

# ***Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (III) in a Changing World***

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Exactly one year ago Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech in which he reflected on the exercise of power in the most populated country with the world's oldest continuous culture. "Strengthen Discipline and Scrutiny over the Exercise of Power", delivered in Beijing on January 13, 2020, is one of the 92 articles included in his work *The Governance of China (III)*, whose previous volumes had already been published in recent years. This third volume assembles President Xi's speeches and texts delivered between October 18, 2017 and January 13, 2020 preceding the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the ideas in the book are clearly valid today.



*Beijing, Tiananmen Square, China's political and symbolic core (I)*

A couple of clairvoyant insights call our attention from the start. On the one hand, at national level, Xi's goal of realizing rejuvenation of the Chinese nation manifests itself in multiple ways, with the most striking one being the unleashing of energies leading to the greatest economic growth in mankind's history. During 2020 such vitality had not been subdued by the pandemic, but on the contrary, had keep as strong as before. Despite the still uncertain global economic outlook, China's economic growth is expected to exceed 7 percent in 2021. At the same time, reading the book we recognize

that Xi Jinping had concluded, well before 2020, that the world faced and is facing changes unseen in a century.

China's rejuvenation, which contrasts with dramatic divisions in the main Western democracy, and volatile situations in the international sphere, are incredible feats right now unfolding before our eyes. Indeed, anyone who dispassionately observes the crisis in the U.S. Capitol, with the vandalic action of a mass encouraged by the sitting American president himself, against the backdrop of tens of millions of citizens who do not trust the mechanisms of their democracy, knows that we are witnessing a major change with remarkable potential echo in international politics. U.S. democracy, seen as a model in the West for two centuries, is cracking dramatically due to internal causes.

In the West, we are used to leaders declaring goals to be achieved during their tenure (sometimes patchwork), while statesmen who think deeply or adopt a long-term approach are hardly recognized and seem to belong to the past. In such a context, it is completely novel to read a 650-pages corpus containing the ideas of a country's leader ruling a fifth of the world's population and contributing to multilateralism and to global interdependence like no other. On style and content, Xi's analysis is based on Marxism with Chinese characteristics with a clear language sometimes incorporating references to the country's philosophical wisdom dating back 5,000 years, making it a unique flowing narrative. Also, in times that demand more international cooperation it is worth noting that *The Governance of China III* helps readers of different continents to understand Xi's motivations and the country's achievements directly, without intermediaries.

How does a leader of a country responsible for a third of the world's economic growth assess the course of the local and global economy? How does he evaluate the public policy mechanisms of the Government that has managed to lift nearly 800 million people out of poverty in the last forty years? Which steps has China been taking to achieve the status of a moderate prosperous society? What are the institutional merits of the country which can explain its successful fight against the novel coronavirus while most of the world is overwhelmed by the virus? What are the guiding principle and goals of the Belt and Road Initiative (or Silk Road, as it is also known in the West)? What is the exact meaning of a community with a shared destiny for mankind? The answers to these and other fundamental questions are found in the book.

Regarding foreign policy, the reader will find explanatory references to a series of initiatives with China as an important player in international contexts as diverse as APEC, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, the G20, and certainly the Belt and Road Initiative.



*Beijing, Tiananmen Square, China's political and symbolic core (II)*

Centuries ago, some remarkable Western intellectuals studied China in search of wisdom about governance and a model of government. Over time we have learned that each country has its unique characteristics, and that, above all, it is not wise for a country to try to copy a foreign model without considering its own circumstances. China has been following its own path. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping the country has been adjusting itself to the changing situations.

Today the world is changing at an unusual speed. When the most powerful country appears structurally divided and with a confused voice, the world needs to be reoriented. When CNN's White House correspondent reports that the incumbent president "is leaving America in a whirlwind of violence, disease, and death and more internally alienated than it has been in 150 years," as global citizens we must wake up and readjust our perspective. The ancient Greek and Chinese classics already warned us that time is flowing, thus we need resilience. This means that inspired by the great thinkers we must remain curious and seek the truth from facts, which is also a fine tradition of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the world's largest political party.

Following the structural guidelines outlined in *The Governance of China III*, the CPC concluded its fifth plenary session of its 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee in October. To boost its economic development China decided to further accentuate innovation, the real economy, a strong domestic market, the invigoration of rural areas, and green and sustainable development. And the emphasis is embodied in the CPC Central Committee's proposals for the 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development (2021-2025) and the Long-Range Objectives through the Year 2035. Is there anything in these wide-ranging plans (which includes a vision of China and the world by 2049) that can also inspire us within the framework of a community with a shared destiny? Certainly, the answer is positive, and the answer is also an invitation to read the book so as to get an insight about the CPC's guiding ideas and decision-making processes in governing the country.

When the ancient country is translating its governance vision into a modernization drive which will meet its goals in a time span several times shorter than that the Western modernization had taken in the 20th century, it is time to reflect on the importance of the governance of China and on the importance of continuous and deeper interaction. Very fresh examples such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

(RCEP), signed among Asia Pacific countries including China, and the EU-China investment agreement, both sealed in the last two months, demonstrate that the notion of a community with a shared future for mankind proposed by Xi is a feasible path.

Practical synergies mean that China and the rest of the world have bigger chances of pursuing progress if they work together than would be expected if each country pursued development decoupled from other countries. This is the main message to the world emanating from the highly recommended reading of *The Governance of China III* at the beginning of 2021.

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