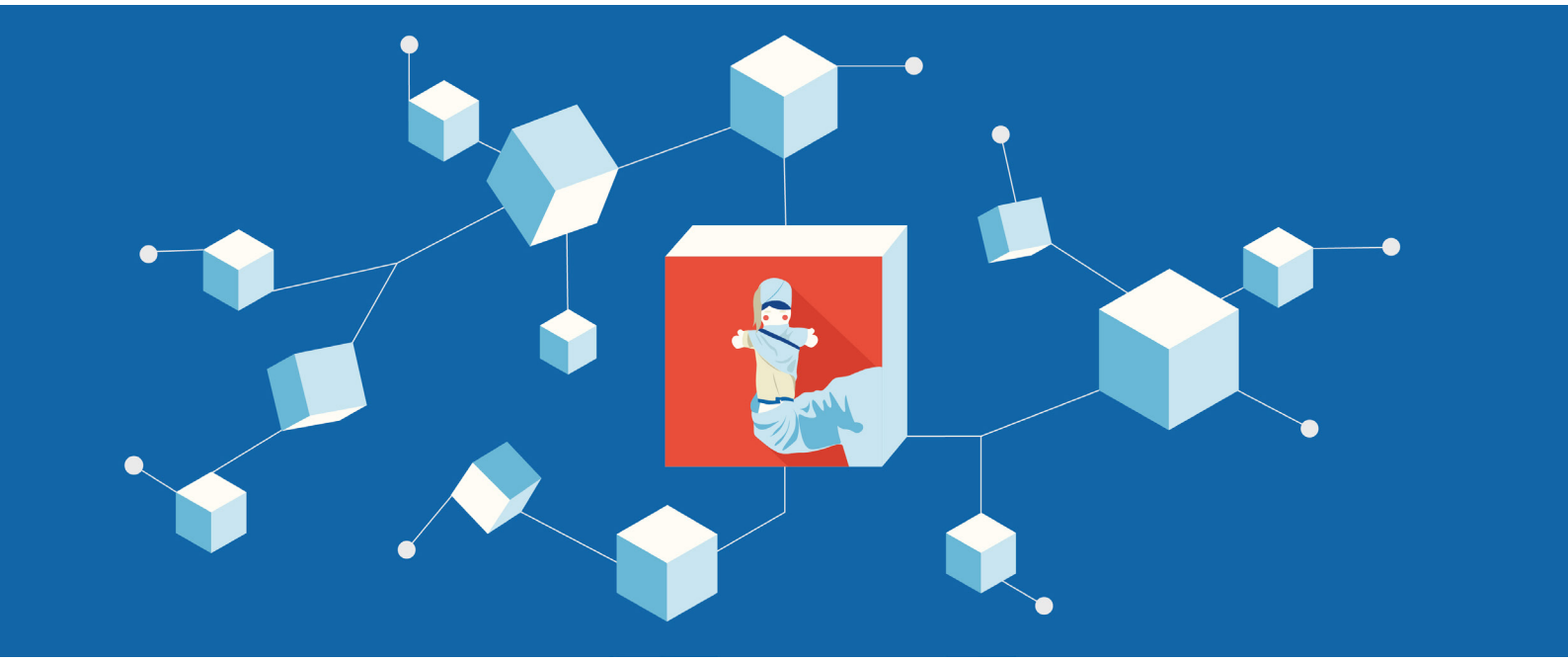
Continuing aid was underpinned by the assumption that since aid was reciprocated in the past, it would be reciprocated in the future. In that same logic, Chinese aid peaked again after 1989, when China was subject to international sanctions following the Tiananmen Square crackdown and Taiwan attempted to re-enter the UN in 1990. To date, Chinese officials stress in talks with African leaders how grateful China is for the support it received in the UN. In his address to the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit in 2021, Xi Jinping expressed his "heartfelt gratitude to the vast number of African friends who supported China […] in restoring its rightful seat in the United Nations."[31]

The term "aid" is very widely defined in Chinese discourse: almost everything in the range of "you need it – we have it" can be termed as "help" or "aid". It can mean *helping* least developed countries fight poverty, or refer to foreign investment or construction by Chinese companies done with the help of export subsidies. And, since aid is often packaged with trade and investment, all Chinese development finance, whether commercial or charitable, may appear as aid to recipients. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) databases in Cambodia and the Philippines, for example, include both Chinese aid concessional loans and non-aid preferential export buyer's credits. This makes Chinese aid look bigger than it actually is, also relative to aid from DAC[32] donor countries.

A controversy, which pointedly illustrates the different understandings of the term "aid", erupted in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic when in March 2020, China sent protective gear to Italy labelled with the words "The friendship road knows no borders." While the Italian "Five Star Movement" presented it as a "gift", European and American journalists accused China of masking a commercial deal as "politics of generosity".[33] However, a press statement of Foreign Minister Wang Yi suggests that the misunderstanding was on the European side: Wang stated that despite its own medical supply shortage, China would "provide medical *aid* to Italy and increase its efforts to *export* much-needed supplies and equipment".[34] For China, export was aid.

The Chinese approach to aid is more pragmatic than charitable. To be sure, China expects – explicitly and implicitly – reciprocation. But by ascribing to developing countries, unlike DAC donors, the ability to reciprocate and by embedding its aid in the rhetoric of "equality", "friendship", and "mutual benefit", China symbolically creates a relationship of equals. This dimension often does not receive sufficient attention in the West.

自治



AUTONOMY
自治

Jerker Hellström

BRIEF

While the term "autonomy" lacks a generally accepted definition in international law, it is often understood as political or governmental autonomy, i.e., self-government or independence of action at the internal or domestic level.[35]

Through a compromise between the sovereign state and peoples who strive for self-determination, states may use autonomy arrangements to protect their territorial integrity while safeguarding the rights of minorities, and to avoid discord. However, governments differ in their compliance to such commitments. State actors striving to assert more control over autonomous areas in the name of national unity and territorial integrity may, for example, see a need to limit the degree of autonomy of self-ruling groups.

For its part, the Chinese government has continuously redefined the concept of autonomy and what it entails.[36] Tibet, Xinjiang, and three other Chinese regions hold the official status of being "autonomous" within the People's Republic of China. The PRC government has promised that Hong Kong would enjoy a "high degree of autonomy" from Beijing and made similar vows to the citizens of Taiwan should they ever embrace the Communist Party's (CCP) leadership. Nevertheless, China's redefinition of autonomy in Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong has prompted scepticism over its ability to deliver on its promises of autonomy to the people of Taiwan.

ANALYSIS

Socialist regimes were among the first states to establish institutions of formal autonomy.[37] According to CCP policy, China's ethnic minorities enjoy regional autonomy in communities where they live in higher concentration – "under the unified leadership of the state".[38] Moreover, Chinese law stipulates that a governor of an autonomous region must belong to the ethnic minority which exercises autonomy.

Nevertheless, actual power rests not with the governors but with the regional Party Secretaries, who have almost exclusively belonged to the Han majority population.[39] Chinese legal scholar Yu Xingzhong concludes that the political system specified in the *PRC Autonomy Law* "certainly does not correspond to what is usually understood [by] the term 'autonomy'".[40]

The CCP in 1951 signed an agreement with Tibetan representatives in which it promised the Tibetan people the right to exercise national regional autonomy under the PRC government.[41] The Tibetan government with the Dalai Lama as its head would govern the Tibet Autonomous Region, but it eventually became evident that it was merely a transitional and temporary arrangement which would not involve the preservation of Tibet's political, religious and social institutions.[42] The Dalai Lama's subsequent call for "genuine autonomy" (within the PRC) has been dismissed by Beijing as an attempt to overthrow its grip on power.[43]

The "autonomous" institutions of the *Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region* (XUAR), strongly resemble those in China's other autonomous regions.[44] For instance, Xinjiang's People's Congress is subject to central veto power, and China's supreme court retains supervisory power over courts in the region. The Party State's efforts to fight the so-called "three forces" (三股势力) – separatism, extremism and terrorism – in Xinjiang have further decreased the prospects for genuine autonomy. Rather than responding to calls for dialogue on the issue of autonomy[45], Beijing has adopted hard-line policies involving large-scale arbitrary detention of members of Muslim minority groups and other measures which "may constitute … crimes against humanity" according to a UN assessment.[46]

For Hong Kong, the Chinese government vowed to preserve its way of life for at least fifty years after the handover in 1997, according to the "one country, two systems" formula, and a "high degree" of autonomy.[47] PRC laws would, by and large, not apply in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and mainland officials were not to interfere in the regional government's affairs. Nevertheless, the Chinese foreign ministry in 2017 stated that the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* of 1984 – by which the PRC had vowed to maintain Hong Kong's autonomy – was "not at all binding for the central government's management over Hong Kong". [48] The Chinese regime has in recent years restricted basic rights in the HKSAR, with reference to four vaguely defined crimes: secession, subversion, terrorist activities, and collusion with foreign forces.

Beijing's position on Taiwan is that it will eventually unify the *de facto* independent territory with the PRC, but that it will enjoy an autonomous status similar to that of the HKSAR.[49] The Chinese government's deviation from its original promises to Hong Kongers, Tibetans and Uyghurs on the issue of autonomy has however contributed to scepticism among Taiwan's citizens towards the proposed "high degree" of autonomy, should they one day be governed by the PRC.

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 guarantees freedom of assembly and association, laying the foundation for the development of a civil society composed of non-governmental organisations. The EU defines civil society as "all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the state".[50]

A similar commitment to independence is not to be found in China because it would contravene the overarching political maxim that the CCP leads in respect of everything, as codified in Article 1 of the Chinese *Constitution*. This principle is reflected in both regulation and types of actors present in Chinese society. 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-organised organisations (GONGO) still play a major role. The policy focus has been on regulating this growing sector and making sure all social organisations (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 organisations should participate in all aspects of social affairs as part of a new innovative approach to governing society.[51] 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 organisations 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.[52]

Before China's policy of reform and opening kicked off in the 1980s, the major party-led people's organisations such as the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and party-led grassroots organisations, 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 organisations is still off limits.[53]

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

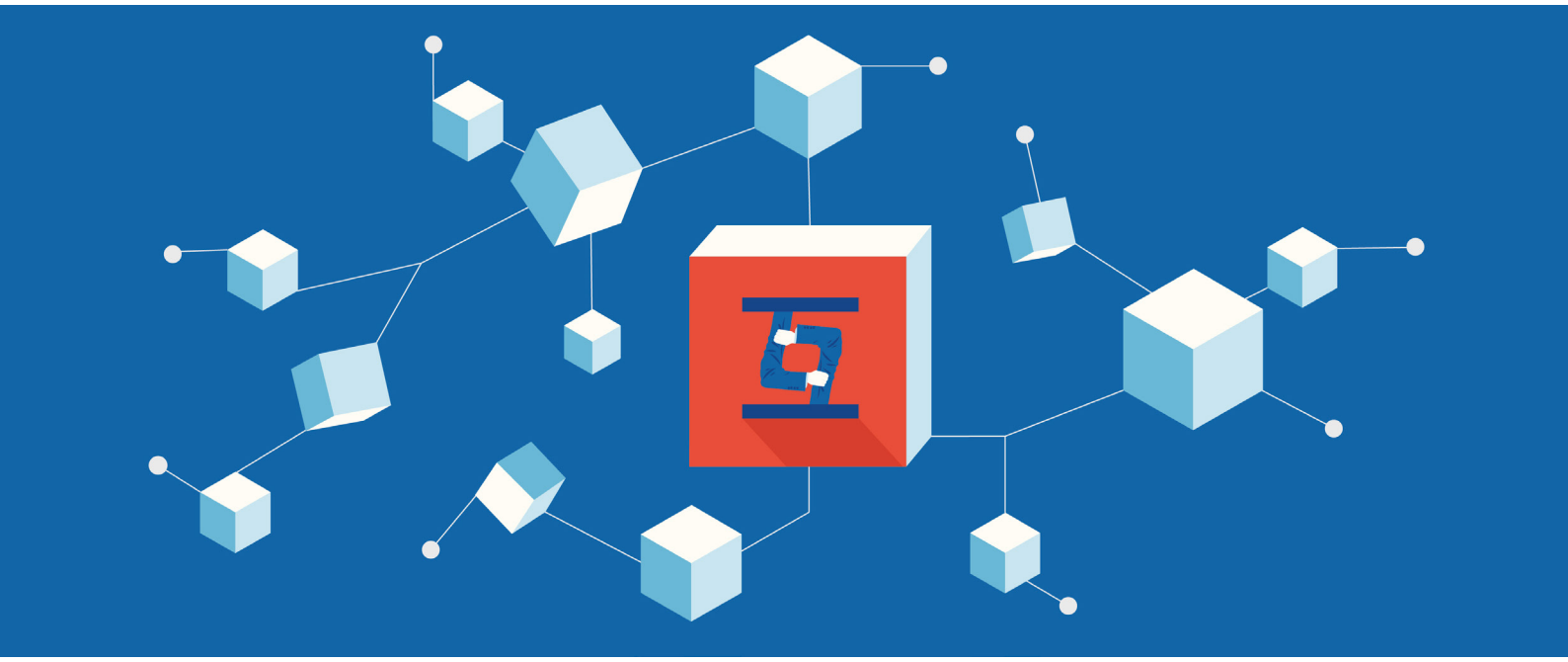
The late 2000s and early 2010s saw the rapid professionalisation of advocacy work, a proliferation of human rights lawyers, and cooperation with international actors. Internet and social media provided a platform for cross-regional and thematic networking. This triggered concerns that civil society might 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…."[54]

The mid- to late 2010s were then marked by repeated crackdowns, especially on rights-advocacy organisations. Legal and institutional reforms focused on reining in self-organisation and bringing a sector that had largely developed outside the CCP's control back under its guidance. The primary goal today is to mobilise 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 organisation. Compliance is monitored through rating systems. Since 2015, there has been an ongoing campaign to establish party cells in and ensure party members are recruited to social organisations to tie them to the Party State and communicate its expectations to them.[55] 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.[56] The *National Security Law for Hong Kong* has further dampened international exchanges and cooperation since coming into effect on 1 July 2020 by introducing the highly ambiguous offence 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.[57]

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.[58] "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 confrontational zero-sum game thinking and a Cold War mentality. 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".

In UN discourse, cooperation is understood as a means of pursuing an *existing* common goal, while 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

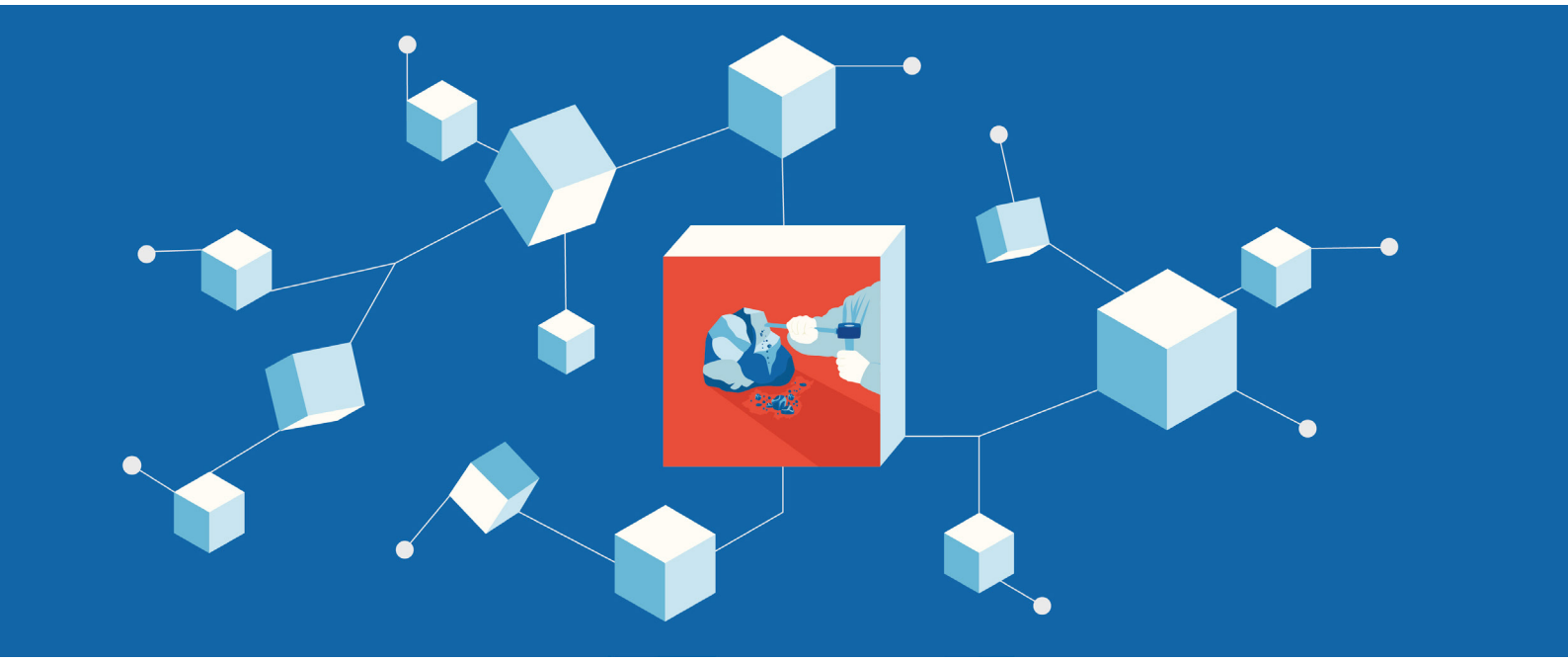
interests" in order to create *relational power*, which rests on the power of human relations.[59] This is why summit diplomacy – such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summits or the various BRI fora – plays a central role in how China conducts foreign 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 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 Covid-19, "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 a shared future for mankind" (人类命运共同体), that is, the Chinese vision of multilateralism.

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."[60] 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.[61] 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".[62]

While China's cultural industry has grown in 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 mobilising against the "cultural hegemony" of the United States and the West.[63] 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", characterised as the last of four means by which Western imperialism was visited upon China.[64] 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.[65] 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.[66] 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".[67] 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.[68] A decade later, China began prioritising public diplomacy and the development of "soft power", though only with limited results, and initiated a global media drive in which the government spent an estimated 45 billion yuan to expand state media overseas.[69]

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).[70] 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.[71] 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.[72] In his political report to the 19th 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".[73]

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.

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, public health and welfare, 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".[74]

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".[75]

The conceptualisation 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 formalised "democratic life meetings".[76] New work regulations issued in 2020 define the "centre" even more clearly and prescribe *Xi Jinping Thought* as the baseline, thus restricting divergence from central ideological guidance.[77]

Chinese citizens can vote: Articles 2 and 3 of China's *Constitution* state that the peoples exercise their power through the People's Congresses (China's legislative organs), which are created through democratic elections. Based on the *Election Law*, all citizens over 18 are eligible to stand in elections, and vote to directly elect delegates up to the county and urban district levels. However, the *Constitution* also makes clear that the PRC is a socialist state under the sole leadership of the CCP. All state institutions work under the guidance of CCP organs, and candidates for People's Congresses are generally pre-selected.[78]

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.

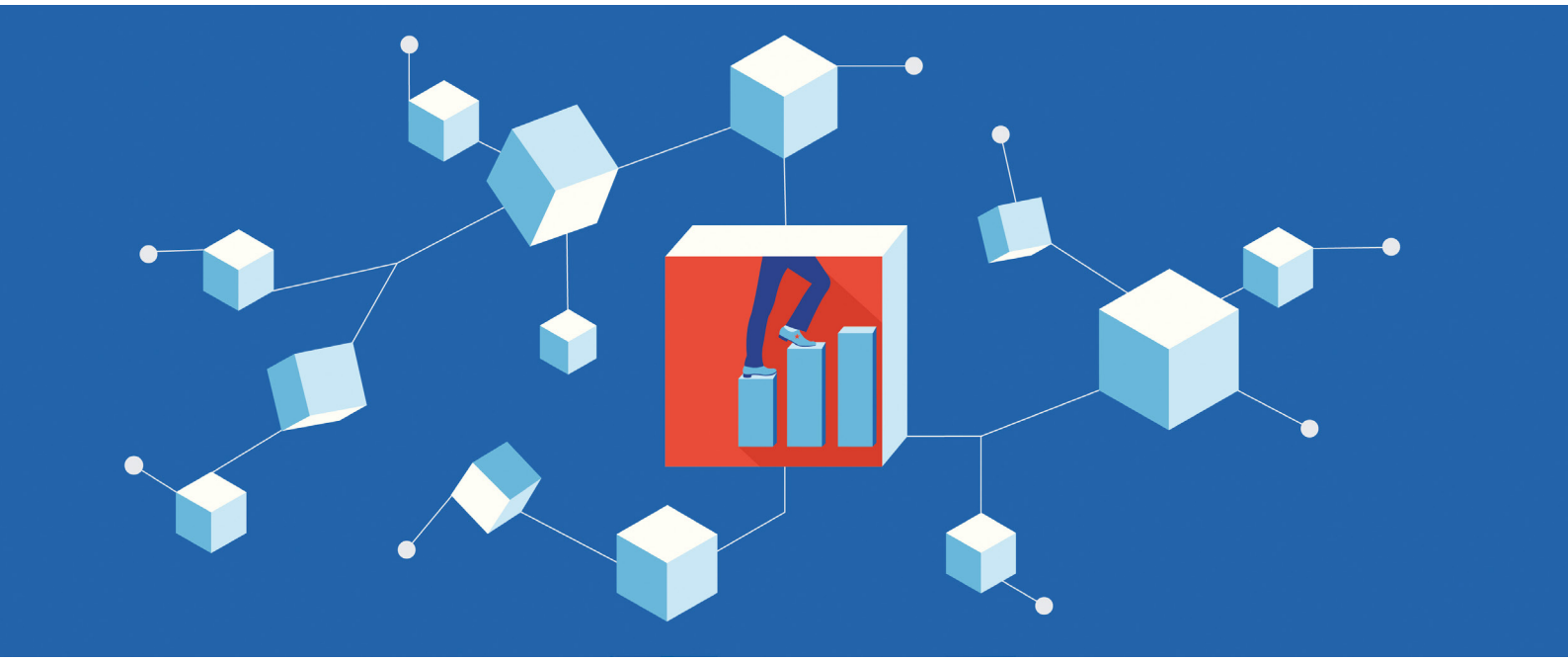
The collective and consensus-oriented ideal of democracy under centralised party leadership is juxtaposed to the confrontational, competitive style of Western democracy. Now presented as the only suitable system for China, it has not always gone uncontested. The 1989 student protests called for a reform of China's 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 the statement that "inner-party democracy is the life of the party". Leading party thinkers brought the concept back into play.[79] 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 strengthening inner-party democracy and liberalising local government elections to allow a pluralism of positions and include more non-party members.[80] 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".[81]

After Xi rose to power in 2012, "democracy" was included as one of the 12 core socialist values.[82] However, this did not mark a more liberal conceptualisation 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.[83] Liberal values were characterised as the root cause of unrest in Hong Kong.[84]

At the same time, China is advocating a "democratisation" 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.[85]

发展



DEVELOPMENT
发展

Marina Rudyak

BRIEF

In the context of DAC[86] donor countries, "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.

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 criticises 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 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".[87] 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 modernisation can be traced back to Sun Yat-sen, since then it has been perceived as a means to overcome the "underdevelopment" and "backwardness" that caused China to lose the Opium Wars.[88] 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.[89] 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.

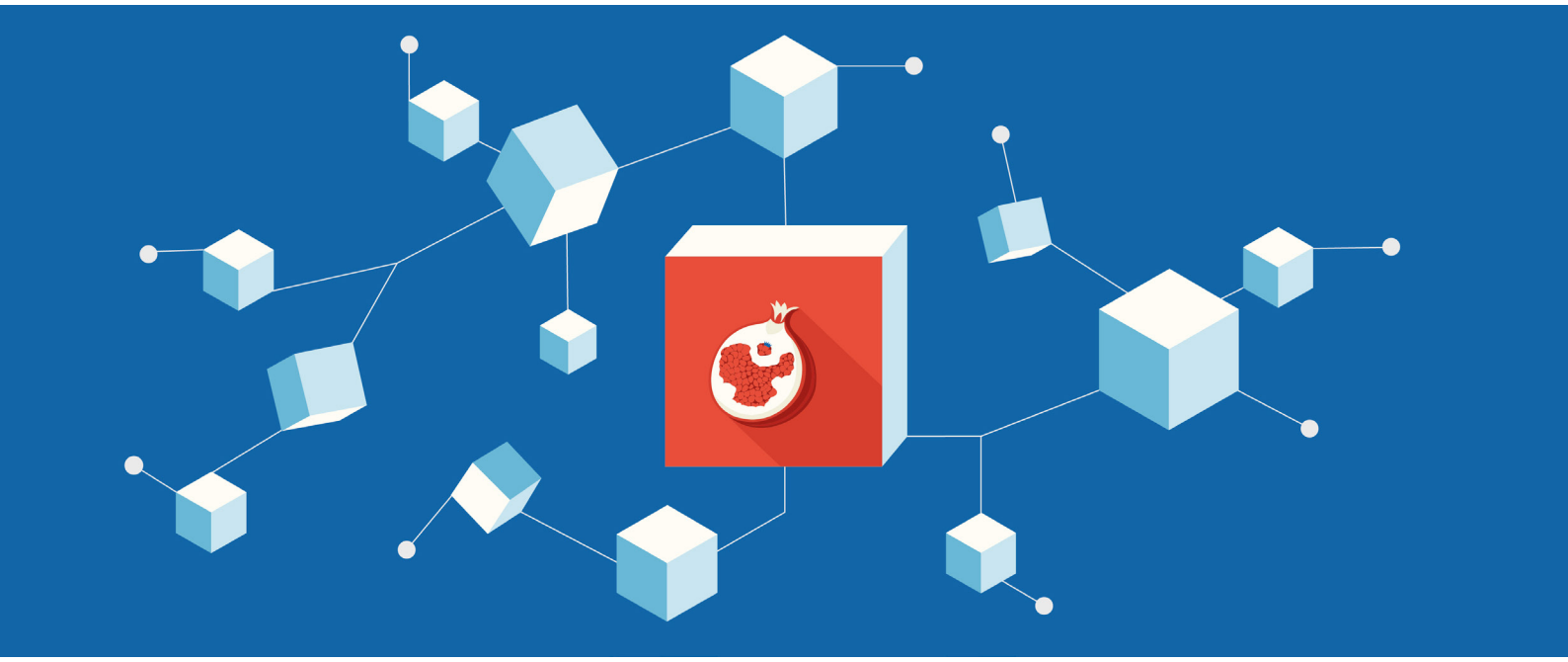
In 1978, Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded Mao Zedong as the paramount leader of the CCP, declared that China's development required "Four Modernisations" – in agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology. Shortly afterwards, the human rights activist Wei Jingsheng wrote an essay displayed on the democracy wall in Beijing, calling on the CCP to add "democracy" as a "Fifth Modernisation", for which he was arrested and later exiled to the US.[90]

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 became 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 reclaimed 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 externalisation 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 identical with the language employed when talking about the development needed to overcome the "relative backwardness" of China's western and national minority regions.[91] 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.[92] 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.

少数民族



ETHNIC MINORITY
少数民族

Jerker Hellström

BRIEF

In the UN context, the term ethnicity often factors in a group's common origin, language, customs and beliefs, but can only be subjectively and arbitrarily defined. [93] The notion of ethnic minorities is a social construct which appeared with the creation of the nation-state, which was built around a constructed nationality, or an ethnic majority.

