

International Center for Democratic Transition

China after the CCP congress in a world confronting unprecedented economic and security challenges.

Keynote Speaker: Professor Yiwei Wang
ZSOLT RÁBAI AND ANDRÁS BARTÓK

The conductor of the discussion is Zsolt Rábai Senior Vice President of the ICDT foundation.

The keynote speaker in this discussion is Wang Yiwei, Director of Institute of International Affairs and Director of Centre for European Union Studies, Remnin University of China. He is also a Jean Monnet Chair professor in the Remnin University of China, vice president of the Academy of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in a New Era.

The Commentator we invited for this discussion is András Bartók, Assistant Professor at the University of Public Services, Budapest.

The discussion was also attended by Professor Vlad Vernygora vice rector of Khazar University of Azerbaijan, specialist in Asia-Pacific Studies, and Miss Barbora Maronkova, Nato Public Diplomacy Division, dealing with the Asia-Pacific region and relations with China. The meeting is also attended by students of Professor Wang Yiwei. The event was livestreamed on Facebook as well.

The main topic of the discussion is concerning what we can expect of China's policies in today's challenging global environment as well as diving into what are China's main interests in the global economy and on the field of regional and global security

Keynote address by Prof. Wang:

The professor firstly highlighted that as Director of Centre for European Union Studies his job is to connect the political west with the east.

The professor starts his speech by highlighting that one of the key differences between the political west and China is that the ruling communist party is not merely „a” party in the Chinese political system it does not only represent a fraction of voters or certain layers of society but it is the sole party that represents the interests of every Chinese citizen and as there are more than 50 different ethnic groups living in China, they do not each have a party representing them but the CCP is a binding entity for all the ethnic groups of China today.

He then stated that the principal topic of the 2022 CCP congress was modernisation. Mr Wang highlights that the CCP did not use the term “modernisation with Chinese characteristics,” instead modernisation to achieve an economic and societal re-generation in today's China.

Modernisation with Chinese characteristics was a term used for Chinese development and modernisation after the Sino-Soviet split.

Mr Wang associates this negligence of the term with the fact that the Soviet Union is no more, and China has surpassed it in every capacity. He also wants to make it clear that Chinese communism differs greatly from the Soviet one which was developed by Slavic and Russian cultural influences on Marxism. While China today focuses on the people centric approach of Marxism, putting people first in every question.

Mr Wang also draws attention to Xi Jinping's comments to Joe Biden in g20 summit of Bali where he expressed that China should be perceived as a democracy and just because this democracy is not identical to liberal democracies in the west it does not mean it should not be perceived as one, Mr Wang describes this as their own form of democracy.

On a positive note, Mr Wang mentions that a second cold war between the US and China is unlikely to happen as China is not an empire like the Soviet Union but a more humanist, inclusive society and will strive to co-operate with the west.

To conclude Mr Wang summarized that China's path to modernisation is based on inclusivity and collectiveness. According to him China's success lies on their ability to live in Harmony in the country and that Chinese people as a collective strive towards future successes. He also mentions that the Chinese model for development should not be exported or implemented in other countries as they lack strong leadership and the mindset and culture to sustain development of such a capacity.

In a world ridden with inflation, war, energy crisis and a pandemic, China's people centric policy has helped the majority of Chinese society to improve their lives even under such conditions.

The first question posed by Mr András Bartok was concerning China's military capacity growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

Bartok A: Is Chinese perception different in terms of deterrence and the role of military power?

How does China view current international military capacities and the current balance of military power?

Professor Wang responds that in traditional Chinese view the concept of man held power is not “evil” therefore they do not give such importance to the notion of balance of power. He continues with saying that the western perception on enlarging military capabilities is that an arms race or a build-up of arms causes increased danger and will lead to conflict, in contrast the Chinese believe that the best way to win a war is without using those weapons in action and only using them for a means of deterrence.

He goes on to highlight the significance of traditional and even ancient Chinese way of thinking in China’s foreign policy decisions, and that they view the world through the lens of Confucius, stating that mistrust is what creates conflicts and that western nations do not have enough trust in China and that this is partly the reason China has different foreign policy approaches towards Russia or the US. To conclude Prof Wang says China follows a non-aligned policy in international relations due to three main reasons:

1. In alliances the parties involved are not equal
2. It is important for China to not rely on other states
3. A Chinese led alliance would lead to a cold war like bipolar international balance of power.

Mr Rábai steers the conversation to China’s view on sovereignty and how they react when the sovereignty of a European state, Ukraine, has been violated by Russia. Mr Rábai pointed out that China still did not recognise Russia’s actions in Ukraine as aggression. Mr Rábai asks Prof Wang to explain China’s foreign policy attitude towards current Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Prof Wang starts by pointing out how deeply saddened China was when the conflict broke out, especially because, as he mentions, both Russia and Ukraine have friendly, productive relationships with China.

Therefore, from a Chinese point of view it is like seeing two good friends fighting each-other, putting China in a difficult situation.

Prof. Wang mentions that China deems it especially important that countries act in accordance with the UN charter and respect the

territorial integrity of other nations and China opposes any violation of territory or sovereignty of any country.

However, he mentions that this war should not be singled out as an offense on territorial integrity as the US and its allies have also violated the sovereignty of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yugoslavia in the past 25 years alone.

Prof Wang makes it clear not acknowledging Russia's actions as aggression does not mean that they support Russia in this matter. China however does not openly condemn Russia's actions they might disagree with it but Prof Wang said it would not align with Chinese culture and would it be "impolite" from China's part to publicly condemn it.

China does not want to damage relations with Russia in joining western sanctions and it does not want to isolate Russia as much as North Korea is currently isolated.

China also sees itself as a potential broker of peace in the future.

Mr Bartók appreciates that Chinese approach on not sanctioning Russia is due to the consideration of what happened to North Korea and how deeply isolated the state became after severe sanctions. He then goes on to ask about Prof. Wang's opinion on sanctions posed on Iran and how it can lead to further isolation of the central Asian state.

Prof Wang points out that China joined sanction against North Korea but against its missile program not the regime, and that it should be similar in the question of Russia and Iran. China agreed with the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with Iran. He then goes on to criticise the US on backing up on their decision concerning Iran. He then goes on to say that as China is on the way of economically surpass the US, therefore their softer approach towards sanctions against countries like Iran is important to pursue to keep peace and harmony on a global stage.

Mr Rábai asks about the situation of Hong Kong, he states that China has agreed to a one country- two systems approach with Hong Kong and that this principle is being breached as China has an increasing grip over Hong Kong's politics and its democracy.

Prof Wang says that the one country two systems policy has not been changed, merely the internal governance of Hong Kong therefore it was Hong Kong's decision to reform its political system to safeguard the one country principle.

Mr Rábai asks about the prospects of the Chinese economy considering the recent results of the CCP congress.

Prof Wang is confident that any challenge, may it be economical or political the CCP and the Chinese people can take it on. The CCP thinks in long-term strategies up to 2035 or 2049 as its terms are not limited. He highlights that during events of crises such as the recent COVID pandemic, Chinese sense of unity is strong. He goes on to say that even though hospital capacities were not sufficient to treat everyone in China the CCP put tremendous amounts of money to build infrastructure such as new hospitals and treatment centres to save the lives of its citizens. The collectivist approach of China according to the professor will help the country to survive future challenges.

Those interested can find the video about the entire discussion on-line at the ICDDT Foundation web site: