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# Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

**Summary:** The text speaks about the formation of the Communist Party of China, its beginnings and development, as well as the categorizations ever since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The new geopolitical reality has been explained, especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The argumentation is made about the peculiarities of Chinese history and modern development. The immeasurable importance of the Communist Party of China in governing the most populous country is pointed out. A short section on the relations between Serbia and China has been included. The conclusion highlights the general views encompassing most of the claims presented in the previous text.

**Keywords:** Communist Party of China, Serbia, new geopolitics, contemporary Chinese politics, COVID-19, Belt and Road

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## Introduction

One century ago, thirteen Chinese men gathered in Shanghai Bay and decided to hold the first Congress of the Communist Party of China during the same month (July). That first, secret meeting took place in a modest and rather small house in Shanghai, which is still in its place today. During the First Congress, the Communist Party of China is said to have had about fifty members decisive to change the way of life and the system of functioning, and fight for the new values which should be formed in China, the former "central empire". The participants of these historic gatherings were motivated by grand ideas of the Soviet revolution and the recommendations of the teachers of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Filled by the desire to establish

justice for the majority of the oppressed population, they developed plans how to accomplish it. Among them was Mao Zedong, who was to become the leader of the Communist Party and of China twenty two years later.

It is certain that in 1921 no one could even suppose that the Communist Party would rule in China and that today we would be celebrating the centenary of its founding, hard-to-describe sacrifices, unbelievable tribulations, struggles, victories, but also failures, the greatest zeal and success spoken about by the whole world nowadays.

There are numerous categorizations of the past century in China and, regardless of their nature, they are most often connected to the leading figures. Many good connoisseurs of modern China claim that Mao Zedong managed to unite China

and liberate it from foreign invaders, to establish its sovereignty and territorial integrity and put his country on the international map of the world. In his era, China took over the baton from Taiwan in the United Nations and the Security Council and became the first-tier factor in international relations. It is important that China achieved its full independence and secured its respect in the world. Many things happened in Mao's era and the final register may never be completed. One thing is certain: with him as its leader, China began radiating self-confidence.

10 | After Mao Zedong's departure and a few whimsical years, a new stage began under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, Mao's contemporary, who had been periodically punished during his political career. A number of historians believe that after Mao's first revolution, Deng conducted the second revolution. He opened up China, began carrying out domestic reforms, created a market of a special type and simply put huge human potential into operation. He did all this for the sake of the development of his own country, while simultaneously maintaining its identity. Even today it is often spoken about the text in classical Chinese style with 24 Chinese characters, sending the following message: "Watch carefully, define the position, do your work peacefully, hide your capacities and wait for the right moment; don't attract attention and never look for guidance"

It can be said that the so-called third revolution is being carried out by current leader Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China and the General Secretary of the Communist Party – the first one in the history of post-war China who was born after the establishment of the People's

Republic of China was declared. This man with a university degree has built his career gradually and persistently based on his skills, exceptional abilities and undeniable commitment. He has encountered various perplexing issues in the life of his country and with each accomplished task proved his success in understanding and comprehending the specific character of the nation he belongs to. It is no wonder that he is holding the leading position in China today.

The experts who carefully monitor China's development and current affairs in relation to China claim that Xi Jinping is the first man in the history of China to state that some of the most important goals are increasing income of Chinese citizens, their better life and higher standard of living. Something like that was hardly imaginable until recently. When we also take into account the fact that President Xi Jinping has recently declared that poverty has been overcome in his country, we can only get an impression of what sort of person he is and what an efficient and successful mechanism he governs.

His vision called "Belt and Road" (colloquially, "the new Silk Road") was declared in 2013 with clear messages and explanations. In that respect, China has signed agreements with dozens of countries, and it would come as no surprise if that number reached one hundred soon. The basic meaning of this great idea is contained in the fact that the modern Chinese state offers favourable arrangements to the countries that accept it voluntarily in order to achieve their own goals in the construction of infrastructure, roads, railways and everything else that is necessary for security, acceleration and expansion of economic

relations of the countries, their internal stability and development. This also includes the cooperation “17+1” which has constantly developed ever since the Warsaw Meeting in 2012.

## New geopolitical reality

Before, during and after the fall of Berlin Wall, euphoria spread across the United States of America and West Europe. The Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union dissolved, while NATO grew larger. There were conflicts in store in former Yugoslavia. Incited internally and externally, they turned into civil and ethnic wars (as well as religious, according to some) that ended up in the break-up of former united Yugoslavia, with many victims, particularly civilians. In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of this century, the monopoly of a single world power could be felt rather directly. Fortunately, at the same time some regional powers emerged and, thanks to their persistence and commitment to succeed, choosing their own road of development, they gradually created a multipolar world, as it is most often called nowadays. The centres of power are multiplying and it can only make true democrats happy. In the past 20 years, we have witnessed the establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the Euro-Asian Union etc. Turkey and Iran are becoming more and more significant, as well as many other countries worldwide.