The Chinese Communist Party has divided China's population into ethnic groups or nationalities consisting of 55 minorities and the *Han* (汉族) – the majority group which is itself a construct of the late 19th century.[94] In China's 2021 census, 125 million citizens – nearly 9 percent of the population – were classified as members of the official minority groups, such as Mongol, Tibetan and Uyghur.[95]

China's ethnic diversity and its large territory is partly the result of previous conquests. As this historical expansionism does not match the official narrative of an inherently peaceful Chinese civilisation, the CCP claims to govern a "united multi-ethnic country since ancient times".[96]

ANALYSIS

After the founding of the Republic of China in 1912, its first president Sun Yat-sen proposed that China consisted of a union of five *minzu* (民族, nationalities or ethnic groups): the Han, the Manchu, the Mongols, the (Hui) Muslims, and the Tibetans. This setup was soon replaced by the concept of *Zhonghua minzu* (中华民族) – the Chinese nation, people, or race – a super-ethnicity with a supposed common ancestry which remains a crucial part of the CCP's rhetoric on ethnic affairs.

During its early years, the Chinese Communist Party contemplated allowing non-Han minorities independence from China.[97] After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the Chinese state however embarked on an "ethnic classification project", which researchers have described as one of the great colonising missions of the twentieth century.[98] The project divided the population into ethnic groups, following Joseph Stalin's criteria: common language, territory, economy, and psychological nature. Most nationalities were classified in the 1950s, and by 1979 their number reached the current 56.

Several of the ethnic minorities officially acknowledged by the Chinese state also encompass large groups that live outside the PRC's borders, such as ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Tajiks. Some ethnic groups with a large international representation have not been included among China's 55 official minorities. These include the Hakka (which are labelled as Han) and Hmong (which have been included in the Miao minority).

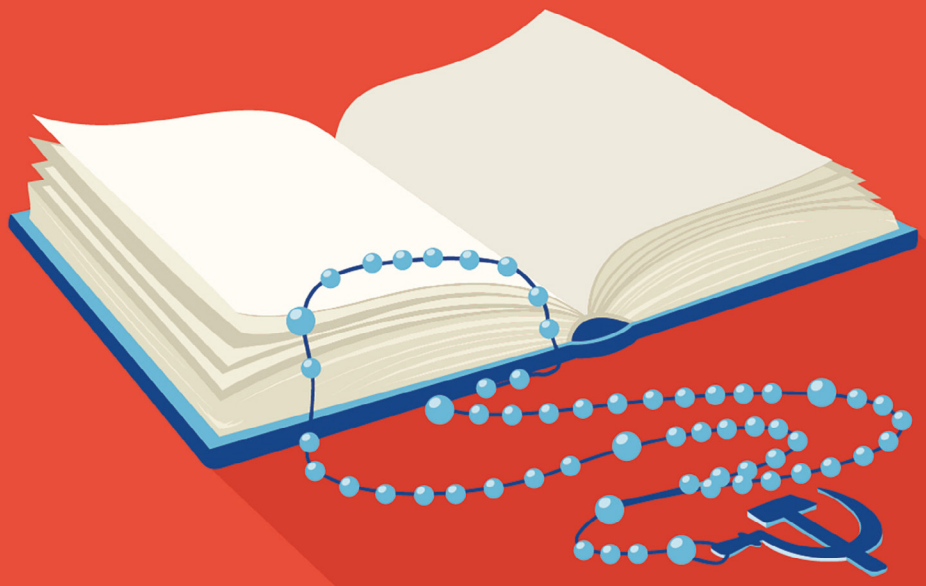
Today, official discourse portrays the ethnic minorities as unique but unified with the Han as part of the 'Chinese nation'. This concept and the associated claim of authority over these groups transcends national boundaries, as the Party also includes foreign nationals with predominantly Han, but increasingly also other heritage that is encompassed under the notion of "Chinese".[99] The Chinese government also counts the *Gaoshan* (高山族) in Taiwan as one of the PRC's ethnic minorities, by which it refers to 16 aboriginal groups officially recognised by the Taiwanese government.[100] China, for its part, claims to have no indigenous peoples, as it would otherwise have to acknowledge its history of colonisation.[101]

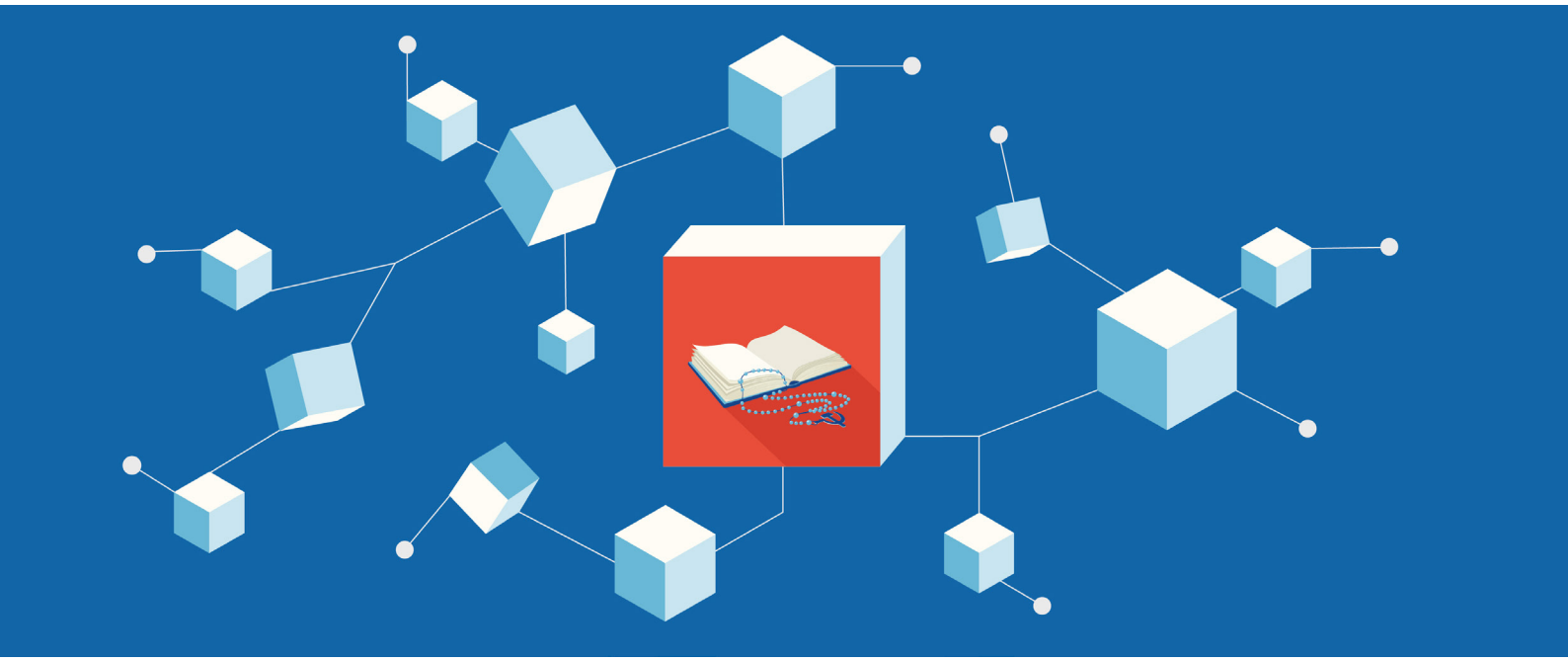
China's minorities have traditionally been regarded as primitive and even inferior, not least by Han elites.[102] In official channels, minorities tend to be stereotypically portrayed as separate from the majority; dancing, singing, and wearing traditional costumes – including delegates to the National People's Congress, China's legislature.[103]

The PRC *Constitution* states that China's nationalities are equal, and contemporary official discourse portrays their relationship as being as close as "seeds in a pomegranate".[104] According to the *Constitution*, all ethnic groups "have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own traditions and customs".

In practice, however, the ethnic minorities are increasingly exposed to a "second-generation ethnic policy" (第二代民族政策), a policy framework that emphasises a unified national identity and severely restricts the rights of minorities to their own cultures, languages, and identities.[105] The minority groups lack meaningful political participation, few of them are represented at all in the Central Committee, and it is rare for members of the ethnic minorities to reach the higher echelons of political power.

宗教信仰自由





FREEDOM OF RELIGION
宗教信仰自由

Katja Drinhausen

BRIEF

Freedom of religion is protected in international human rights law and includes the right to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, practice, and teaching.[106] This freedom may be limited by laws to protect public safety, morals, or the rights of others. Countries take different approaches in regulation. The relationship – or degree of separation – between state and church, or religious organisations, is also shaped by the historical evolution of institutions.

In English translations, China's official documents and statements often refer to "freedom of religion". But the term used in the *Constitution* and regulations is more correctly translated as "freedom of religious belief" (宗教信仰自由). Citizens are free to believe but limited in their right to express their faith. Only "normal religious activities" (正常的宗教活动) defined by the Party State are protected. Laws and policies not only place religion under close supervision, but also require religious organisations to actively propagate CCP ideology through religious content.

ANALYSIS

The Chinese state recognises five official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestant faiths. Since the early 1950s, they are organised and represented by official patriotic associations. According to a 2018 government White Paper, China has more than 200 million registered believers.[107] This does not account for the plethora of traditional folk beliefs. There are also numerous underground churches and religious groups, despite repeated attempts to integrate them into the official structures or disband them.

The CCP itself is secular. Party members are forbidden from following religious beliefs.[108] The Party's relationship with religion has been fraught and tumultuous. Under Mao, religion was regarded as backwards and something to be overcome by force. Practices and publications were banned, and many religious sites destroyed in political campaigns, such as those during the Cultural Revolution. From the mid-1980s, the reform era permitted new space for religious practice and numbers of believers rose significantly.

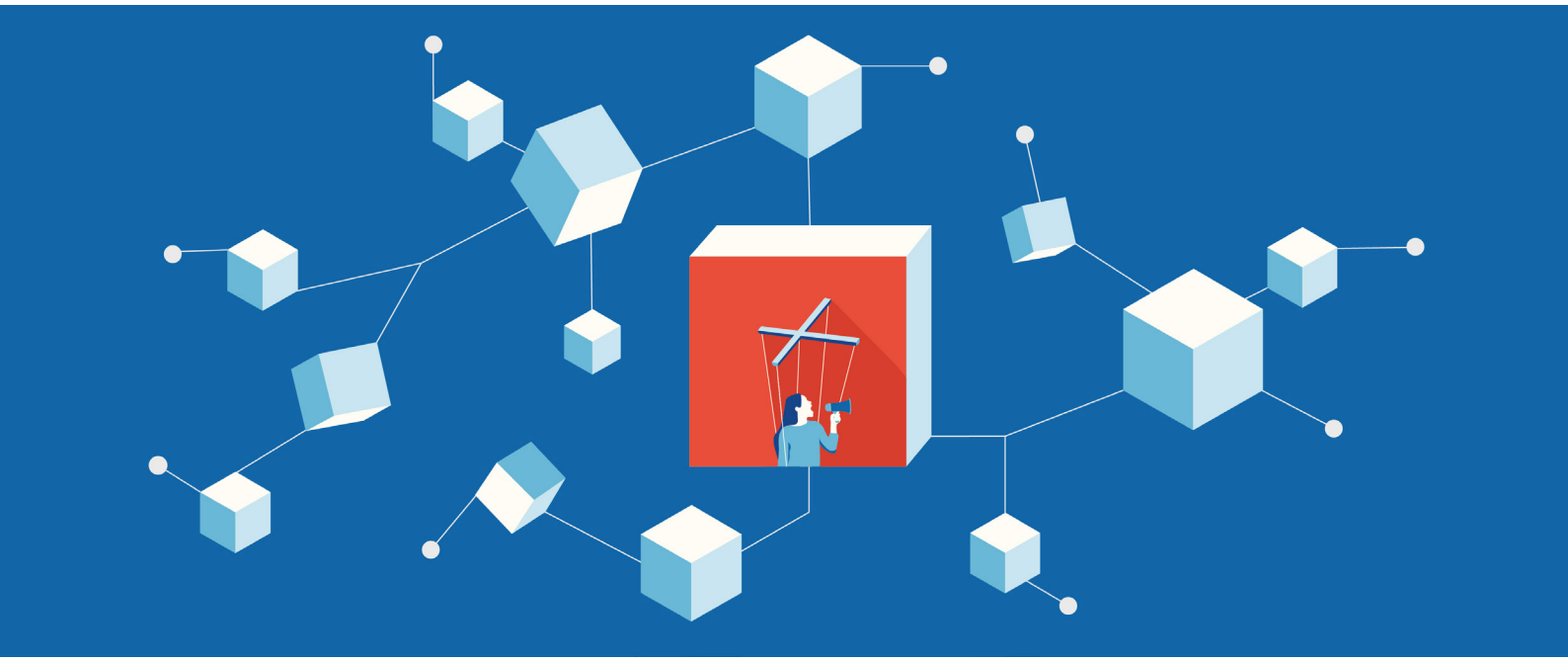
But the leadership upheld its Marxist convictions that religious beliefs were a "temporary phenomenon" and would fade with economic progress. These expectations were not met. Alongside rising membership in officially recognised religious organisations and unofficial house churches, new movements emerged, most prominently the Falun Gong. After attempts to restrict them resulted in large scale protests, China's government banned the Falun Gong in 1999, declaring it an "evil cult".[109]

The Party State remained concerned that religious faith could fuel existential risks for the regime's security. Some of the most prominent human rights activists and lawyers in the 2000s were Christians; advocates for more autonomy in minority areas were often practicing Muslims or Buddhists. From protests and violent clashes in Xinjiang to self-immolation by Tibetan monks and nuns after 2009, the party identified "misguided" or "extremist" beliefs as root causes – not failed state policies and structural discrimination of minorities. Under Xi, "foreign-originated" Islamic, Catholic, Protestant and Buddhist beliefs have come under further scrutiny. The 2018 White Paper emphasizes the need to ensure independence from foreign influence.

