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**China’s long march**

Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics is three-pronged: i) factors-in the history of the CPC-led revolution and the journey of sacrifice and nation-building that ensued thereafter; ii) acknowledgement and appreciation of the fact that China has arrived, and become a moderately prosperous society; and iii) that this is not the end, but “the continuation of the great social revolutions of the Chinese people led by the CPC”.

Xi Jinping Thought also re-enforces the triangle that is the Chinese people, the Communist Party of China and the State. It is the harmonious interplay and deep intertwinement of these three pillars that form the prerequisite for taking the revolution forward and implementing Xi Jinping Thought successfully. Xi Jinping continues to remind the CPC, as the party-state, and the Chinese people, that they are two sides of the same coin, and that one of them cannot be successful without the other. A ‘people-centred approach’ is at the centre of Xi Thought.

Furthermore, a key aspect to Xi Jinping Thought are the goals and challenges that Xi Jinping sees for China in the foreseeable future. While the US sees China and Russia as the biggest challenges to it’s stability and security, the issues for Xi Jinping remain domestic. The number one priority for Xi Jinping continues to be “building a moderately prosperous society”, while eradicating poverty by 2021.

Since 2021 is the centennial celebration of the CPC, it is crucial that Xi delivers the livelihood and standard of living that its forefathers promised to the Chinese people in 1949, when it was founded. Often, Xi Jinping has asked the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to remain true to the “original aspiration” of the party, which is to deliver a “moderately prosperous society”, an important converging point between Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and Xi Jinping Thought for the People's Republic of China. The convergence of the three all important leaders’ vision is deep-rooted in the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China to rule China, as it’s delivery on economic growth and poverty alleviation is unmatched to date.

Understandably, China’s outlook on national security and fundamental core interests are rooted in maintenance of domestic stability and elimination of poverty. By continuing the Opening Up and Reform started by Deng in 1978, Xi carefully distinguishes between the body-politic of the PRC, emphasizing socialism with Chinese characteristics, from the Chinese economy, which he is cautiously yet steadily liberalizing (the pace of which is often contested).

Xi Jinping, through Xi Jinping Thought, deconstructs the traditional liberal theory of Western democracy by introducing the Chinese model of governance to the world, which so far seems to be working. For the first time since the Opening Up and Reform took place, Chinese leaders put forth different outlooks of development – Jiang Zemin put forth the Three Represents whilst Hu Jintao introduced the Scientific Outlook to Development, amongst others. In the past, these visions of Chinese leaders were for the Chinese people (and party) alone. Xi Jinping Thought has departed from this past tradition, as its audience is both domestic and international.

Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory too, which preceded Xi Jinping Thought, primarily remained within Chinese discourse and the mainland’s realm. Xi Jinping Thought has internationalized Chinese socialism, and unveiled to the world what constitutes China 2.0. The fact that this is a break from past precedence signifies China’s renewed confidence in itself, as well as the rejuvenation of the Chinese people and state, that it is sufficiently self-assured to introduce itself, with its fundamentally communist identity, to the rest of the world. The internationalization of this ideology is manifested in the establishment of 10 Xi Jinping Thought Centres in different capitals of the world as well as the publication of three sequels of Governance of China authored by Xi Jinping that have been launched in all major capitals of the world and translated in hundreds of different languages.

A key component of Xi Jinping Thought is that of the Chinese Dream of Great Rejuvenation for the Chinese Nation. The century of humiliation, which is embedded in the collective Chinese consciousness, is used to stir nationalism and motivate the Communist Party of China to reach what Xi calls “centre-stage”, which can be correlated to the ancient status of China as the Middle-Kingdom. The “century of humiliation”, which saw China being bullied, colonized and economically exploited, by foreign powers, has made the Xi-led CPC vow to regain China’s previous prestige and status in the world, which is alluded through the reference to “Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.

China sees the past 200 years as an aberration, where the West dominated the political and economic realm. Xi’s rejuvenation is in the context of its civilizational history of 5000 years, where China as the middle-kingdom, engaged in commerce with most of the world, held an important role in supporting neighbouring states, and was scientifically and technologically ahead of the rest of the world. Xi chose a symbolically telling venue to first use this slogan of the Chinese Dream of Great Rejuvenation for the Chinese Nation, the National Museum’s Road to Revival Exhibition, an exhibit which details China’s suffering at the hands of colonial powers in the 19th and 20th centuries.

At the root of the ‘rejuvenation’ is the self-introspection, internal reform and discipline of the party. From 2003 till when Xi took over in 2013, the CPC’s self-reform and discipline was not as emphasized and prioritized. The unprecedented accountability campaign that Wang Qishan spearheaded before being appointed the vice president, prosecuted “flies, foxes and tigers”, ridding the party of individuals that Xi says had “contaminated” the system.

In order to move forward, Xi Jinping Thought underscores the mobilization of the party cadres to a level of alertness and discipline that was last seen during Mao, where deliverables, governance, and decisions are taken with party ideology and the people’s well-being at their heart. Indeed, China is preparing for another Long March.

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