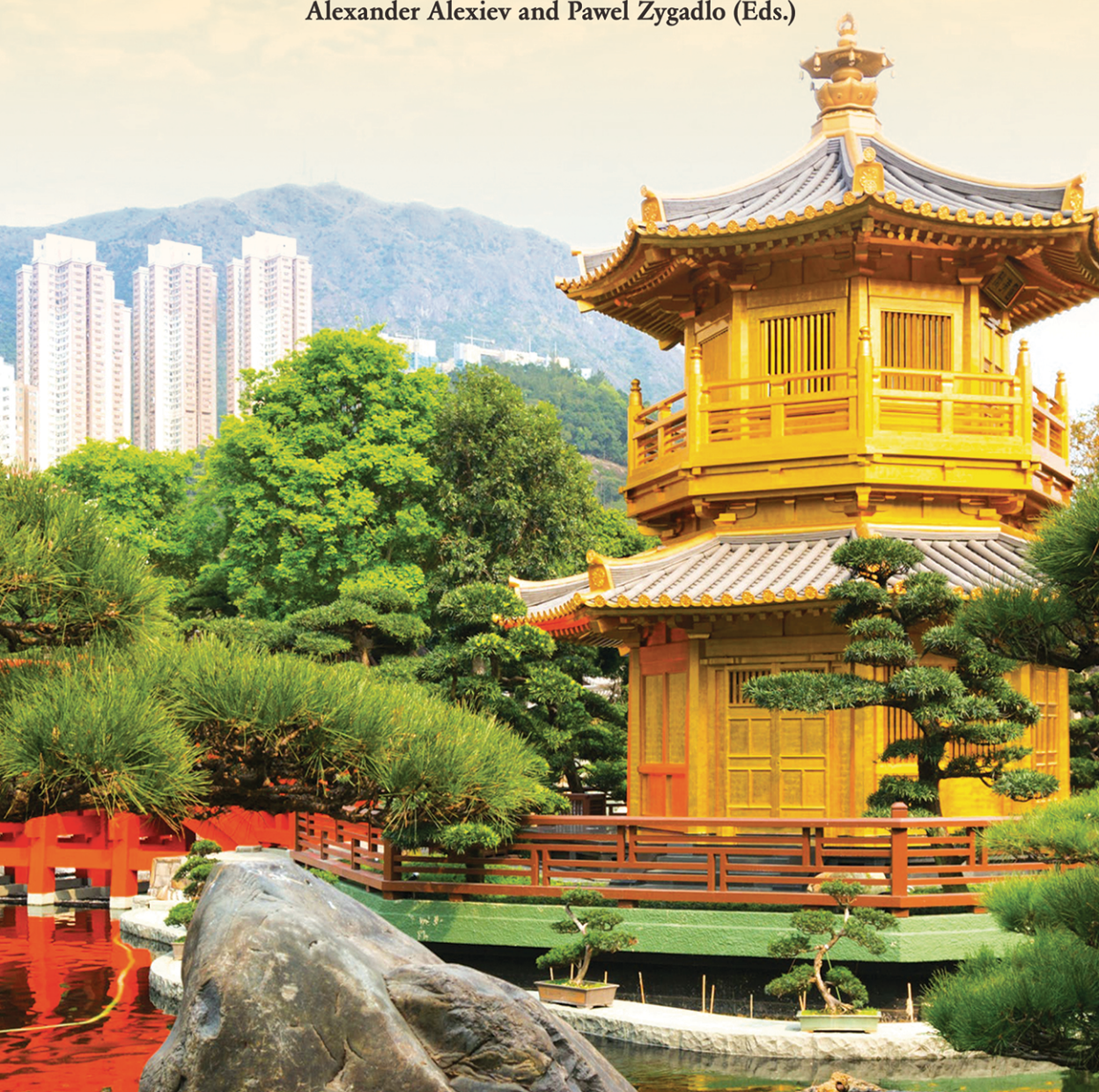


# CHINA AND THE WORLD: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, POLITICS

Vol. 1

Alexander Alexiev and Pawel Zygodlo (Eds.)