Ultimately, the secular Party State demands authority over key religious affairs, as when insisting that the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama follow Chinese law.[110] The distrust in religion is reflected in the tight surveillance of places of worship, especially bigger temples, churches, and mosques. The Party State regards ethnicity and religion as indicators of potential threat in individuals or groups, leading to close monitoring and various restrictions. State policies highlight the arbitrary nature of what is treated as "normal religious practices": While celebration of religious festivities, fasting and praying may be tolerated in other parts of the country and even lauded by China's diplomats abroad, some of these expressions of Muslim faith were interpreted as signs of extremism and cause for deprivation of liberty in Xinjiang.[111]

The past decade was marked by a fundamental change in approach. All religions must now "love the country and the party", support political stability and promote Chinese mainstream values and national identity. This ambition is reflected in various policy initiatives, from Five-Year-Plans for the Sinicisation (中国化) of Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism, to Daoist education plans including Xi Jinping Thought.[112] Since 2018, the State Administration of Religious Affairs has been placed under the Party's United Front Work Department to strengthen guidance. Places of worship are required to promote Party ideology and policies with banners and by inclusion in sermons, including content shared online.[113] The intention is clear: In today's China, religion must spread the gospel of the CCP.

言论自由



FREEDOM OF SPEECH
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".[114] 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".[115]

In practice, however, the ruling Chinese Communist Party places substantial restrictions on the exercise of freedom of speech, which is regarded as potentially destabilising 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

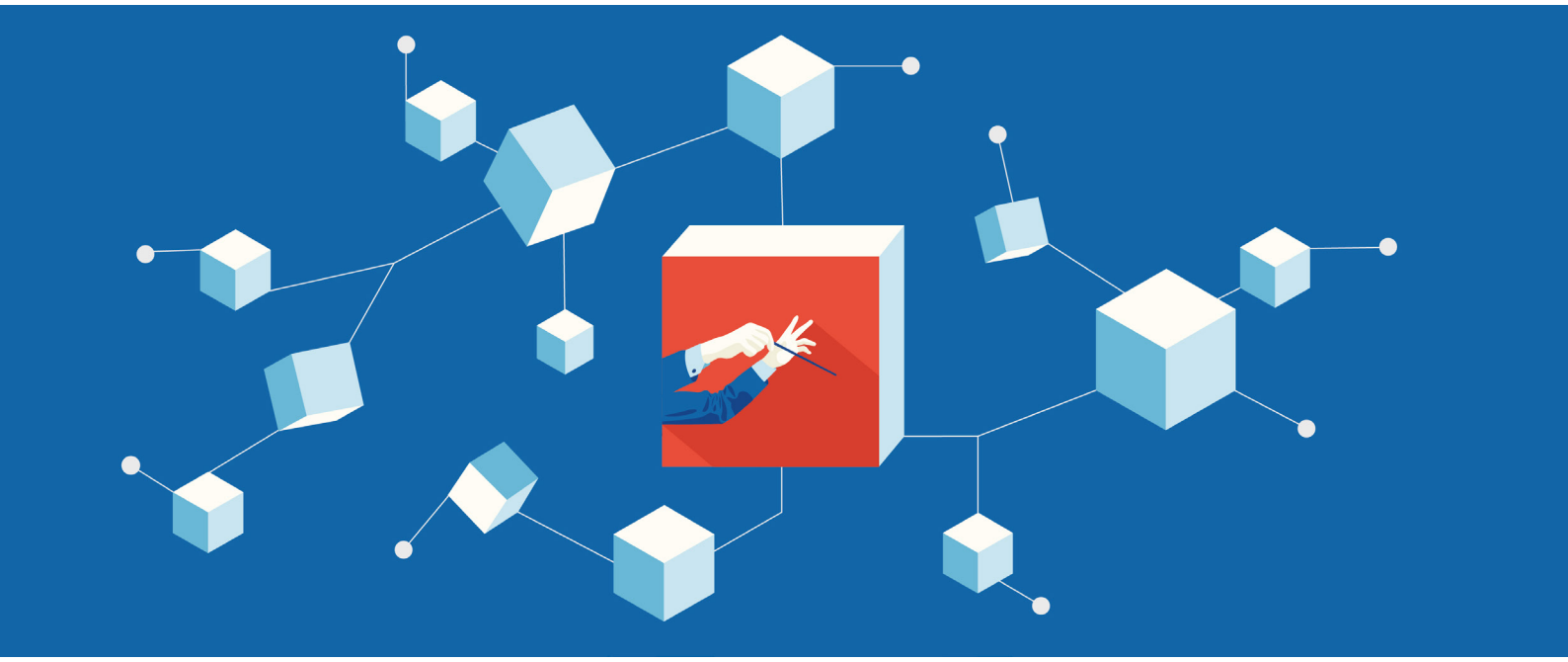
The story of the media and freedom of speech in China since the 1980s has essentially been about the constant efforts of the CCP leadership to balance the imperative of regime stability against the priorities of reform and development, the latter having resulted in a more complex and diverse society 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 the previous three decades.[116] It was in the context of this reform spirit that "freedom of speech" was included in China's 1982 *Constitution*.[117] 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 that culminated in 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.[118] 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 access to the outside world, and censoring content domestically.[119]

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. 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.[120] 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. The mandate of "public opinion guidance" has been codified in legal guidelines and extended to all users.[121] 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 "[f]reedom of expression does not equal free expression", by which they mean that speech must be curtailed in the interests of the general population.[122]

善治



GOOD GOVERNANCE
善治

Katja Drinhausen

BRIEF

The term “good governance” (善治) was first mentioned in a high-level Party document from 2014.[123] Today, it is firmly established in the political vernacular. In party-state discourse, the focus is on the efficient provision of public services, combatting 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 institutionalised 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 characterised 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.[124] 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 2000s, in step with global discussions around good governance. 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, whereas party-affiliated academics and officials have criticised this “catch all” approach and argued for staying close to the concept’s original definition in administrative science.[125] This means focusing on efficient governance, containing corruption and abuses of power and strengthening the legal and regulatory framework, rather than granting institutionalised 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.[126] 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.[127] The term *lianzheng* (廉政), often used synonymously or in conjunction with *shanzhi*, denotes incorrupt or "clean" governance.

This narrow interpretation is in line with the political-ideological discourse of the CCP that emphasises 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. 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.[128]

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 of public institutions, companies and citizens alike.[129] The drive to modernise governance emphasises technocratic, data-based control under centralised CCP leadership and supervision, rather than sharing watch-dog responsibilities with non-governmental actors or the media. This model is presented as more efficient and ultimately superior 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.[130]

历史

HISTORY
历史

David Bandurski

BRIEF

According to one globally shared view of history, its study informs human behaviour. Even in China, George Santayana's famous words, "[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it", have the familiar ring of truth.[131] But history's constant exploitation is also a fact across much of the world. Following the tradition of "correct" history writing laid down in the Soviet Union under Stalin in 1938,[132] China's ruling Communist Party has long viewed the shaping of history as a crucial means of justifying and defending the regime. Under Xi Jinping since late 2012, the emphasis on the Party's official vision of history as a source of power and legitimacy has only strengthened.[133]

ANALYSIS

Since its origin in the 1920s, the Chinese Communist Party has adhered to a materialist conception of history,[134] a doctrine of linear historical progress proceeding through class struggle. Armed with this socialist historiography, Mao Zedong established himself as China's revolutionary leader in the 1940s, and in the decades that followed this conception of history legitimised the CCP as a revolutionary and ruling Party. In the CCP's first formal resolution on history in 1945, Mao Zedong summarised the key political lessons since the Party's founding in 1921. The resolution, which followed Mao's successful purging of his political opposition, focused criticism on the supposed damage caused in the preceding decade by "left-leaning opportunism", and formalised Mao's supremacy, laying the foundation for catastrophic failure of the Cultural Revolution – a decade hugely destructive to China's cultural heritage.

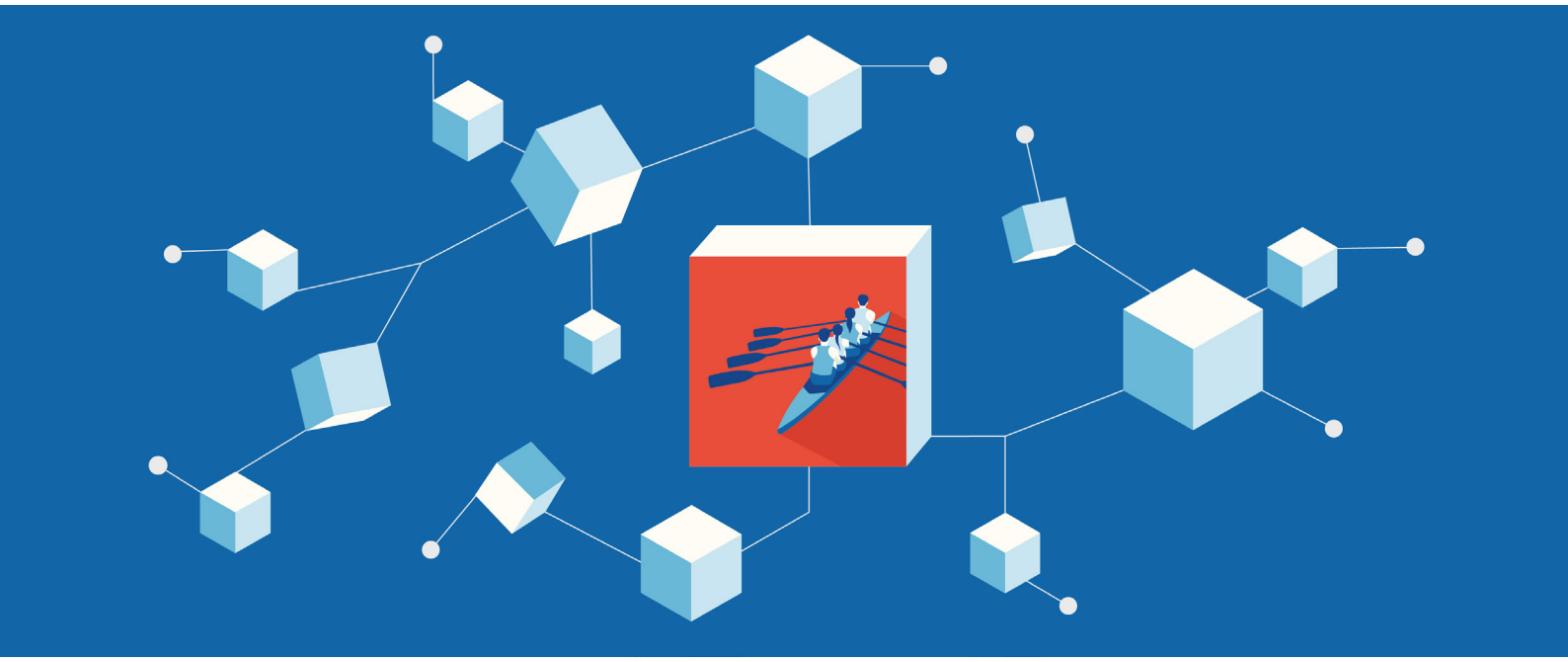
After Mao's death, the CCP set off on a new path of reform and opening. A new consensus on history was required to explain the failings of the Mao era and consolidate the foundation of power under the reform

agenda. This came in 1981 with Deng Xiaoping's *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the PRC* (关于建国以来党的若干历史问题的决议),[135] which served to reframe the reform project and settle the question of the "erroneous theories and practices" of the Cultural Revolution, while not undermining Mao's revolutionary role, insisting that Mao's "contributions to the Chinese revolution far outweigh his mistakes".[136]

Similarly, the CCP's third resolution on history, the November 2021 *Resolution on the Major Achievements and Historical Experiences of the Party's Hundred-Year Struggle* (中共中央关于党的百年奋斗重大成就和历史经验的决议), declared a new direction for the CCP and reconsolidated its claim to power under the leadership of Xi Jinping. The resolution, which established Xi as the pioneer and charismatic leader of a "New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" (中国特色社会主义新时代), cemented his power and legacy. Xi's "New Era", a period covering less than one-tenth of the CCP's 100-year history, occupied more than half of the resolution text.

Under Xi Jinping, the CCP has sharpened its focus on the Party's revolutionary history. It has spoken in the official media of "red genes" (红色基因), referring to the revolutionary spirit and Party's history as a political and cultural inheritance of the Chinese people,[137] and has even sought to safeguard its revolutionary legacy with campaigns against "historical nihilism"[138] – meaning denial of the Party's official history and its materialist historical development – and legislation against the defaming of heroes.[139] Also under Xi Jinping, there has been a renewed focus on China's "excellent traditional culture" as a resource of Party legitimacy, seen particularly in Xi's 2012 notion of the "Chinese dream" of a "great rejuvenation of the Chinese people". This idea posits China's return, after more than a century of humiliation at the hands of the West, to the centre of the world stage – a position, according to current CCP historiography, that Chinese civilisation held for much of its own history.[140]

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".[141] 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.[142]

ANALYSIS

China published its first White Paper on Human Rights in 1991.[143] 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 con-

ditions. 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 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 of 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 realisation 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.[144]

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.[145]

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".[146] In a series of high-profile speeches at the World Economic Forum in Davos, and at 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.[147]

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 Human Rights".[148] 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.[149]

国际法

INTERNATIONAL LAW
国际法

Malin Oud

BRIEF

International law is the body of rules and principles regulating the relations between states and other international actors. Based on treaties and customary law, it is an evolving concept that can be traced back some four hundred years. Fundamentally, international law requires respect for the sovereign equality of states, which means that states generally have the discretion to accept or reject proposed new international law. Since the adoption of the UN charter in 1945, international law has expanded to prohibit the use of force against another state and to encompass human rights, humanitarian law, and accountability for international crimes such as genocide and crimes against humanity, as well as to address emerging concerns like space law, internet regulation, and environmental law.

In China's understanding, the core principles of international law are state sovereignty, non-aggression, and non-interference.[150] China views the liberal, post-World War II model of international law that has been dominant since the 1990s as a tool of Western hegemony and interventionism. Since 2015, China has put forward the concept of "a community with a shared future for mankind" (人类命运共同体) on the international stage, emphasising "common" rather than universal values. This is presented as a more inclusive, democratic, and fair model than the current international system.

