

One Hundred Years of Chinese Communist Party (1921-2021): From Periphery to the Centre-stage of the Party-State

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In its history of the first hundred years of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) it has many impressive achievements to its credit, namely continuous economic growth, technological developments and poverty alleviation of 800 million people and all-round improvements in quality of life. China continues to see itself as a developing economy with the aim of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Its aim is a harmonious and equitable society. It is now firmly in the saddle at the start of the second hundred years. Few question its continued presence in China's Party-State. However, it has to solve the question of political succession smoothly and also demonstrate that it can live peacefully with its neighbours, despite its commitment to the Westphalian state system and principle of national sovereignty.

Keywords: Party-State, CCP, Westphalian state system, Socialism with Chinese characteristics

China in the 1920s was an economically backward country under considerable foreign domination. The 1911 Republican Revolution had a lasting imprint but lacked any indigenous blueprint; the radicals derived inspiration from the Bolsheviks. The Chinese society was complex and intricate with myriad social relations and classes: a limited but rapidly growing working class, a small national bourgeoisie, a small but powerful land-owning class, peasants, rich and poor, landed and landless, artisans, bureaucrats, militarists, monks, bandits, rural vagabonds and compradors in the service of foreign capitalists. Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) described China not as a capitalist state but rather as a situation that was semi-feudal or feudal at best. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded by Li Dazhao (1888-1927) and Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) in 1921 in Shanghai with 11 enthusiastic young men, including Mao Zedong (1893-1976). Li was the chief librarian at Beijing University and the first communist to join the Kuomintang. Chen, the editor of the influential journal *New Youth*, advocated guild socialism under the influence of John Dewey (1859-1932). Li felt that Marxism lacked an ethical perspective as Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-83) did not stress that good persons could emerge as they learned through mutual aid. The early Chinese Marxists entertained the idea of a glorious future for China. But they were not prepared to follow the rigid periodisation of reaching the ideal as propounded by Marx, as that would be a long-drawn process.

In 1924, the CCP supported the Kuomintang (KMT) of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (Sun Zhongshan) (1866-1925), which was endorsed by both Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) and Joseph Stalin (1878-1953). The Soviets fulfilled their military and organisation requirements. The members of the CCP joined the KMT but retained their separate CCP membership. Sun's standing helped in keeping the alliance together. After Sun's death in 1925, fissures began to appear between the right-wing of the KMT and the communists. Chiang Kai Shek (Jiang Jieshi) (1887-1975) succeeded Sun in 1926 and became KMT's army's commander in chief. The communists were expelled from positions of top leadership. The KMT started the Northern Expedition to drive out the warlords and the Western imperialists who aided them. It was successful as Chiang secured the support of financial circles in Shanghai and that of many warlords, including the latter's armies. In April 1927, Chiang began attacking the communists in the areas under his control, but in which the help from the communists was crucial. Most of these areas were in the southern part of China. In July, the CCP-KMT alliance was dissolved, officially ending the First United Front.

The Comintern representatives in China, Michael Borodin (1884-1951) and MN Roy (1887-1954), could not salvage the situation for the communists. This bitter experience forced the CCP to distrust bourgeois parties and relied on the revolutionary potential of the working class. However, Mao returned to Hunan in 1925 and began to explore the possibilities of peasants providing the leadership for the impending revolution, thus distancing himself from Lenin and even Marx whose contempt for rural life was expressed in his phrase 'idiocy of village life.' From 1927 onwards, a distinct brand of Chinese communism began to develop. In 1934, when the Kuomintang army gained a decisive military advantage, it overwhelmed the communists and the latter, to avoid annihilation, fled to Northern China. This epic retreat called the Long March was a journey by 100,000 communists covering 6000 miles. Only 35,000 survived. Within the CCP, there was a leadership struggle, and Mao gained the top position in 1935, one of total dominance, which he enjoyed till his death in 1976. The Kuomintang fighters were better equipped and larger in number as they faced the Japanese onslaught. The communists were confined to a remote corner but were more disciplined and led by better generals, which helped beat the Kuomintang in the civil war from 1945-49.