CHINA AND THE WORLD:  
LANGUAGE, CULTURE, POLITICS

Volume 1

КИТАЙ И СВЕТАТ: ЕЗИК, КУЛТУРА,  
ПОЛИТИКА

Том 1



# CHINA AND THE WORLD: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, POLITICS

Papers from the international conference, jointly organized  
by the Department of Sinology at Sofia University  
“St. Kliment Ohridski” and the Department of China Studies  
at Xi’an Jiaotong – Liverpool University, 12–13 December 2019

Volume 1

# КИТАЙ И СВЕТОТ: ЕЗИК, КУЛТУРА, ПОЛИТИКА

Доклади от международната конференция, организирана  
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Том 1

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## Foreword

The year 2020 has certainly been an unusual one. Our physical world came under attack from an invisible enemy. We were reminded of the existence of the mighty microscopic world that is the true master of this planet, having inhabited it for billions of years before us, and continuing to thrive, unaware of our human existence. Outnumbered and outlived, like aliens in this world, we were chased away from public spaces and boxed into our private quarters. Our academic community, like everybody else, was also not able to go about its life as usual, where students and teachers gather together in bright halls and classrooms to teach and learn, to communicate and share knowledge. Lively social life has shifted swiftly into the virtual realm of individual screens on the Internet. Nevertheless, thanks to this new technological parallel world that we have created for ourselves, we have been able not only to conduct our classes, but also to go about our academic lives and continue to do what we do. Slowed down, but not deterred, we were able to finish the work we had started in 2019.

We are happy to announce that we are hereby finally publishing the present Volume 1, which contains selected and revised papers, presented at the international conference ‘China and the World: Language, Culture, Politics’, jointly organised by the Department of Sinology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and the Department of China Studies at Xi’an Jiaotong–Liverpool University in December 2019.

The conference as such was held in commemoration of establishing diplomatic ties between PRC and Bulgaria, with other Central- and Eastern European states following suit. Scholars representing a variety of disciplines gathered for a two-day conference to present their research and discuss perspectives and methodologies applied by them. Attended by almost one hundred scholars from China, Europe, the United States and



Australia, the conference marked a new step in interdisciplinary research on China. We were very lucky to have managed to gather all these people in the physical world of our city of Sofia at the last possible time before the massive lockdowns in 2020.

Being one of the major political, military, and cultural global powers, China attracts special attention from the academic world. There is then no lack of interest in ‘Chinese matters’ from linguistics, political sciences, sociology, anthropology, and literary studies. Numerous volumes and research papers have been published in an attempt to grasp the uniqueness of China as a political power, an attempt to explain its social structure and elaborate on China’s history as a cultural and linguistic phenomenon. However, disciplinary specialisation in humanities and social science often results in focusing on just one aspect of the researched phenomenon. As it seems to be an inevitable outcome of science development, it often ‘misses’ the singularity of the civilisational molecule that is China.

Papers collected in this volume represent different perspectives of academic inquiry. As the main theme of the conference was ‘China and the World’, the subtitle ‘Language, Culture, Politics’ arose from this awareness of disciplinary limitations and the urgent necessity of a dialogue between different academic fields. It is then our most sincere hope that the papers selected for this volume will make some contribution to a comprehensive understanding of China, yet well-rooted in a specific scientific field.

Many individuals contributed to the organisation of the conference and the fruition of this volume. First of all, we should thank the authors that honoured us with their participation and later on dedicated time and energy to revise their papers and prepare them for publication. Secondly, we owe a debt of gratitude to all the reviewers who despite their busy schedules engaged with the papers’ review, making lots of valuable comments and suggestions, contributing greatly to the value of the research works included in this proceedings.

We would like to express our special gratitude to Professor Beibei Tang, the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at XJT-LU, and Professor Madeleine Danova, Dean of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, without whose generous support neither the conference nor the publication of this volume would have been possible.

Last but not least, we would also like to thank our dear friend, Professor Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik of the University of Ljubljana, whose expertise, sharp judgement, and timely advice were of critical importance for the successful outcome of this conference, especially at difficult times during the preparation phase.

Our forum and the process of producing this volume was an uplifting experience for us, as we had the chance to meet and work with colleagues from around the world. We sincerely hope to continue this collaboration in the future and look forward to having international scholars who research diverse aspects of China getting together yet again, and seeing ourselves in the midst of a fruitful exchange of knowledge and ideas once more, regardless if this is to take place in the virtual or in the physical world.