ANALYSIS

The PRC took its seat as "the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations" in 1971.[151] Before the reform and opening policy launched in 1978, China was largely an outsider to the international law system. With the end of the Cultural Revolution, China abandoned the ideological struggle against the capitalist West that had marked the Mao era, and instead became an active participant in key international organisations and frameworks. It ratified core treaties on trade and investment, as well as some human rights treaties. China's approach to international law has been instrumental and selective, leveraging rules that are advantageous to its development and eschewing rules that could bring disadvantages.[152] Prominent exam-

ples are China's insistence on its status as a "developing country" in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its unilateral claims regarding the South China Sea.

China does not seek to replace the established UN-centered international system, but to reshape those parts of international law that conflict with its national interests.[153] Ever since Deng Xiaoping's first speech at the UN in 1974, China has cultivated an image of a peaceful developing country and responsible great power with no hegemonic intentions, which it contrasts with Western imperialism and the West's historically self-serving role in creating international rules.[154] From its own perspective, China is the real guardian of international law. For example, the leadership argues that it was "not violating but upholding the authority and dignity of international law" by not recognising the 2016 international arbitration ruling on conflicting territorial claims between the PRC and the Philippines in the South China Sea.[155] UN investigations of the human rights situation in Hong Kong and Xinjiang are routinely discarded as "interference in China's internal affairs" and "smear campaigns" orchestrated by the West.[156]

In the last decade under Xi Jinping's leadership, China has evolved from rule-taker to aspiring rule-maker at the UN. Spurred by an increasing concern with security and stability in the face of uncertain global economic trends and democratic uprisings in other parts of the world, party-state discourse now clearly promotes a Chinese model of governance. This model combines commitment to economic globalization with the reaffirmation of a strong state not bound by liberal democratic checks.[157] Xi's vision of international order emphasises state sovereignty, non-interference and "win-win cooperation" theoretically based on "common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom".[158] In essence, China seeks to return to a pre-World War II understanding of international law where human rights are an internal matter of states.

As China's economic and political clout grows, so does its ambition to expand the reach of its domestic laws and seek jurisdiction abroad.[159] For example, the 2003 *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Convention on Countering Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism* has been used to quell "security threats" in Xinjiang and Hong Kong and to extradite suspects and dissidents at China's behest.[160] In this light, Xi's project to construct "foreign related rule of law" (涉外法治) and a "legal system applicable outside the jurisdiction of our country" has important implications for the future of international law.[161]

新闻学

JOURNALISM
新闻学

David Bandurski

BRIEF

Journalism, defined as the "activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information",[162] is crucial to the protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.[163] A 2012 UN Human Rights Council report stressed that journalism is core to citizens' exercise of their right to "seek and receive information."

Over the past 10 years, the CCP has explicitly rejected this view of the role of journalism,[164] upholding instead the *Marxist View of Journalism*, which places the Party's interests at the heart of press activity and demands journalists uphold a "correct political direction" and "emphasise positive propaganda".[165] However, the CCP's recent categorical rejection of public-interest journalism ignores the complexity of journalism's role in the Party's century-long history. A critical look reveals competing views of the role of the press and journalism that contradict current propaganda about "the West's idea of journalism" as radically opposed to China's.

ANALYSIS

China's modern political history runs alongside a rich history of professional journalism balanced against the CCP's claims to journalism as a tool of Party rule. As Mao Zedong rose to power in the 1940s, he echoed Leninist views, and in a famous 1942 speech on the arts, he affirmed the need for "Party spirit" (党性), a translation of the Russian *partiinost*, meaning adherence to the CCP's political direction.[166]

But despite this Maoist orthodoxy, views on the role of journalism within the CCP were more complicated. In April 1950, months after the PRC's founding, a decision urged newspapers and periodicals, without government interference, "[to] include the masses in regular and systematic supervision".[167] The notion was short-lived. Reports about Party negligence unsettled the leadership, and in July 1954, a new decision gave

officials greater control over media in the name of "Party spirit".[168] During the brief Hundred Flowers Movement of 1956-57, journalists railed against restrictions, but many were swept up in the ensuing Anti-Rightist Movement.

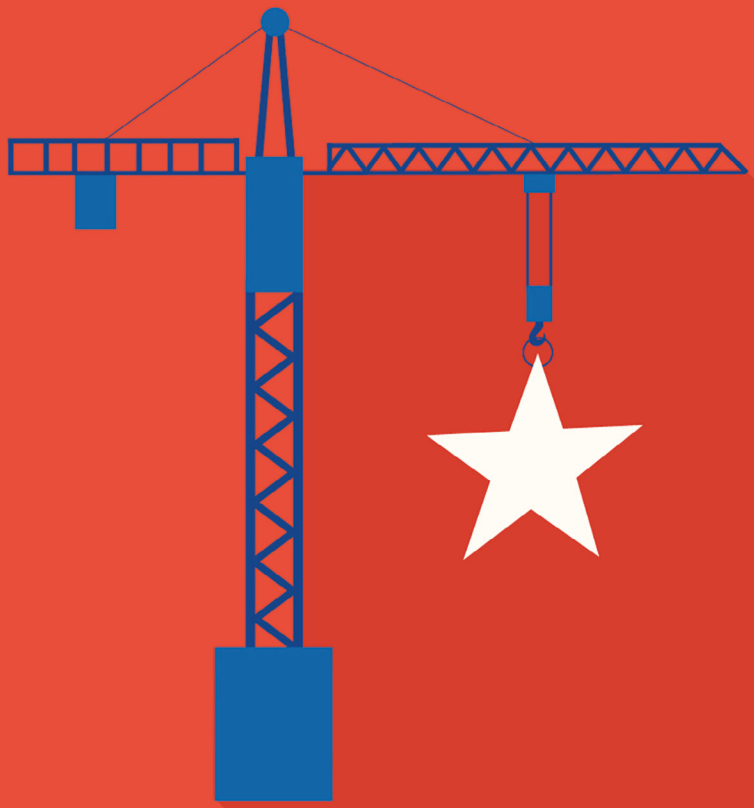
In 1979, not long after China initiated the reform and opening policy following the Cultural Revolution, the country's top communications journal republished the full text of the original 1950 decision on press supervision, noting that it could have "an important role" in "news reform", which included aspirations such as less rigid writing and even exposure of official corruption.[169] One prominent debate was between the liberal *People's Daily* editor-in-chief Hu Jiwei, who said newspapers embodied "people spirit" – meaning a public interest role, and the leftist official Hu Qiaomu, who urged the supremacy of "Party spirit".[170] The debate culminated with the Party's brutal 1989 crackdown on the democracy movement, after which liberal press policies were blamed for the protests.

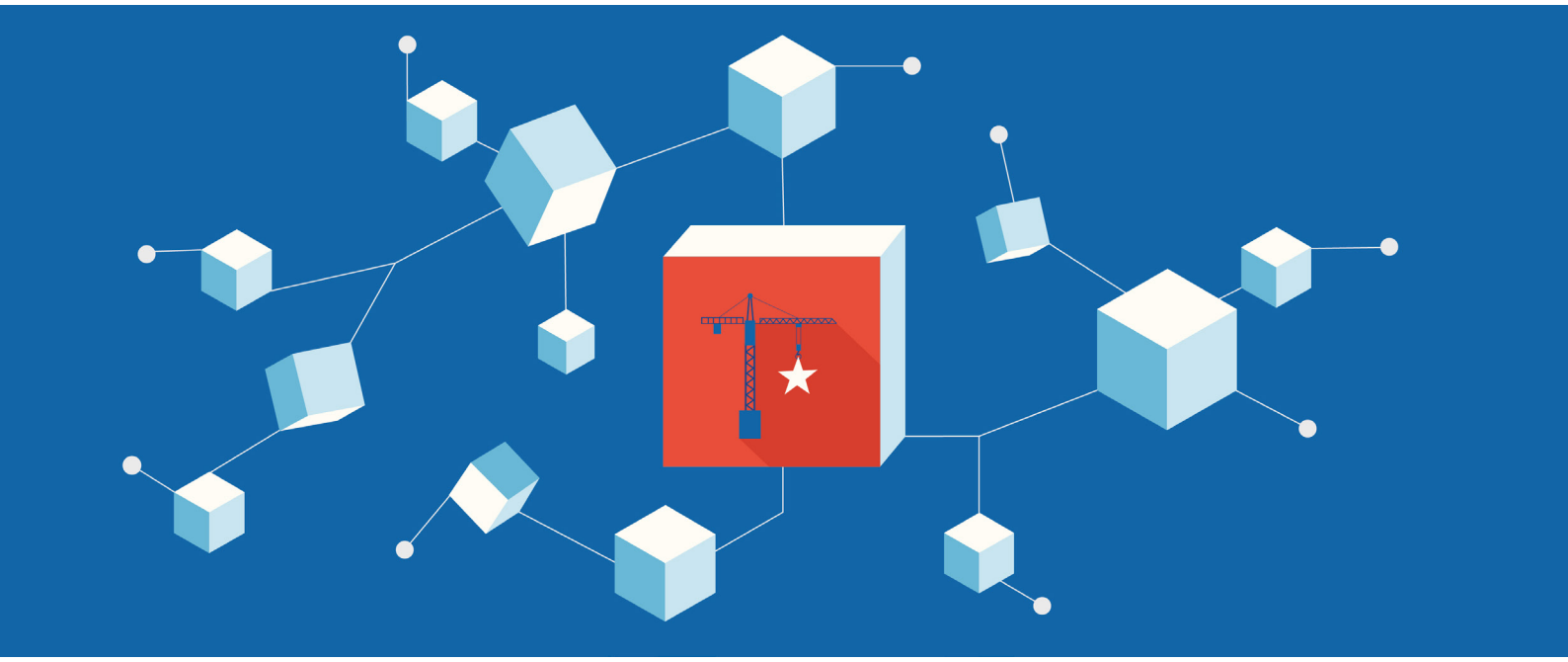
In the 1990s and 2000s, even as controls persisted under the concept of "public opinion guidance",[171] broader economic change, media commercialisation, and the rise of the internet created opportunities for journalists to reassert a professional role. The period saw the rise of investigative reporting, which the country's premier Zhu Rongji in October 1998 referred to as "a mirror on the government."[172] In the absence of checks on the abuse of power, citizens often turned to journalists as a source of justice, and so-called "citizen journalism" also made headway as a separate source of information.[173]

Since Xi Jinping's rise to power in late 2012, journalism's gains have dramatically reversed. High-level prohibitions in 2013 included the CCP's rejection of what it called "the West's idea of journalism" as a direct challenge to the Party's control of the media and publishing system.[174] Since that time, the Party has championed the *Marxist View of Journalism*, rigidly opposing China's journalism values to those of an abstracted West. Instead, authorities have stressed the need for "positive energy", which obliges not just journalists but all networked citizens to be defenders of the Party and the national image.[175]

In his first major speech on media policy in February 2016, Xi Jinping said media "must be surnamed Party", a play on surname and spirit as Chinese homophones, and a clear echo of earlier authoritarian turns that referenced Mao's "Party spirit". In fact, Xi's speech went further in asserting that the notion of "people spirit", a reference to the liberal strand of journalism, had "always been the same" as the "Party spirit."[176] As the Party by definition struggled on behalf of the people, all journalistic work by media enjoined to "love the Party, protect the Party and serve the Party" was essentially public interest journalism.[177]

现代化





MODERNISATION
现代化

Marina Rudyak

BRIEF

A globally shared view holds modernity as closely linked to progress. Modernisation is the process of development from a "pre-modern" or "traditional" to a "modern" society. In Western thought, modernisation has been associated not only with technological advancement but also with secularisation, democratisation, and advancement of human rights. It is intimately linked to the ideas of enlightenment and rationality.

In China, the idea that modernisation does not mean "Westernisation" long predates the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). "Chinese substance, Western application" (中体西用) was the slogan of reform-minded intellectuals after the defeat in the Opium Wars. Its essence has been carried on by the CCP whose leaders have emphasised that China will not pursue a "Western-style" but a "Chinese-style modernisation" (中国式现代化). One that modernises industry, agriculture, army and science and technology – but does not include political liberalisation or democracy. The latter, the CCP believes, has led to social conflict within Western societies – something that China can only avoid through the leadership of the CCP and socialist modernisation (社会主义现代化).[178]

ANALYSIS

Li Shulei, the head of the CCP's Propaganda Department, described modernisation as something imposed on China by the West that subsequently became an internal necessity.[179] This view is deeply embedded in China's historical memory. Ever since the defeat by the technologically superior British and Japanese in the 19th century, techno-centred modernisation was seen as the path for China to overcome backwardness and national humiliation. Modernisation was also closely linked to anti-imperialism through the struggle for national self-determination.

Sun Yat-sen, considered the "father of modern China" argued in *Three Principles of the People* (1911) that increasing "people's welfare" (民生) through economic and industrial development programs was a prerequisite for realising "nationalism" (民族主义) and "self-determination" (自决权).[180] To this day, both the CCP and the Guomindang (KMT, now one of the political parties in Taiwan) claim Sun Yat-sen's intellectual legacy. In Sun's footsteps, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, who co-founded the CCP in 1921, saw modernisation as a core part of anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggle, and as a means to improve people's livelihood and enhance capacities for independent development.

Moreover, the early communists linked China's modernisation quest with those of other poor countries: Liu Shaoqi declared in 1945 that the course taken by China would lead the way for Southeast Asian countries facing similar conditions.[181] Later, through foreign aid, China's domestic quest for modernisation was extended to other countries.