Meanwhile, given the Japanese attack, there was a temporary truce between the KMT and CCP. Stalin encouraged the truce. However, after the defeat of Japan in 1945, the China question assumed international importance. The US and Stalin supported the KMT and tried to negotiate a coalition government between Mao and Chiang. Eventually, Chiang lost because he could not control the warlords and because his government was also corrupt and repressive. Mao, on the contrary, was popular and identified with the peasant army, personally sharing their grief and hardship. He spoke for the ordinary people in a language that they could comprehend. He did not own any personal property other than his quilt and few clothes. He refused to wear shoes if his soldiers did not have one. Edgar Snow¹ (1905-

¹ Snow recalled his four-month time with the Red Army as a most inspiring experience, during which he had met with the most free and happy Chinese he had ever known. This, for Snow, represented vibrant hope, passion and the unbeatable strength of mankind, something he had never felt again. He described the Long March. Snow went back to China in 1970, where was given a rousing welcome. He stood side by side

72) attributed Mao's magnetism and charisma to his rare qualities. He found that the CCP had developed its distinctive brand of communism. He described its members as outstanding men and women with a sense of "military discipline, political morale, and the will to victory" and "for sheer dogged endurance, and ability to stand hardship without complaint" they were "unbeatable" (China daily.com, 2021). The peasants and workers joined the Red Army to "help the poor and save China" (Ibid). He was the first Western journalist who detailed the Long March in his classic *The Red Star over China*.² (1937). With the capture of mainland China by the CCP, Chiang fled to Formosa (Taiwan) in 1949.

Mao's Political Beliefs

Mao next to Lenin, is rightly credited with establishing a new state with a new regime. Among the architects and makers of the twentieth century, he deserves an honourable place. His Marxism was pragmatic as it had its roots in Chinese history and philosophy. Initially a radical, he became a Marxist in 1918. Like Lenin, Mao did not create the Chinese Communist Party but framed its strategies to achieve victory and acquire power. Like Stalin, he laid the foundations of a socialist economy and achieved collectivisation of agriculture but also established a personalised dictatorship. "It is often said that Mao Zedong was both China's Lenin and her Stalin....it would be appropriate to say that Mao Zedong was China's Lenin, Stalin and Peter the Great" (Schram, 1981, p.22).

Mao's most original contribution to Marxism since 1925 was in recognising and accepting the revolutionary role of the peasantry, whom he looked upon as the vanguard of the revolution. He viewed Chinese capitalism as potentially reactionary and alien. He observed that China had a rich revolutionary tradition and a splendid historical heritage but was sluggish in her economic, political and cultural development. Foreign intervention has led to structural changes within the country. The Chinese 'new democratic revolution' had a dual nature. Its minimum programme sought a United Front to overthrow feudal elements, bureaucratic capitalists, and foreign imperialists and consolidate the new democratic revolution that would inevitably lead to establishing a socialist and eventually a communist society. Its minimum programme would aim to gradually transform the non-proletarian classes in the United Front. Mao was vague about the length of time required to complete the entire process.

Mao adopted the Leninist concept of democratic centralism regarding the Party organisation, which envisaged free discussion within the party but strict compliance by all once decisions were taken. In reality, within the Communist Parties of the former USSR and China, there was greater reliance on centralism than democracy. But theoretically, at least Mao was more conscious of the need for people's involvement as he advocated a mass line which meant consultation with local people. Maoism intertwined centralism and democracy with a theory of knowledge following the Leninist perception that the elite would lead and people were to be led (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2000). "Maoism in its final shape is a radical peasant utopia in

with Mao on the Tiananmen gate tower to express his life-long bond with China's revolution. His sympathetic description drew widespread criticisms in his own country USA, during the McCarthy years in the mid-1950s.