In such circumstances, China is playing an increasingly important role. About ten years ago it was ranked the second in the world by its economic

success and the volume of the gross national income. For a long time China has been the first in the world by the volume of its trade. It is no secret that it is the first country in history that has managed to double its national income in only ten years. In that way it has attracted plenty of attention, unfortunately including many ill-intentioned ones. There is a good reason why “*Thucydides Trap*” has become a frequently mentioned syntagm in the American theory and many other political theories (Allison, 2017). President Xi spoke about it during his visit to the USA in September 2015. He explained the dangers of being trapped by a stereotype in a very convincing and substantiated manner, emphasizing that China by no means strived towards political domination, being certain that there was room for all of us on the planet, no matter how different we might be.

In this place it would be appropriate to remember a famous Chinese seafarer from the very beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century – Admiral Zheng He, who sailed many seas and oceans with his fleet and visited different countries of Asia and Africa (according to some, on one of his seven great voyages he reached as far as the coast of South America) (Menzies, 2002). Many sources state that this army leader’s fleet consisted of hundreds of ships with 27,000 soldiers. It is a historical fact that during the rule of the powerful Ming dynasty, Admiral Zheng He traded with the countries in which he anchored his ships, exchanging gifts and expressing gratitude for receiving rare animals unknown in China. He never even attempted to colonize, let alone enslave the nations who stood out with their hospitality. This occurred much before 1489 as the alleged year when Columbus

discovered America (with three ships, as we know). In contrast, Cortes and Pizarro had only a few ships, but managed to enslave millions of natives. Portuguese Alvarez sailed to Chinese Macao with several ships in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and this colony was not liberated until the last year of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Zheng He's example should be given a special place in all textbooks throughout the world as proof that cultural conflicts are not inevitable. On the contrary, based on his example, it becomes easier to understand the modern efforts of many Chinese social theoreticians to prove that opposites (yin and yang) are not necessarily equivalent to conflict and that they create a synthesis, and even harmony, if generations are taught properly. It points to many elements of Christian culture that has advocated harmony, peacefulness and particularly love from time immemorial.

Everything we have stated can be checked up historically and socially. The collapse of this thesis is possible only if the event of unilateral and selfish acting. That is why all those claiming to advocate real peace and general wellbeing are now standing the test. The oaths about the values to be realized are challenged most if they continue to be imposed in practice.

It transpires that the most popular and democratic behaviour is the one that is not based on the exclusion of the materialization of someone's greedy interest, but on true mutual appreciation and understanding the needs of the nearest ones.

Technological achievements, instant information, immediate communications with any part of the world, space travel, terrifying weapons, cyber wars etc. compound interpersonal and in particular interstate relations. Sometimes

inventions and newly-made devices seem to surpass the established human perceptions of the way they should treat neighbouring nations, but also the world as a whole. There are more and more challenges and it is increasingly substantiated to ask whether the man will be able to react properly at a certain moment, especially if that decision has extensive and far-reaching consequences. Mere relying on artificial intelligence is always rather disputable. That is why it is even more important not to forget the premise of everything that exists and that every nation and state should have a sense of satisfaction but no fear.

Returning to the situation in modern international relations which are, naturally, most affected by the largest powers, we should point to the starting points of the UN Charter which have remained current because today's conflicts in the world call for constant reminding of its goals and principles. It is probably the only book that should be equally respected by all at any time. All other declarations, strategies, instructions and agreements (public and secret) need to fulfil completely the spirit of the words contained in the Charter.

It can be concluded that the Chinese ruling party takes this seriously into account. No document of domestic or international significance is intended to be implemented at the expense of other countries and nations. It definitely does not mean giving up the idea of achieving the country's own territorial integrity.

It is an important question what would be happening in the world and what trends would exist in the development of the states without China. With its diligence and hard work, huge investments

in education and science, involvement in world capital flows, respect for the rules in international relations established after World War Two (in which Beijing did not participate!), in the footsteps of economic development, organizing the most populous country in the world, stabilizing internal circumstances, alleviating poverty, creating a large number of workplaces, huge success in inventions, new technologies, investment breakthroughs outside the country, contributions to multilateralism, not conditioning financial support and aid to other countries etc., China deserves to have the central place in international relations. China is doing this led by its Communist Party.

Frequent criticism that China is expanding and wants to dominate over the space of others most often comes from those with a great number of military or other bases thousands of kilometres far from their own borders. Of course, it would not be good if any other country tipped the scales and took over the leading great-power role of the United States of America the way it has it today.