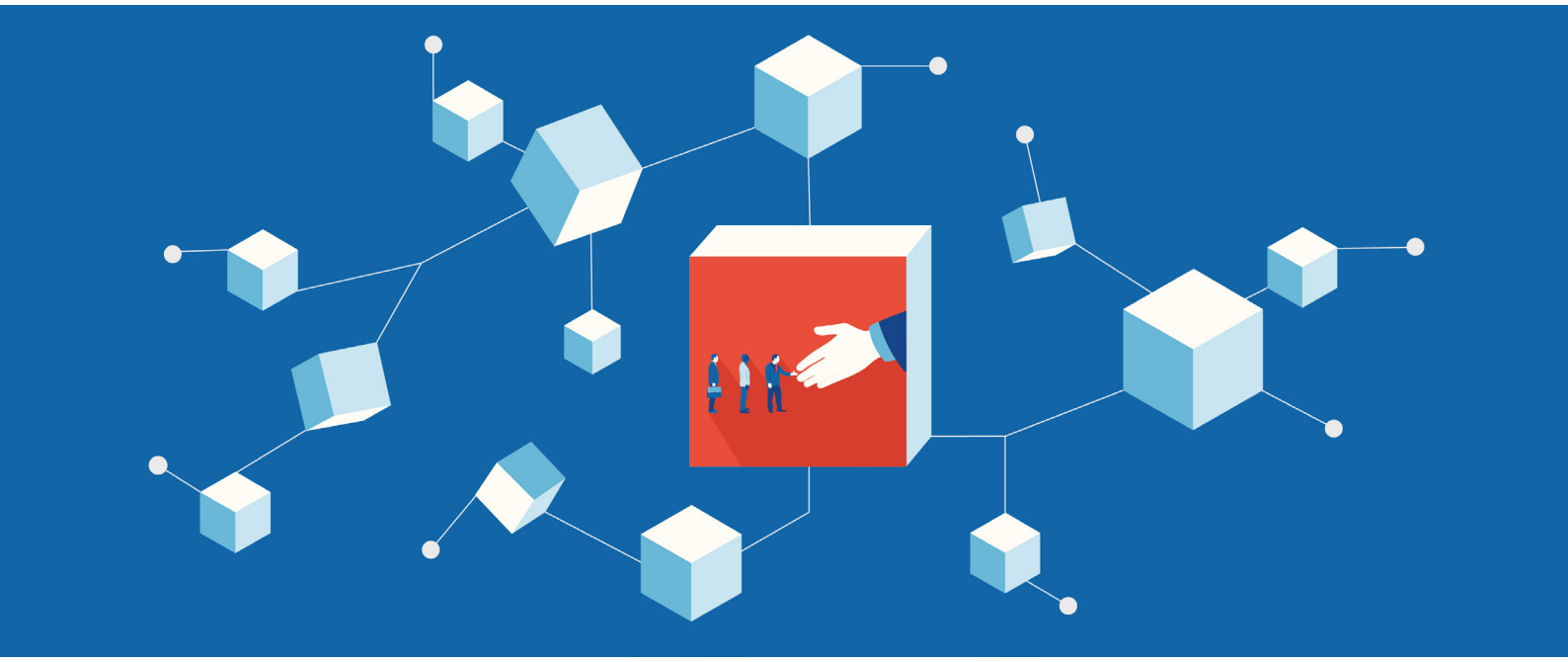
Beginning with Mao Zedong, CCP leaders made clear that China would pursue a "socialist modernisation". In the Mao era, it meant following the example of the Soviet Union to modernise industry, agriculture, military and science and technology. The "Great Leap Forward" was Mao's attempt to accelerate the transformation of China's economy from agrarian to industrial – which ended in a country-wide famine.

The "Four Modernisations" in industry, agriculture, military and science and technology then became the core of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policy. To the West, Deng argued: "Our four modernisations are four Chinese-style modernisations".[182] Deng's modernisations included the "socialist market economy" with a mix of state elements and private enterprises, experimentation with foreign technology and policy. But Deng rejected the "Fifth Modernisation", brought forth in the Democracy Wall Movement by Wei Jingshan: democracy in the liberal sense.

Xi Jinping has described Chinese-style modernisation as the pathway to the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation", which China aims to achieve by the 100th anniversary of the PRC in 2049.[183] A defined milestone on this path is to make progress towards "common prosperity" and to become a middle-income country by 2035. In 2022, the goal of "Chinese-style modernisation" was amended to the *Party Constitution* at the 20th National People's Congress.

The party discourse on modernisation in the Xi-era has a deep moral undertone. It postulates that in contrast to the "old path of capital-centred, polarising and expansionist Western modernisation", China was pursuing a better "people-centred development": one to which China's "whole process democracy" was better suited than liberal democracy.[184] Referring to Sun Yat-sen's vision of modernisation in 2020, Xi argued that China has progressed far beyond than what Sun had imagined – and only the CCP was able to achieve that.[185] Liberal voices warn however, that the primacy of ideology over economics in Xi's Chinese-style modernisation has closed the spaces for political innovation that made China's modernisation successful in the first place.[186]

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".[187] 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".[188] The BRI, in turn, is presented as an alternative, "joint consultation"-based "Multilateralism with Chinese Characteristics", where interaaction 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

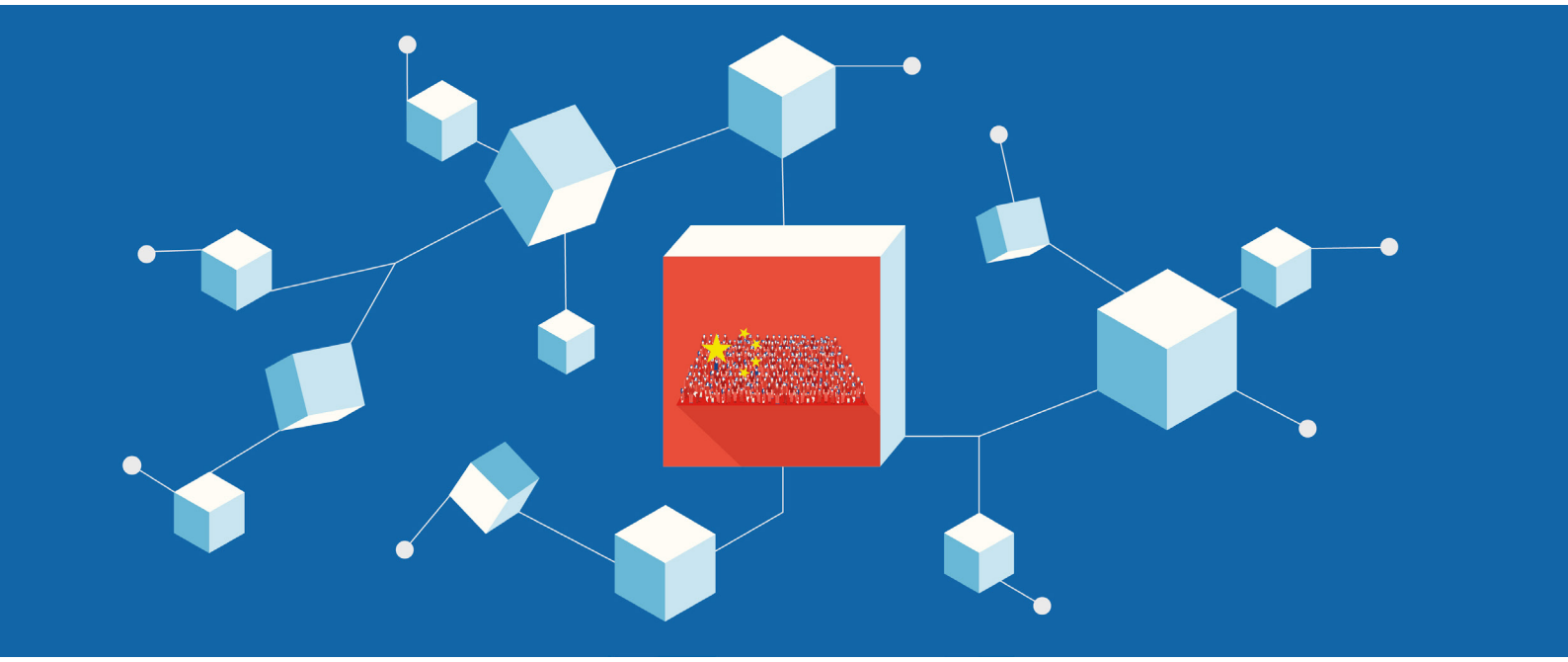
After assuming power in 2013, Xi Jinping initiated a foreign-policy shift to a more proactive "major power diplomacy", of which the BRI is the most visible manifestation. Originally aimed at increasing cooperation with neighbouring countries, the scope was quickly expanded to become a globally oriented 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 for mankind" (人类命运共同体). Accordingly, multilateralism "should not take the old road of safeguarding the narrow interests of a group".[189] 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 dubbed 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" which was written 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".[190] 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 19th Party Congress, 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 cooperation, but will interact with other countries through bilateral consultations.[191] A 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.[192]

国家



NATION
国家

Jerker Hellström

BRIEF

'Nation' tends to be understood as a community of people living in a particular area or a country, characterised by having its own government, language, history, and traditions.

The Chinese language makes no distinction between nation, country and state using them interchangeably to translate the word *guojia* (国家). In its narrow sense, the term 'Chinese nation' refers either to the People's Republic of China (PRC) founded in 1949, or to the historical empires which controlled various parts of the territory that is today governed or claimed by the current Chinese regime. In its broad sense, it embodies the notion of a Chinese super-ethnicity, *Zhonghua minzu* (中华民族) – which is the Party State's shorthand for all PRC nationals plus the Chinese diaspora.[193]

The Chinese terms used to translate 'nation' are linked to notions of ethnicity and civilisation. As the official narrative equates the Chinese nation with the Chinese Communist Party-led state, Chinese patriotism – loving your nation (爱国) – involves loving the Communist Party and being loyal to the party-controlled state.[194]

ANALYSIS

The boundaries of the modern nation-state are set by citizenship. In China's official and popular discourse, however, the extent to which an individual is seen as belonging to the Chinese nation is first and foremost decided by a person's ethnicity. All individuals with some Han Chinese heritage, including both PRC citizens and foreign nationals, are perceived by the state as being part of the Chinese nation.[195] This notion has potential implications for all persons with Chinese ancestry, including a diaspora of as many as 60 million people.[196]

The Chinese state divides the diaspora of the "Chinese nation" into three main groups: PRC nationals who reside abroad (*huaqiao*), "Chinese" naturalised abroad (*huaren*), and those of Chinese ancestry born overseas (*huayi*).[197] The three groups only include overseas Han, while a fourth group, "*shaoshu minzu huaqiao huaren*", or ethnic minority overseas Chinese, has been suggested to categorize non-Han with roots from PRC territory.

The Chinese leadership expects "the sons and daughters of China", including "overseas Chinese compatriots",[198] to contribute to the safeguarding of national interests such as the realisation of the China Dream of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦). The slogan, which was officially launched by CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping in 2012, is a euphemism for strengthening the Chinese Party State.

An official narrative suggests that the Chinese nation is the world's only "civilisational state"[199] (文明型国家), meaning that it is unique in terms of ancient history, territorial vastness and technological development, and where the (Han-)Chinese population are indigenous to the territory. [200] By Beijing's own accounts, the Chinese nation is based on a civilisation dating back some five thousand years.[201] In order to be able to promote its version of Chinese history, the PRC government has embarked on a project in which science is tasked with backing up this claim.[202]

From the Chinese regime's perspective, the Chinese nation that it claims to represent not only encompasses citizens of other states and the history of ancient empires. The notion of "national sovereignty and territorial integrity" (国家主权和领土完整) also includes territories outside of the Communist Party's control, such as Taiwan. Before the founding of the PRC, however, the Communist movement explicitly excluded Taiwan from China's territory.[203] This was also the case in the Nationalist government's *Constitution* of 1912.[204]

The official name of the Chinese nation is China (中国, *Zhongguo*) or the People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国). When Taiwanese refer to 'China' (*Zhongguo*), it is normally with the connotation that it is a country separate from Taiwan. When China is referred to as the mainland (大陆) or inland (内地), the implicit meaning is that China and Taiwan form part of the same nation.

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.[205] 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 emphasises its own "peaceful" nature. As the Party characterises China as peaceful by definition and the Chinese nationality (or *race*) as genetically peace-loving, its defence policy is also portrayed as purely 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".[206] 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; "[t]he 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".[207]

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 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".[208]

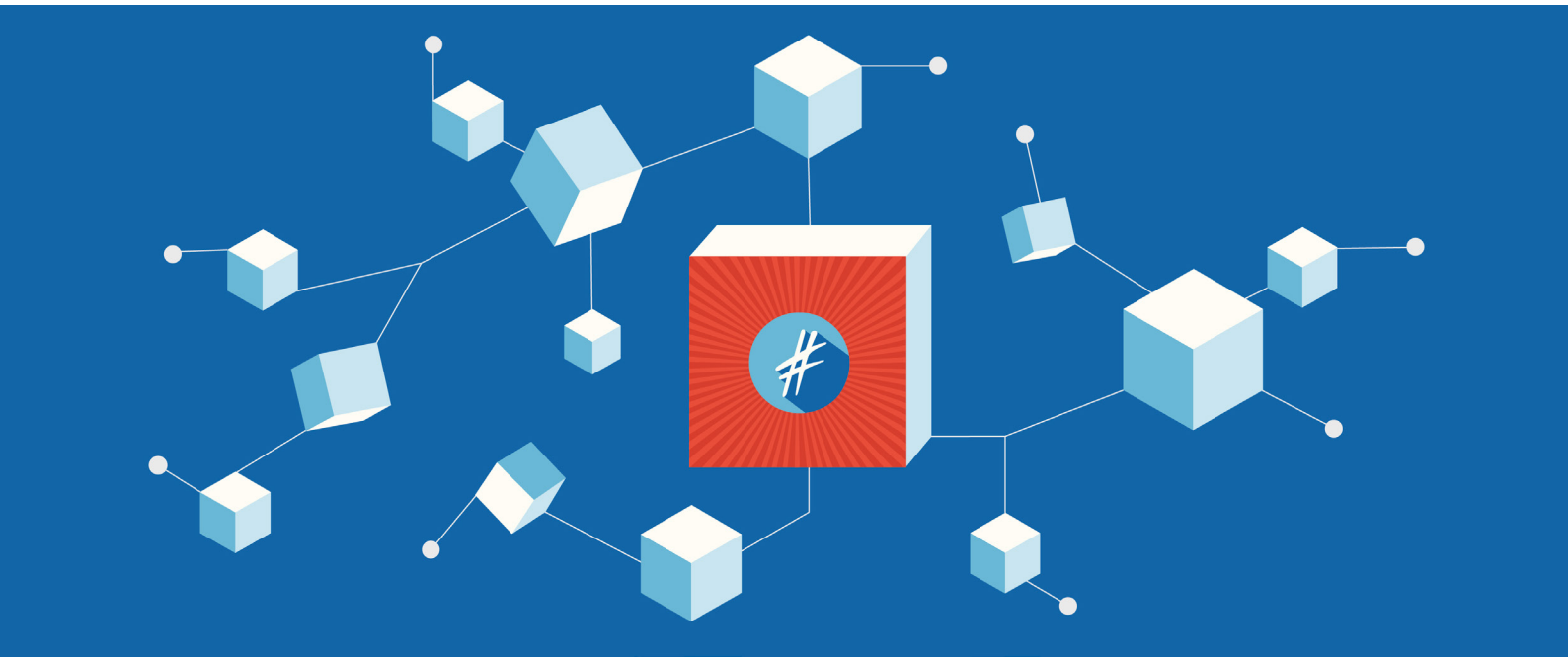
The White Paper stresses the importance of preserving social stability, which is tightly linked to China's notion of peace and one of the CCP's core objectives. In fact, "preserving peace" could also refer to the suppression of peaceful protest movements, let alone violent social unrest. The Chinese 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.[209] "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.[210] 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 modernisation 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".[211]

Moreover, the "peaceful unification" ("和平统一") of China is a euphemism for Taiwan's incorporation into 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. 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".[212]

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".[213]

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" broadly involves governments cultivating both public opinion in other countries and intercultural communications. The aim was 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-centralisation 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 4 June 1989, China established the State Council Information Office, a government office whose function is to "explain China to foreign countries".[214] 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".[215]

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 emphasising 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".[216] The ambiguous dual identity of these two offices at the present day can be seen as symbolising 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.