² The book sold over 100,000 copies and went into three additional printings.

which Marxist phraseology is much in evidence but whose dominant values seem completely alien to Marxism (Kolakowski, 1981, p. 495).

Mao in Power

Inheriting a bankrupt economy, the CCP initiated a series of measures to set the economy in order. Large capitalist enterprises were nationalised. The Land Law of June 1950 was adopted, guaranteeing each individual at the age of sixteen a minimum land-holding such that a family of five would have about one hectare. Fearing that the peasants would oppose sudden collectivisation, after the negative Soviet experience, social reforms were gradually enforced. The land of absentee landlords was redistributed to begin with, and subsequently, economic differences were narrowed through fiscal measures. The First Five Year Plan (1953-57) initiated attempts to socialise the economy, beginning with heavy industries, light industries and retail enterprises, and finally to collectivise farms. Most peasants and small producers stiffly opposed the last two measures.

Stalin died in 1955. Mao was not happy with Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971)'s policy of peaceful coexistence and was alarmed at de-Stalinization, as he adored Stalin. The complete break with the former Soviet Union came in 1957 because of ideological differences and territorial disputes. The de-Stalinization campaign and reforms initiated by Khrushchev led Mao to announce surprise initiatives in political liberalisation. He welcomed criticisms of his government and its policies with the view to improving the system. This was called 'let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend', which was abruptly terminated following the virulent criticisms that poured in from all quarters. Needless to say, Mao was not prepared for such a shock. He reversed his stance and stifled all further criticisms. In the summer of 1959, Mao abandoned the talk of the imminence of the transition to communism and overtaking the West in fifteen years. He realised that socio-economic transformation would be an arduous process. In this admission, he showed more maturity than Khrushchev, who made an elaborate plan to overtake the USA in production and reach full communism by the 1980s.

Mao believed in mass mobilisation to attain revolutionary goals. Towards this end, he launched various movements: the anti-landlord campaign (1949-52), Hundred Flowers Bloom Campaign (1957), The Great Leap Forward (1958-60) and The Great Cultural Proletarian Revolution (1966-70). Besides these, there were other smaller campaigns like the anti-insect and rodent campaign, anti-corruption movement, sanitary campaigns and tree planting campaigns that aimed at developing collective consciousness among the people. Besides mass support, Mao was ready to use guerrilla warfare tactics as he felt these were necessary for less developed areas. This is summed up succinctly in his famous statement, 'political power flows from the barrel of a gun.' To achieve a communist order, Mao believed in the efficacy of violence and support from the masses. He was flexible in the context of means and ends. Like Friedrich Engels (1820-95), he realised the enormous importance of a standing army, but he wanted to limit its power and presence. It was the party that would be supreme and be in complete control to ensure security, peace and prosperity. Mao's conception of guerrilla warfare inspired others like Charu Majumdar (1919-72), Frantz Fanon (1925-61), Che Guevara (1928-1967) and Régis Debray (1940-).

It was during the Great Leap Forward campaign that Mao gave full expression to his vision of the socialist future: good material life for all, abolition of distinctions between town and country, between mental and physical labour, between workers, peasants and the intellectuals and the eventual dissolution of the state. True communism would be built through basic industries and a modern economy. The Great Leap Forward was intended to be a period of transition from socialism to communism. It tried to reverse the process of centralised heavy industrialisation that existed during the First Five-year plan period by encouraging entrepreneurship among the people. Every household unit was encouraged to produce or manufacture some useful product with the state providing capital and resources. The family as a social unit was undermined by extending communism beyond mere work and ownership as the idea of communal living was propagated. However, all these were abandoned, for there was a steep fall in production, and the threat of famine loomed largely. By the mid-sixties, backyard industries were abandoned, and barack communes disappeared.