Contemporary world cannot be imagined without China. The same was in the past too because it has been an uninterrupted civilization ever since its beginnings. China is said to have had as many as 450 emperors and there is still no single scholarly opinion about its beginnings. In his book, Kissinger even notes that the Chinese nation has no legend about its emergence, which makes it special in comparison to most other nations (Kissinger, 2011). Moreover, we should recall that until the 19<sup>th</sup> century it has primacy in trade performances and that for centuries it was in the first place by the volume of its trade and the gross national product. Therefore, China

is a natural leader in economic terms. As Ezra Vogel correctly noticed, the USA should recognize China's contribution of to the world and treat it fairly (Vogel, 2013).

Recalling Deng Xiaoping's visit to Japan in October 1978 and a series of his dialogues with the hosts, first of all with the then Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, we must emphasize his following words:

“Deng explained to his hosts that he had come to Japan for three reasons: to exchange the documents ratifying the Treaty of Peace and Friendship; to express China's gratitude to its Japanese friends who had strived to improve China-Japan relations in the past few decades; and, like Xu Fu, to search for the ‘secret magic potion’. The Japanese listened and laughed because they were familiar with the story of Xu Fu who had been sent to Japan by Chinese Emperor Qin 2,200 years before in order to find the secret elixir of immortality. Deng went on to explain that what he actually referred to by the “magic potion” was the secret of modernization. He said that he wanted to learn about modern technology and management”.

This is how the foundations were laid for China's opening up to the world, which implied gradual abandonment of deteriorated ideological postulates and, in the beginning, subtle inclusion of China in the world capital and commodity market. It is known that the first serious experiments in that respect were conducted in Shenzhen that bordered with Hong Kong and used to be a minor fishing settlement. At that time it was not wise to conduct trials or reforms in the capital city,

in the centres like Shanghai or in the provincial capitals, but seemingly unimportant places were chosen. Forty years later, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, Shenzhen's trade volume is becoming equal to that of Hong Kong! Moreover, taking into account that Shenzhen is the seat of Huawei, Tencent and several other leading world companies, the extent of such economic progress is evident in an extremely short period of time from the perspective of history.

14 | However, I believe that the most direct indicator of the success of someone's governance is the percentage of population literacy. The latest statistical data show that almost 100% literacy has been achieved in China. In my opinion, this fact speaks volumes about the maturity of the country. All other circumstances derive from literacy. All inhabitants are entitled to health insurance! When we think of the fact that it is the country with more than 1.4 billion inhabitants, any further comment is unnecessary.

General literacy certainly leads to China's increasing investments in development. The target has probably been achieved of allocating 2.5% of the gross national income to research and development. China has produced and owns one of the most powerful supercomputers (Tianhe-2). The scale of the attention dedicated to it is proved by the decisions of the highest Party bodies (the latest Congress of the Communist Party of China, this year's session of the National People's Congress of China etc.) and the efforts of President of the Republic and General Secretary CPC, Xi Jinping, that China must reach technological autonomy, no longer depend on deliveries of the companies from

the countries with reserved, rather distrustful or even hostile attitudes to the Chinese state (China Daily, 2020). Naturally, it will not affect China's cooperation with all those countries that want it. On the contrary, such cooperation will become stronger. We also have in mind that in the past few years China has organized quite successful fairs dedicated exclusively to importing goods from abroad, which is probably a unique case in the world. Furthermore, China's government and party leaders decisively continue the Belt and Road policy the effect of which surpasses everything that has been known in the history of mankind to the present day.

It is interesting that in his program speech at the most recent Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, as well as at the session of the National People's Congress of China, Chinese leader Xi Jinping unambiguously determined the direction of further progress of the nation and the state. He assessed that it was time to transfer completely from extensive trade to intensive trade, that quality should overshadow quantity, that people should live a better life, that the middle class should be stronger, that the principle of "double circulation" should be applied (strengthening domestic purchase power and consumption, as well as the continuation of trading with the world) etc. At the beginning of this year, the 14<sup>th</sup> five-year plan until 2025 was officially adopted, as well as long-term development guidelines until 2035. If, apart from all this, we have in mind that China has made private and state-run property equal, the importance and scale of this unrivalled venture can be anticipated.

Recently the news has gone around the globe that Chinese cosmic module landed on the surface of Mars. We know that China was the only country to send a spacecraft to the dark side of the Moon. This and similar data are the testimony of the most complex and refined ventures we have usually associated with the USA and Russia so far. China is evidently becoming the leader in some fields of space technology production, which deserves praise, especially when the cosmic expanse is used for peaceful purposes.