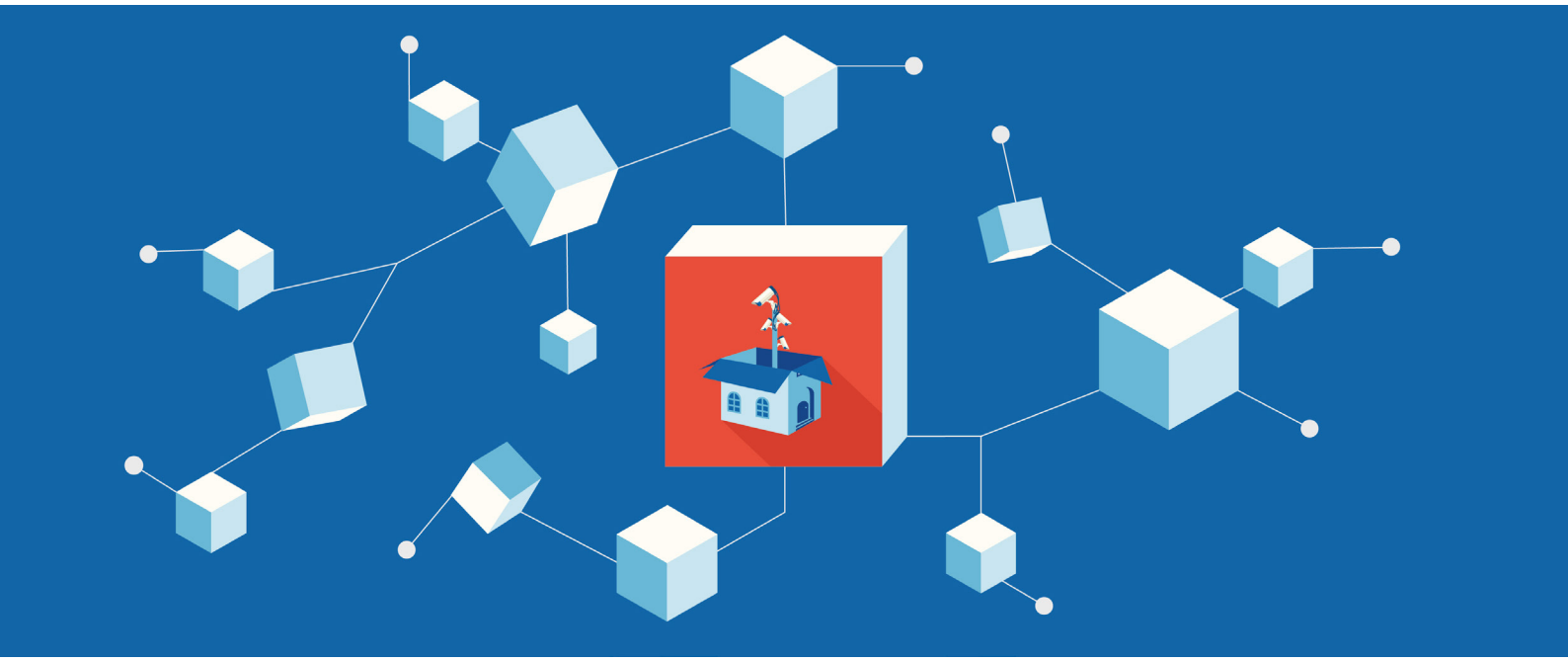
In late 2007, Joseph Nye's term "soft power" was also introduced into China's official political discourse.[217] In 2008, as China prepared to host the Beijing Olympic Games, which were regarded as a historic opportunity to showcase China's development before the world and increase its soft power, the country faced a wave of criticism over its human rights abuses. Accordingly, much of the official CCP discourse focused on rectifying 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 centralised 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 19 August 2013, Xi Jinping emphasised 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, communicating China's voice well".[218]

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.

隐私



RIGHT TO PRIVACY
隐私权

Katja Drinhausen

BRIEF

At its core, the right to privacy refers to freedom from undue interference in personal life, home and correspondence.[219] UN and EU standards make clear that the right to privacy entails freedom from arbitrary and mass surveillance.[220] Safeguarding privacy has become a challenging issue in the digital age, as both states and corporations collect and analyse significant amounts of data. Privacy is therefore closely intertwined with the protection of personal data, for which e.g., GDPR, and national laws create new frameworks.

Articles 39 and 40 of the PRC *Constitution* similarly forbid the unlawful search and intrusion of the homes and correspondence of Chinese citizens.[221] China's legal protection of personal data has been substantially expanded in recent years. Where discourse and legislation in liberal democracies has traditionally emphasised protection from the state, the focus in China is predominantly on protecting citizens from excessive collection and abuse of data by corporate actors. The state retains expansive rights to monitor and request data about its citizens under broadly defined public and national security prerogatives.

ANALYSIS

China's new *Civil Code* (2021) and *Personal Information Protection Law* (2021) have strengthened the protection of personal rights and information in China.[222] Companies or organisations that handle personal information now face stricter obligations to gain consent and inform individuals about the data they collect and how it may be processed.

Although privacy and security of personal data were highlighted in the *2021 White Paper on Human Rights Progress by the State Council*,[223] the acknowledgement of a right to privacy as a distinct individual right is

largely absent from official documents. This has both political and linguistic roots. Under Mao's collectivist regime, keeping things private was a matter of suspicion. The wider adoption of the term was also hampered by the fact that the Chinese term for privacy (隐私) is homonymous with the term for "shameful secret" (阴私).

The political and public approach changed in the era of reform and opening. In the 1990s and early 2000s, China's government formulated the first data protection regulations. The following decades saw not only a growing protection of privacy rights through personal information and data security standards, but also an increasing use of the term in academic writing and public debates.

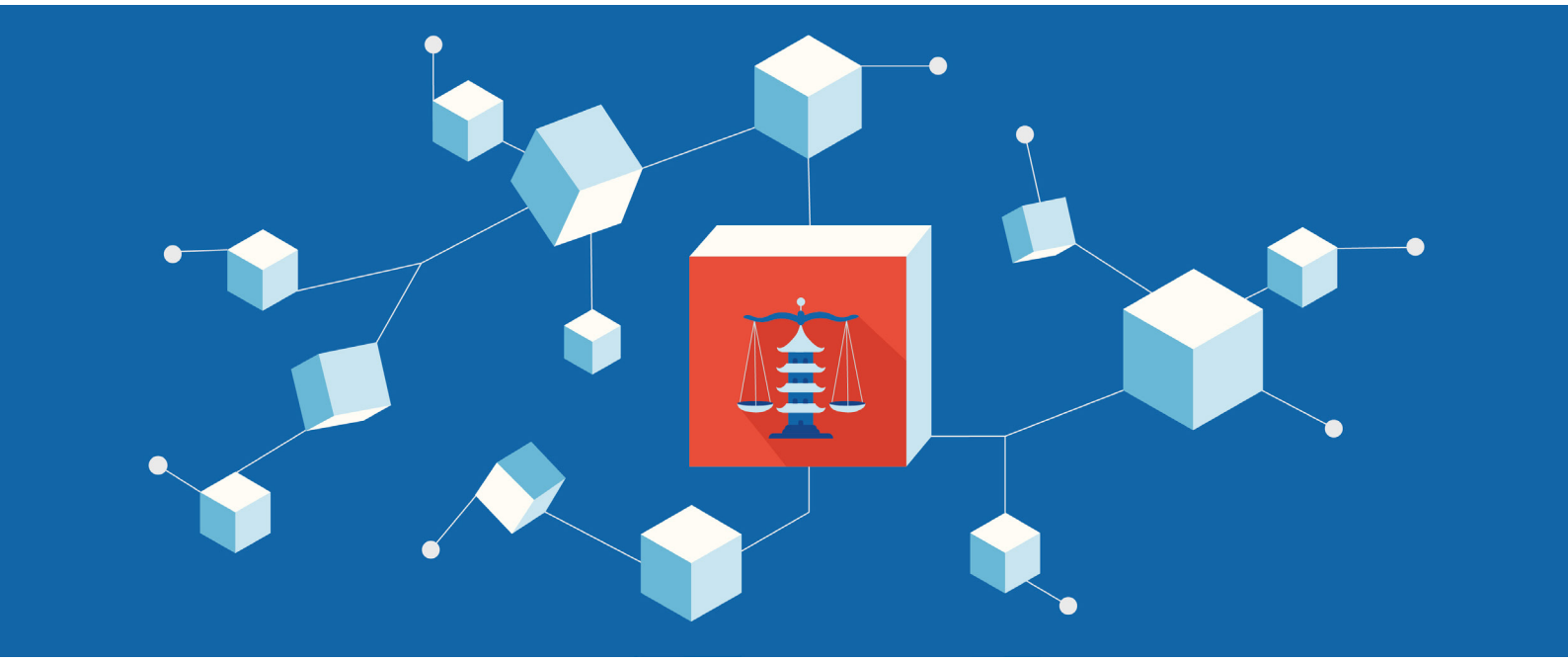
Today, privacy is a well-established term in China. This is closely linked to the wide-spread adaptation of digital technologies in daily life – from communication and travel to consumption and payment. In contrast to European norms, Chinese policy documents and legislation frame privacy and the protection of personal information primarily under information security and consumer rights and are largely directed at the private sector, not protection from state-led efforts to surveil the population.

State organs must comply with established standards in their collection and use of data. But China's *National Security Law*, *Cybersecurity Law* and other legislation give the state wide remit to monitor public and online spaces.[224] Corporate privacy statements generally include references that data can be shared with relevant agencies where it concerns public and national security.[225] As platforms are legally required to provide online services only after real-name registration and identity verification, data can quickly be tied to individuals.

To build a peaceful China (平安中国), government policies since 2012 aim at expanding camera coverage, tracking physical movements and monitoring online expression to build a preventive, "multi-dimensional" system for safeguarding public security (立体化信息化社会治安防控体系) – and the political security of the Party State.[226] Complementing previous surveillance initiatives that are now a core component of "smart" and "safe cities", recent years have also seen a digital upgrading of mechanisms already established under Mao. This includes digitisation of personal files on citizens as well as the use of apps and hotlines to encourage mutual monitoring and reporting among the population. Progress in surveillance capacities has been on display in pandemic management, but also in minority areas such as Xinjiang.[227]

Government efforts to use data for public and national security purposes are by no means exclusive to China. What sets the implementation of privacy in the PRC apart is the lack of institutional and public oversight through administrative and constitutional review procedures, a free press and civil rights organisations. This approach to privacy is not uncontested. From public and academic discussions to individual lawsuits and refusal of companies to hand-over data – China's citizens are concerned about the protection of their privacy. Leaks of public databases and the abuse of China's health code apps to prevent protests sparked renewed debates in 2022.[228]

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".[229] 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 professionalisation of the judiciary were important aspects of China's modernisation 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.

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 realising the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation".[230]

However, if the first thirty years of legal reform and opening up saw the de-politicisation of the Chinese justice system, the last decade has seen its re-politicisation 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 the *Hong Kong National Security Law*, 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".[231] 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".[232]

科学

SCIENCE
科学

David Bandurski

BRIEF

While international definitions of science centre on the study of the physical world through unbiased observations and verifiable experimentation, the word "science" has complex, multi-layered meanings within the context of Chinese Communist Party discourse. On the one hand, science as a discipline systematically studying the natural world has been regarded as a crucial contributor to national development, driving economic growth and self-reliance.

On the other hand, notions of science have been interwoven with political claims to truth as a source of political power. From the time of Mao, with inspiration from the Soviet Union, politics and science have been bedfellows. This can be seen today as calls for "speaking politics" sometimes override scientific recommendations, as in the early days of the Wuhan outbreak, and as political education emphasising the Party's legacy is incorporated into science education materials. References to actions or policies as "scientific" are today sprinkled throughout CCP discourse – a claim to the fundamental rightness and rationality of all the Party does.