The Cultural Revolution

In mid-May 1966, the party chiefs in Beijing issued a text which came to be referred to as the May 16th notification, warning of infiltration into the party, the government, the army and different spheres of culture by counter-revolutionary 'revisionists' in an attempt to establish a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. This notification, according to many historians, heralded the Cultural Revolution. It was the fear of the return of elite politics (Ramzy, 2016). Chen Boda, Mao's secretary in the early 1950s and subsequently the chief propagandist during the Cultural Revolution, pointed out that Mao thought it was necessary to go beyond constitutional limits while rectifying a wrong. Mao wrote to his wife Jiang Qing in 1967 that he wanted to create "great disorder under heaven" to achieve "greater order under heaven" (Phillips, 2016).

On June 1st, the People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Party, advised the masses to "clear away the evil habits of the old society" (Ibid). The students established Red Guard divisions in classrooms and campuses across the country. By August, the bedlam was in full swing as Mao's allies exhorted the Red Guards to destroy the four olds- old ideas, old customs, old habits and old culture. Schools and universities were closed. Churches, shrines, libraries, private homes and shops were pillaged or demolished. Many party officials, teachers and intellectuals were humiliated, with some murdered or driven to suicide. Around 1800 people lost their lives in Beijing in August and September 1966. Mao ordered security forces to allow the Red Guards to function, allowing the spread of 'red terror'. Workers also joined the movement. China slipped into a virtual civil war situation with rival factions fighting it out in the various cities. The editorial in The Peking Review on September 26th 1966, praised the efforts of Mao, the Red Guards and the Revolution: "Like the red sun rising in the east, the unprecedented great proletarian cultural revolution is illuminating the land with its brilliant rays". By late 1968, Mao, realising that the revolution had gone out of control, instructed millions of young people from urban areas to go to the countryside for 're-education'. He ordered the army to restore order. It is estimated that the Cultural Revolution saw the deaths of between half a million to two million people. In the southern province of Guangxi, Inner Mongolia was among the worst affected regions, with reports of mass killings and

even cannibalism. Deng was purged in 1967. Xi Zhongxun, the father of Xi Jinping was publicly humiliated and sent into exile. Xi's half-sister, Xi Heping took her own life after being persecuted.

Mao's pocket-sized Little Red Book, published in 1964, became the official handbook of the Cultural Revolution. It contained 267 aphorisms and key ideas written to educate the semi-literate peasant or soldier. At the peak of the Cultural Revolution, the Little Red Book reading sessions were held widely. Air hostesses apprised passengers of Mao's words of wisdom in aircraft flying in the skies of China. In the 1960s, the Little Red Book was the most printed book globally, with more than a billion copies printed. Though Mao tried to distance himself totally from the teachings of Confucius, the Red Book took its place. The Cultural Revolution officially ended with Mao's death on September 9th 1976, at 82. Intending to move on and to avoid discrediting Mao too much, the party leaders decided to publicly try Jiang Qing, Mao's widow and her accomplices. They were known as the 'Gang of Four', for the mess unleashed by the Cultural Revolution. Jiang was sentenced to death in 1981, which was later reduced to life in prison. She hung herself in 1991 on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution.

Some of the grave consequences of the Cultural Revolution were a crippled economy which resulted in chronic malnutrition among two hundred million people in the countryside; the uprooting of some twenty million people who were sent to the countryside, and the execution or driven to the suicide of one and half million people (Osno, 2016). Amartya Sen attributed these terrible consequences because of the non-existence of democracy. The Economist (2016), commemorating 50 years of the Cultural Revolution writes: "Between May 1966 and Mao's death in 1976, which in effect ended the Cultural Revolution, over one million died, millions more were banished from urban homes to the countryside and tens of millions were humiliated or tortured. The Communist Party does not want any public commemoration of those horrors. Though it has called the Cultural Revolution a "catastrophe", it fears that too much scrutiny might call into question the party's fitness to rule. But debate about it still rages on the internet in China, and even occasionally surfaces in mainstream publications". It was comparable, says The Economist (Ibid) "to France's reign of terror in 1793, though that nightmare lasted only ten months and claimed fewer lives". Mao wanted to get rid of his rival, real and imagined. By 1966 three quarters of the members of the Central Committee, including Lio Shaoqi, the Chief theoretician of the Party, whom Mao considered his successor, were dubbed as traitors or counter-revolutionaries.