According to numerous news sources, the coronavirus was first detected in China. The disease caught many countries worldwide mostly unprepared, so the number of victims and the infected increased by geometric progression. Although the most populous country in the world, China managed to contain this plague by putting in huge efforts and setting the whole social (not only medical) system into motion, thus putting the danger posed by COVID-19 under control in a relatively short period of time. This is yet another countless time that China has proved its efficiency and care. At the moment this text was written, almost a year and a half after the outbreak of the pandemic, China, as the most populous country, had fewer than 100,000 of total registered cases (in comparison to over 160 million registered cases in the world). Chinese vaccine was one of the first to be used throughout the world. Many countries were interested primarily in this vaccine, while China did its best to meet everyone's requirements. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended Sinopharm vaccine and approved its use. The fact that more than

one third China's population has already been vaccinated speaks volumes of the highest-ranking organization that exists here.

According to Henry Kissinger, China is finally "in the position to lead its foreign affairs, no longer on the basis of its long-term capacities or ultimate strategic goal, but in compliance with its current power".

## Serbia and China

Serbia supports China's policies, particularly the one regarding Hong Kong and Taiwan. In multilateral forums, our two countries seem to have almost identical attitudes. We highly appreciate the support provided by China in relation to Kosovo and Metohija.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić has met Chinese President Xi Jinping more than ten times, while their constant and regular communication would be difficult to measure in terms of hours.

It is a rare case that a country has the National Council dealing solely with China and Russia. It is led by Serbia's former president Tomislav Nikolić. The Council is composed of nine ministers from the current Government of the Republic of Serbia.

There are numerous joint projects for traffic and infrastructural construction in progress. It is estimated that more than \$10 billion (or more than \$12 billion according to some sources). I would like to mention, for example, the Belgrade bypass, high-way Preljina–Požega, high-speed railway to Budapest etc. We know that Chinese companies have taken over the steelworks in Smederevo and the mine in Bor. Chinese companies have already

built the bridges across the Danube and the Sava Rivers. There are also many engagements in other areas of exceptional importance to the economy of our country.

Serbia will never forget the aid provided by China during the coronavirus-caused infection. We are particularly grateful for the Chinese team of doctors that has spent many weeks in Serbia, helping specifically to put the disease under control.

We emphasize that the Republic of Serbia will always oppose sanctions against China or any other country. Because of our bitter experience, we are unable to consent to such measures.

Our two countries have already built a solid and encouraging registry of common past and guaranteed future.

## Conclusion

China is a country that has the longest recollection of its statehood and cherishes the awareness of it. It is one of the few countries that can boast of such a fact. The famous book by the last Chinese Emperor Pu Yi, entitled *From Emperor to Citizen*, contains a unique testimony about the man who experienced and survived such transition (not counting the “ordinary” kings and queens). Similarly, China has experienced and survived the transition from a powerful empire to a powerful republic founded on social justice.

We may assume that fans of Alexandre Dumas would translate the principles of socialism into the motto “one for all, all for one”. Through its Communist Party, China promotes a long-established legal principle that the state is above

the individual, but it at the same time proves quite effectively that the state is always there for the individual and his environment, as an inseparable condition for survival.

China has recognized quite successfully that Chinese citizens can reap good fruits of life only if they work in corroboration with the rest of the world. It may seem that such a conclusion leads to paradoxes which, after being considered thoroughly, turn out to be extremely logical. For example, China did not take part in shaping the post-war order, but it promotes political and economic principles that derive from this order, only with its own “ingredients”.

China has become a super-power not only in economic, political and military terms, but also thanks to its century-long tradition and culture. It has chosen the system that many see as a “relic of the past” – socialism. Nevertheless, it is well-known that there are different solutions and roads of building a truly satisfied society and its organization of power. It transpires that such system serves the society that is accomplishing enviable progress in all spheres of life.

I would like to repeat something I have advocated for on numerous occasions. In today’s world it is pointless to glorify internal political systems of some member-countries of the United Nations. True democracy in international relations should imply that each country assesses itself. Its choice should be respected by all. It does not mean that we should not by all means strive for the principles of life that constitute the ultimate points of the civilization progress so far. However, under no circumstances should we “teach others a lesson” because it might easily turn into our own negation.



I would also like to point out once again that Chinese socialism is characteristic only of China. Moreover, it is understandable that in the war and post-war periods China took over from others with respect to ideology what it found useful for itself and consistently carried out, sometimes

even too eagerly. However, modern Chinese state has proved its efficiency and peculiarity in numerous areas. This refers to indisputably wise and comprehensive governance.

I would like to congratulate the Communist Party of China the centenary of its founding.

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Photo: Xinhua

Shenzhou12 spacecraft had been successfully launched and sent into the space with three Chinese astronauts