ANALYSIS

The fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 ushered in a wave of soul-searching about China's future. Writing in *New Youth* magazine in January 1919, Chen Duxiu, one of the early founders of the CCP, personified China's hopes for restoration in "Mr Democracy" and "Mr Science."[233] Only these "two gentlemen", he wrote, could "remedy all of the darkness that has shrouded China – in politics, in morals, in academic endeavours and ideas", and free the country from external aggression and colonial occupation. Embracing the natural sciences meant abandoning the old superstitions and embarking on a project of national strengthening.[234]

With the founding of the CCP in 1921, Party leaders were keen to lay claim to science and modernity. Taking their cues from Soviet writings, CCP theorists saw the introduction to China of the materialist philosophy of Marxism as a moment of "scientific" reckoning in which "Chinese Communists began to have a more scientific understanding of many basic issues of the Chinese revolution and society".[235] In the 1950s, CCP discourse made clear that the scientist's primary role was to "serve the people", and to be on guard against the people's enemies.

At the outset of the economic reform and opening period in the 1980s, there was a new emphasis on science development. China's focus was on acquiring foreign technologies, with the pace of technology imports increasing dramatically.[236] Chinese overseas study also helped to build China's science system from the 1980s. These developments soared in the 1990s, the natural sciences viewed as crucial to overall economic development and national prestige.[237] Nevertheless, the notion of the "scientific spirit" as a trait of the CCP's Marxist politics persisted alongside real advancements in science, marking the Party's claim to practical and people-based policy responses. One of the most prominent examples in the reform era was the "scientific view of development" (科学发展观), a catchphrase introduced in the early 2000s by President Hu Jintao that essentially outlined the need for more balanced development.

In the Xi Jinping era, China's advancements as a "scientific power" have continued apace.[238] China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) places science and technology at the centre of national priorities, with Xi pledging to make China the "world's primary centre" for science and innovation.[239] But the conflation of the scientific and the political has also continued apace. In late 2019, as the earliest cases of Covid-19 appeared in the city of Wuhan, local doctors were disciplined for raising the alarm through private chat groups, and told that they must "speak politics, speak discipline and speak science".[240] Medical personnel were obliged, on political grounds, not to share information publicly, effectively delaying by many weeks a more concerted domestic and global response. Early in the pandemic, China has also placed limits on the publication of research on the origins of the novel coronavirus, prioritising politics over science.[241]

The phrase "speaking politics" has surged under Xi, underscoring the need for obedience to the Party and its prerogatives. In recent years, there has also been a growing emphasis in science education on the need to simultaneously carry out ideological and political indoctrination of China's youth. One recent textbook on biology, for example, instructs teachers to implant a discussion of "red genes" – a reference to the political and historical legacy of the CCP – into a unit on genetics.[242]

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 enjoy safety.

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]. [243]

The NSL furthermore defines "the state" as ruled by the CCP: "[t]he State persists in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party".[244] Similar language can be found in 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 domestic espionage on dissidents with foreign connections, and overseas espionage on Uyghurs, Tibetans, Taiwanese, democracy activists, and members of the Falungong movement, as well as their supporters. 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.

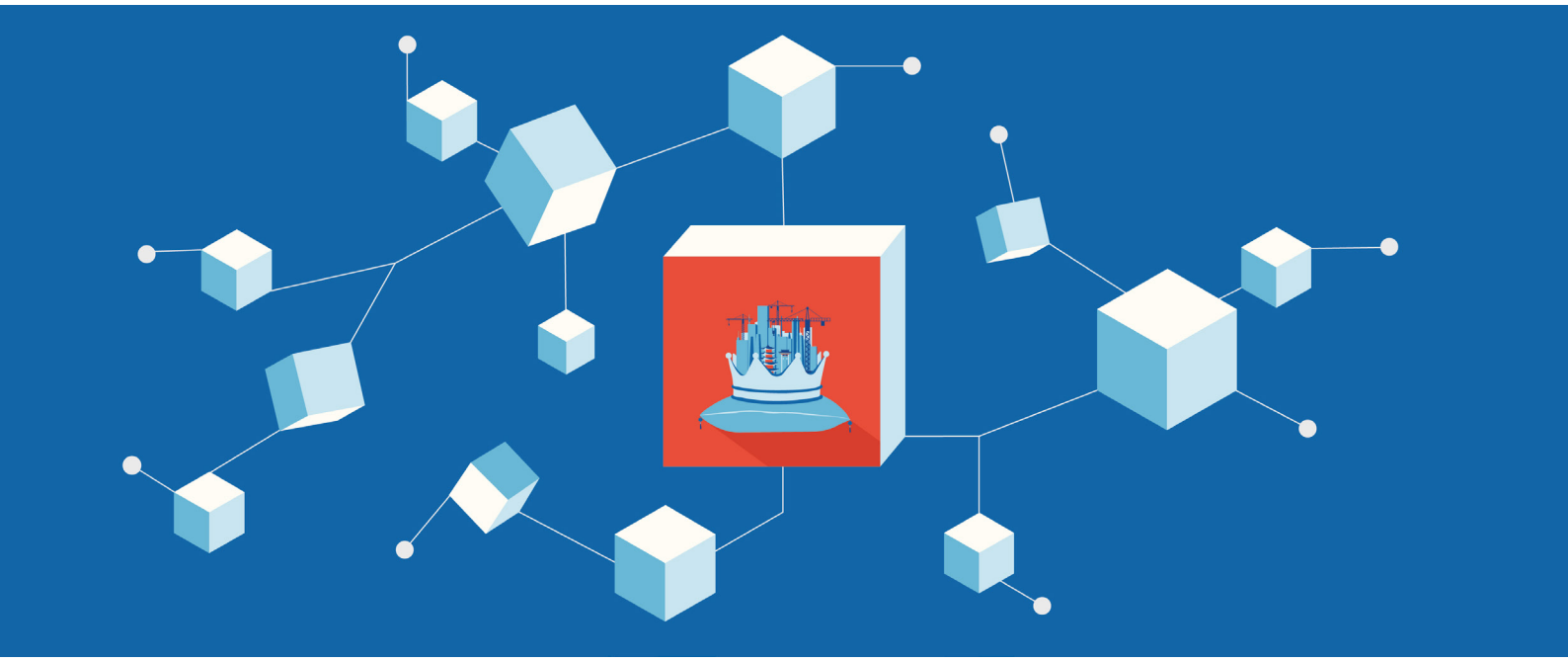
An example of how the concept of 'security' is used by Chinese officials is Beijing's efforts to defend the establishment of re-education camps in Xinjiang from 2017. While detainees have not been charged with any crimes, the Chinese government has depicted the camps as part of its counter-terrorism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

Cultural security is aimed at protecting Chinese society from cultural infiltration by hegemonic powers, Westernisation and cultural decay.[245] 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 current member of the CCP's Politburo Standing Committee and a prominent ideologue, asserted that globalisation 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.[246] This can be compared to the definition of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, where food security is "a situation that exists when all people, at all times, 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".[247]

Human security is understood in China as focused on the collective humankind, rather than emphasising 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.[248]

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.[249] China is a principled defender of a strong normative understanding 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 recognised 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 have agreed to respect one another's "core interests".[250] As China's core interests include its sovereignty over Taiwan, the statement could be interpreted as a recognition that Taiwan is a part of China, which 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.[251]

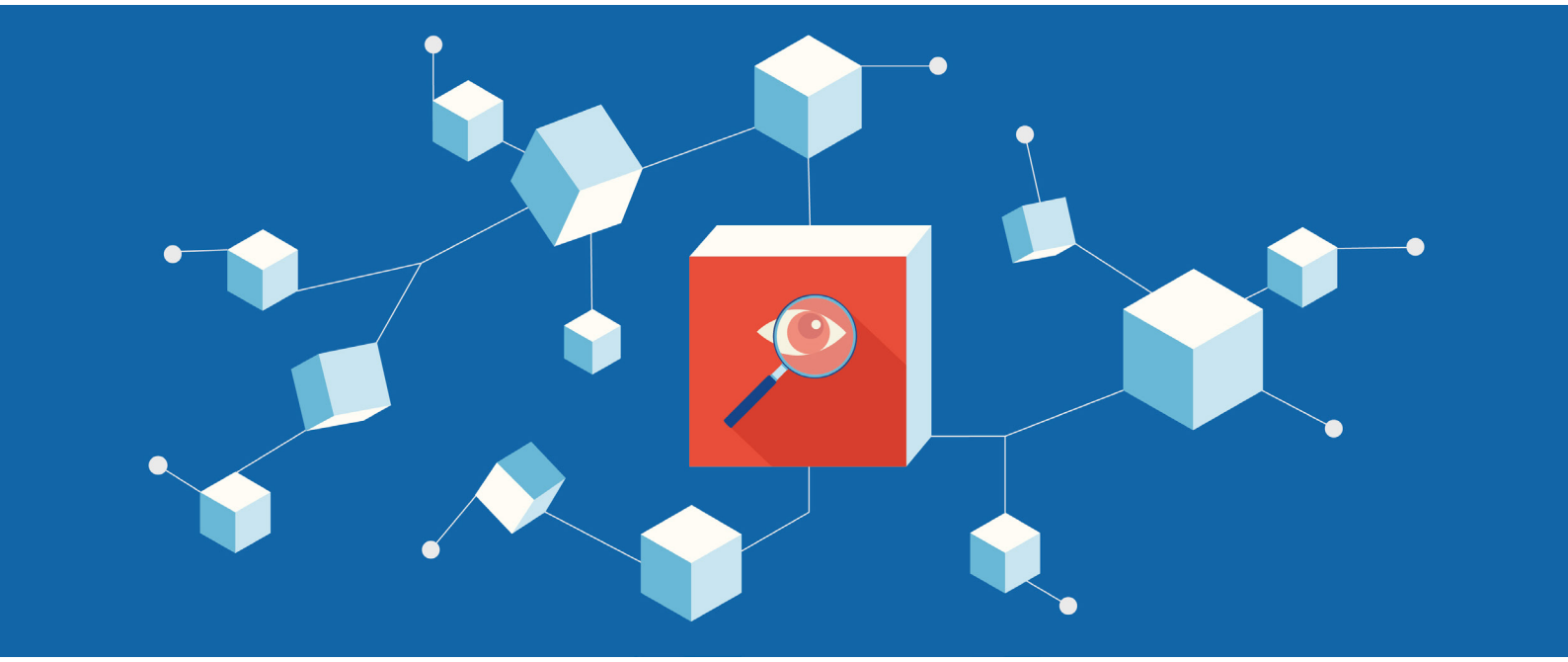
China's adherence to Westphalian norms of sovereignty is another strong influence over its posture in the international human rights debate. China insists that a country's level of development, culture and values has to be taken into account, which places strict limits on international human rights monitoring 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.[252]

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.[253]

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 14th 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.[254]

透明



TRANSPARENCY
透明度

Malin Oud

BRIEF

Transparency refers to an environment in which policy and processes are open and predictable, and where decisions and information are provided to the public in a comprehensible, accessible, and timely manner. Freedom of information is an integral part of the human right to freedom of expression. Government transparency should be the norm and exceptions limited to issues such as national security, public safety, criminal investigations, privacy, and commercial confidentiality.

The Chinese leadership sees transparency as important to promote state legitimacy. But it treats it as a matter of discipline and top-down supervision, rather than as a question of press freedom and citizen participation. The right to "open government information" (政府信息公开) is recognised in law, but may not infringe upon the interests of the Party State. National security is frequently invoked in order to protect "state secrets". Compared to international standards and practice, China's definition of state secrets is overly broad and includes information that would "affect social stability" or "have an unfavourable influence" on China's foreign affairs. Information may be retroactively defined as "state secrets", and the maximum penalty for divulgence of state secrets is death.

ANALYSIS

Greater access to government information was part of Deng Xiaoping's policy of reform and opening up launched in 1978. The constitutional right of Chinese citizens to supervise government was recognised and the concept of Open Village Affairs (村务公开) was introduced, in order to deal with local corruption. The political reforms championed by the Party in the 1980s came to a brutal halt with the suppression of the student protests in 1989, but the idea of "open government affairs" (政务公开) continued to gain prominence. Combatting corruption and building a "clean government" was seen as vital for the survival of the Party.[255]

The lack of government transparency came to the fore again in a series of disaster cover-ups in the 1990s and early 2000s. From the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan in the mid-1990s, to the SARS outbreak in 2002, the Songhua River chemical spill in 2004, and the melamine contaminated milk scandal in 2008, the political culture of secrecy and the lack of a free flow of information had devastating impacts on people's health and livelihoods, and lead to a public call for openness. The Chinese internet also acted as an important watchdog at this time, with investigative journalists exposing corruption and power abuse. Transparency was endorsed at the 17th Party Congress in 2007, as the necessary "sunshine" against corruption.[256]

In 2008, the first national regulation on Open Government Information (OGI) was introduced, providing enhanced access to government information for issues such as government budgets and expenditures; environmental pollution; food and drug safety; land takings and compensation; procurement and construction contracts; as well as greater transparency concerning the legislative process and court information.[257] Domestic NGOs and lawyers used the new OGI regulation to bring public interest litigation and to support advocacy on environmental pollution, discrimination, and other issues.

The effectiveness of the regulations was however always limited by the systemic lack of rule of law, media freedom and civil society oversight. To the Party, transparency means top-down supervision and control, and does not imply citizen supervision and public oversight. The major concern is with government efficiency and not with government accountability.[258] The role of the media is to transmit government messages and to perform a limited monitoring function exposing local corruption at the behest of the central leadership.[259] In Xi Jinping's era, investigate journalism has been curtailed and, in a reversal of previous trends, the government now actively limits access to government data online to prevent unwanted insights.

While the Party chases "tigers", "flies" and "foxes" both home and abroad in the name of transparency and anti-corruption, its internal governance and working methods remain a black box of secrecy, disappearances, and extrajudicial measures. Xi Jinping has used his signature anti-corruption campaign to take out both corrupt officials and political rivals. However, according to Xi, the Party's "courageous self-reform practice" and ability to "turn the blade inward and pluck out our own corrupt flesh" has provided a powerful answer to those who tout the Western system of democracy and separation of powers.[260]

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