The most enthusiastic support for the Cultural Revolution came from Joan Robinson, a noted economist and a close associate of John Maynard Keynes. The left-leaning liberals like Leontief and Galbraith were appreciative of the Cultural Revolution. However, the most enthusiastic support was from Robinson, though, in 1981, she conceded that her appreciation of China's spectacular growth in agriculture was incorrect. But she defended her significant support arguments for the GPCR and insisted that the Chinese performance, judged by Third World standards in agriculture and nutrition, was impressive. The World Bank supported her claim.

Towards the end of his life, Mao described the founding of Communist China and the launching of the Cultural Revolution as two of his proudest achievements. Despite the considerable mayhem unleashed during the Cultural Revolution Mao's fate was

not similar to that of Stalin. Deng observed in 1981, “discrediting Comrade Mao Zedong would mean discrediting our party and state”. The Central Committee published a “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party,” which stated that Mao had “initiated and led” the Cultural Revolution, which is called a “grave blunder”. But “as for Lin Biao (Mao’s chosen successor in 1969-71), Jiang Qing and others...the matter is of an entirely different nature. They...committed many crimes behind his (Mao’s) back, bringing disaster to the country and the people.” Under Deng’s guidance, official historians constructed a carefully calibrated account of the Cultural Revolution to put an end to the debate, “a sort of historical omerta” (The Economist 2016). Dikotter (2017) pointed out that a critical evaluation of Mao was practically impossible as “the entire history of the Chinese Communist Party revolves around the personality of Mao”. However, on the positive side, Mao was a nationalist who was perceived as responsible for ending China’s century of humiliation and channelling all his energies into regaining China’s glory and greatness. Mao fought the Korean war bravely and defeated the strongest military force of his time, ensuring that no history of the twentieth century was complete without acknowledging his role. The liquidation of the feudal landowning class and ruthless rationalisation of agricultural production, and healthy and educated human resources enabled Deng to transform China into a highly efficient country of productive small-scale farmers and rural entrepreneurs. Mao’s destruction of the corrupt business class enabled Deng to attract foreign and overseas Chinese investors (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2000).

Compared to many other developing countries, China’s record during Mao’s regime was spectacular in basic indicators like literacy, nutrition and rural development. Since 1949 efforts have been made to modernise the public health service. Mao was critical of the urban bias of medical services in 1965; mobile teams of doctors from urban hospitals were sent to deliver health care and train local paramedics. China had a Barefoot doctor in charge of providing primary health care and eliminating endemic and infectious diseases in rural areas. These doctors integrated Western and Chinese medicines under state direction. Nearly 1.5 million peasants received intensive three to six months of training in anatomy, bacteriology, birth control, and maternal and infant care. The system began to disintegrate at the end of the cultural revolution but accelerated again in the early 1980s. In 1985 ‘barefoot doctor’ as a job title was officially removed from the Chinese medical profession.

After the Soviet refusal to transfer nuclear technology to China in the late 1950s, Mao began his indigenous nuclear programme and joined the nuclear club in 1964. In the early 1970s, the US initiated its policy of détente with China, officially recognising it, abandoning nationalist Chiang and accepting Mao’s one-China policy. Both Mao and Chou Enlai died in 1976. There was an intense power struggle, and the famous Gang of Four was jailed. A new era began with Deng. If China is today a near literate, adequately nourished and with a strong rural economy with a productive agricultural base, a functioning national infrastructure and a booming economy, it is largely a consequence of Mao’s policies. However, today’s China is a negation of Mao’s ideals.

Post Mao China

One of the first important acts of Deng Xiaoping (1904-97) in 1977 was to restore the entrance examination for admissions to centres of higher learning, discontinued during the Cultural Revolution, in a fair and free manner. This one single act greatly restored the confidence of the average Chinese is an ancient practice pursued since Confucius' time and regarded as one of the major pillars of the Chinese state. In 1979, Deng led the country to a border war with Vietnam which had joined the Soviet-led Comecon and the gamble paid off as the Soviets did not intervene, which further bolstered his image within China. In 1989, he ended the two-month-long student protest at Tiananmen Square for greater freedom by force, reiterating CCP's continuing grip on the nation that continues even today. Deng's action was approved by Kissinger, stating that no country would have tolerated such open defiance. Meanwhile, Deng visited the USA, Japan and other East Asian countries, including Singapore. He consulted the maker of modern Singapore Lee Kaun Yew, and a host of others, and initiated a process of sectoral liberalisation in Shenzhen, unleashing unprecedented economic growth as he believed that the colour of the cat was immaterial as long as it caught the mice.

Unlike Western liberal democracies that believe in incremental change in China, there is greater autonomy which allowed Deng to succeed Mao and initiate radical reforms. When communism collapsed in the rest of the world, it continued well in China with support from 93 per cent of the people; the latter regarding politics as an exclusive activity of the specialists and the elite. A paternalistic state is accepted in China and Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Singapore. National sovereignty with an over-emphasis on unity does not translate into popular sovereignty. The Chinese "state has consistently been seen as the apogee of society, enjoying sovereignty with an over-all else" (Jacques, 2009, p. 260). This Chinese-ness does not leave any space for the right of self-determination for Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. Unity and stability are two non-negotiable bases of the state, and since the CPC visibly guarantees both, it is firmly in the saddle. One of the major reasons that Mao is still respected and continues to be a national hero is his success in maintaining Chinese unity and enhancing China's international prestige by defeating the USA in the Korean War (1950-53).

Recent Trends

For leadership, democracy and the multiparty system are not immediate concerns as economic take-off did not require it. It was further reinforced by the track record of authoritarian Japan and the NICs of East Asia. The peaceful transition from Mao to Deng and the capacity to incorporate significant changes have led to unprecedented continuous economic growth and technological advancements, poverty alleviation of 800 million people and all-around improvements in quality of life. All these have enhanced the legitimacy of the CCP. China, for all practical purposes, has become a successful developmental state. Behind the economic success, there are also important indicators of limited political changes at the local levels. In the Deng period, several reforms like the introduction of competitive electoral politics in the rural areas and even in mayoral elections were initiated. Correspondingly, reforms in the civil services, initiation of structured decentralisation and limited activation of representative bodies have led to a Chinese assertion of a blending of the election with selection. Economic compulsions have

led to increasing codification and the introduction of the rule of law, without which a market economy would be unable to function efficiently. This has significantly reduced the power of the political elite and led to important political reforms like limiting the terms of officeholders to two terms of five years each. In 2013, the idea of professional revolutionaries was abandoned, and the membership of the party was broadened to make it a more balanced coalition. With a doctrine of extreme cautiousness and care, this process of limited democratisation has been both gradual and incremental.

In a significant White Paper on Democracy (2005), it is analysed as a functional tool rather than the desired ideal. Modernisation and efficiency are the overriding considerations. The aim of rural elections is not a movement toward strengthening grass-root participatory democracy but better governance and efficiency. Martin Jacques comments that in contrast to this purely functionalist attitude to democracy, “there has been a major expansion of civil liberties and human rights” (2009, p. 281). Except for sensitive and non-negotiable issues like Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the communist party, all other issues could be discussed freely and openly without fear of state retribution. A lot of efforts exist to ensure strict discipline, accountability and a corruption-free system. The internet and a strong middle class of 400 million have strengthened critical reasoning and significant advancements in scientific enquiry, artificial intelligence and space explorations. Depoliticization is pursued with vigour. It is similar to the debate on the end of ideology in the mid - 1950s in the West that asserted the end of ideology in both advanced capitalism and developed socialism because of the compulsions of managing a modern, complex society dominated by science and technology. Deng’s slogan that it is good to be rich has become the accepted ideal. Deng died in 1997 as a private citizen, an exemplary act unthinkable at Mao’s time. He donated his eyes and body for medical use.

In sharp contrast to the Western democracies, in which lawyers mostly rule, the top brass of the CCP is highly technocratic and dominated by engineers. The Chinese hard state exists in policy formulation and execution of policies like population and migration, but in other areas like moral policing, drinking a can of beer in public taken seriously in the USA is left to citizens’ choice. Since Mao’s death and the elimination of the Gang of Four, China has overwhelmingly accepted the reformist model assuring foreigners and overseas Chinese (the largest investors) of continuity with enough institutional checks and balances to make investments secure.

The Deng doctrine of peaceful succession has worked till now. In 2018, Xi removed the two-term limit for the President and introduced an element of uncertainty by amending the constitution. In this, he follows Putin more than Deng. He defends it as an essential step to guiding the party’s grand vision for restoring the Middle Kingdom by 2049. The Chinese model that Xi applauds is based on an impressive track record. Its legitimacy is not limited to the renewal of the popular mandate as we are used to in liberal democracies but in projecting a political structure free from compulsions of electoral politics. This was reinforced by the 2008 financial crisis, which seriously questioned the efficacy of the American economic model, China’s infrastructure projects, both domestic and international, and its collective strength in tackling the coronavirus pandemic effectively. The entire effort of the CCP is to remind China and the world of the century of humiliation that it suffered because of the Western and the Japanese design to perpetuate China’s semi-colonial and semi-feudal order.

The century that began with the Opium War (1842) denied China the rightful evolution and supremacy that it enjoyed as the longest civilisational state in the world. Restoring China to its rightful place is not an ideological question but a nationalistic one that the CCP intends to achieve by acquiring frontier technology, including AI and space, and achieving rough parity with the USA.

China is aware of the wide differences between the Cold War period and the contemporary situation and accepts the fact of an interdependent world. The BRI project is an example of that interdependence. The important point for China is the full restoration of its sovereignty, in which all other considerations become secondary. It is aware of Sun's role as an educated western statesman. He wanted to usher in Western democracy but did not yield any success as the October 1911 Republican Revolution put him nominally in power that crippled him. He was unable to provide a stable government. The May 4th 1919 Movement reflected that the army functioned based on personal loyalties and not on the state. 1912 to 1933 was a period of conflict that saw an increasing fragmentation of China, reminding it of the importance of unity. The CCP looks to the Kuomintang period as a nationalistic but corrupt one, leading to China becoming a soft target of Japan in the 1930s and the latter brutally occupying Manchuria. The CCP also asserts that the heroic resistance of the Chinese was one of the major factors for Japan's defeat in 1945.

Mao's victory in 1949 is looked to as establishing China's independence and unity, facilitating its great power status. Nationalism being the driving force, the CCP accepts mistakes and setbacks but emphasises the economic and cultural aspects, which has made it secure and powerful. This reference by Xi not to accept any bullying is about the unequal treaties that the Western powers and Japan inflicted on China in the past. The whole emphasis is on restoring China to pre-1842 status. Russia suffered humiliation in the 1990s but only for ten years, while China has suffered for more than 100 years. The point is that China's evolution is very different from the West, and the CCP's legitimacy is based on the centrality of its capacity to guarantee China's independence. The most important point that it proclaims is that the West has no right to lecture China, a victim of Western humiliation and exploitation and that China has every right to choose its path and write its destiny. China endorses the Westphalian state system. China is challenging Western duplicity for its support of many authoritarian regimes and discouraging liberal and reformatory ones. It also reminds the West that when the latter invested so heavily and singularly contributed to China's success, it did so without insisting on Beijing's track record on human rights and democratic values. But these have now assumed paramount importance only with the rise of China as a formidable power and an economic rival. China's admission into the WTO in 2001 has proved to be a game-changer.

There is a belief that by 2049 when China has emerged as the world's largest economy, it will have avenged a century of humiliation (1842-1949). It has already surpassed the USA in PPP terms in 2014 and is slated to overtake the US in actual GDP terms by 2028. The grandeur of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, its ability to avert the 2008 financial crisis, the impressive scientific progress and 10 percent of its universities being in the first hundred in the world have added to the CCP's legitimacy. It is widely believed that the decision to go ahead with the Tokyo Olympics amidst this pandemic despite opposition from a majority of Japanese is because the

Japanese government thought that the winter Olympics scheduled later in the year in China would be held either way.

One great and unprecedented achievement is ameliorating 800 million people from abject poverty through broad-based economic development and human development, emphasising education, healthcare, and decent nutrition. Sachs (2020) acknowledged it as a “great historic accomplishment bringing hope and providing lessons to poor countries in the world”. The Chinese leadership did not delay the goal of abolishing extreme poverty by 2020, along with its concerted efforts to contain the spread of the pandemic. Three lessons from the Chinese practice are crucial: (1) clear goals, (2) good capacity for planning and (3) broad-based strategy that combines public investment and market-based growth in infrastructure, health care and education. Sachs (2020) highlighted the role of China’s National Development and Reform Commission and the whole planning structure as it created “a framework able to look ahead in a systematic way and plan for five- to 10-year horizons what to do is extremely important” The low cost, and high-quality infrastructure that China enormously supplies would according to Sachs bring important benefits for the world economy.

Stiglitz (2006) pointed out that a unique combination of pragmatism and vision enabled China to achieve sustained growth and poverty reduction, both of which the world has never seen. Unlike the rest of the developing world, China, defying the Washington consensus, has sought sustainable and equitable increases in real living standards. There is increasing emphasis on the environment as the realisation that unsustainable development would compromise living standards. There is also the concern of mitigating rising inequalities with the government planning to achieve a more harmonious society. The government hopes to address social inequalities, increase citizens’ well-being and promote consumption by strengthening social security (pensions) and public health and education. This also explains the excessive savings that China faces. There is also the need to reduce the knowledge gap with the developed world. In reducing poverty and making available consumer products at affordable prices, China has enabled millions of poor people to enjoy the benefits of modern industrialised society, something which was earlier restricted to the rich and the middle classes. The rural agricultural poor have moved to urban areas because of technical training and then moved from low technical ones to higher ones. China has achieved this in four decades. This is in sharp contrast to Europe where the transition happened over centuries and over one hundred years in the USA. A ten per cent growth every year for the past four decades has established China as the world’s factory. This was evident in the early stages of the pandemic when the world’s supply chain got disrupted due to a lockdown in China. Its miracle was based on exports outwitting its competitors. Yet, it has also built a huge prosperous internal market with a prosperous middle class of 400 million, enabling it to weather the shocks in the world trading system.

Conclusion

Unlike the Soviet Union, China’s achievements are manifest in all areas-military, nuclear technology, frontier knowledge and research, economics and politics. It has two-thirds of the world’s high-speed trains, contributing to its economic might by enabling a smooth and fast supply of goods at affordable rates. In the last 25 years, real wages have quadrupled, while in the US it is stagnant. It has established

high tech parity with the west. Its economy is both market-oriented and state-managed. China continues to see itself as a developing economy to build socialism with Chinese characteristics. It does not follow either the West European model or the Soviet one. Its aim is a harmonious and equitable society."China's rise", according to Mearsheimer (2014), "is very likely to be the most important event of the twenty-first century". In its history of the first hundred years of the CCP it has many impressive achievements. It is now firmly in the saddle at the start of the second hundred years. Few question its continued presence in China's Party-State. However, it has to solve the question of political succession smoothly and also demonstrate that it can live peacefully with its neighbours, despite its commitment to the Westphalian state system and the principle of national sovereignty.

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