Paweł Zygałło and Alexander Alexiev  
Suzhou and Sofia, October 2020

# **The Xi Jinping's Era and the Evolution of the Chinese Political System. Internal and External Effects**

Maria Elisabetta Lanzone  
Fabio Lavagno

## **Abstract**

*The XXI Century appears as China's Century, with many consequences. During the seven decades since the foundation of PRC, many changes occurred. Nowadays under the guide of Xi Jinping, whose though has been included in the Constitution in 2018, China knows a new transformation with the full consciousness of being one of the most potent worldwide rulers, with a strong tradition, preserved by a recent revival of Confucianism. "One belt, one road initiative" (一帶一路) is part of this transformation. It represents not only an infrastructure plan but also the ambitions of Chinese leaders to increase the role they want to play with the US and in the EU. Under this framework, the paper aims to analyse the most profound changes during Xi's Era with a specific focus on the current relationship between European Countries (Italy in particular) and PRC.*

**Keywords:** Chinese Politics, Chinese Communist Party, Chinese Constitution, Europe, Italy

## **The People's Republic of China 70 years later**

The XXI Century appears more and more as China's Century. This will carry on many internal and external consequences. The general crisis of Western World, the lack of capability of US to grant its rule of "World's gendarme" (after the end of USSR and the Cold war era characterized by the contraposition between the two super-powers), the EU not playing the role of continental power, joined to the crisis of the liberal democracies systems, give to China and to its not stopping growth the chance to be one of the most powerful rulers in the World order redefinition during the next decades.

When People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in Beijing in 1949, after the triumphant Long March of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Mao

Zedong and the winning Chinese Communist Party (CCP) found themselves to face and govern a wounded and undeveloped country. This was due to the semi-colonial status that occurred in China during the XIX Century after the Opium Wars and as a result of the condition imposed to China by the western Countries. The term “Unequal Treaty” (signed in Nanjing in 1848) became associated with the concept of China’s “century of humiliation”, especially the concessions to foreign powers and loss of tariff autonomy through the treaty ports. China’s history of the first half of the XX Century is not less important to determinate the Country’s condition at the birth of PRC. The Sun Yatsen Republic experience, after the conclusion of the imperial power with the end of Qing dynasty, the decades of civil war between CCP and the fascist inspired nationalism of the Kuomintang (KMT) only interrupted during the periods of a common front against the Japanese invasion and domination; are all aspects to keep in consideration analysing the birth of the PRC.

After the took of power the new regime gave to the state a temporary structure based on the tripartite of the power among CCP, formal government and PLA on the theoretical basis of the Common Program for China that at the article 5 guaranteed to all, except for “political reactionaries” the right o freedom of “thought, speech, publication, assembly, association, correspondence, person, domicile, moving from one place to another, religious belief and to hold processions and demonstrations”. This resume the spirit of cooperation of the united front that include the peasantry, the urban and the national bourgeoisie and the working class as a basis for the people’s democratic dictatorship. Land redistribution and reform and new marriage law are entirely part of this period of transition.

The 1954 Constitution strengths the State structure and gives permanent institutions. The People’s National Assembly (National People’s Congress) is elected for four years and is designed as a legislative assembly and as State supreme organ. The President of the Republic is designed by the same assembly.

The State Affair Council (previously called Politic Affair Council) is in charge of the governing affairs. The Council of National Defence is tied to the Republic’s Presidency, the Prosecutor’s Office and the Supreme People’s Courts are under the control of the National Assembly. It’s a very classical state structure, in which the only two particular aspects are the maintenance of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference – CPPCC (that is no more a legislative assembly, but the symbol of the United Front) and the creation of the State Supreme Conference not well defined in its composition, but tied to Republic’s Presidency and often used as a political tribune for Mao’s campaigns (Spence 1999).

With the new state structure, the first phase of land reform complete, the bourgeoisie broke, the CCP was free to develop an integrated plan for the nation's economic development. The model adopted was that of the Soviet Union, where the state control industrial production in a sequence of five-year plan. The Soviet model was adoption is due to many causes such as the isolation from Western countries (after the anti-foreigner campaigns and the Korea war), the failure for the GMT attempts at reform along Western lines. CCP adopted the Soviet model as a way to emphasize the anti-capitalist and the anti-imperialist nature of the new People's Republic, where the goal was to build socialism in a poverty-stricken country (Sabattini, 1996).

### **Modern China: the Evolution of Chinese institutions during Deng Xiaoping's Era**

If Mao's era has been characterized by the effort to rebuild a wounded Country in which the main goal was to build a complete socialist society, is during the Deng Xiaoping's Era that the basis of China, as nowadays known, was settled.

Deng inherited a China full of contradictions, in which different campaigns shocked the Country on the political side (such as Hundred flowers or the Cultural Revolution) or the economic side (Great Leap Forward). A country isolated diplomatically and ideologically from the communist world (with the only exception of Albania) after breaking with the USSR (Joyaux 1988) but finally recognized by the United Nations in 1971. A country not properly developed economically and with severe difficulties for agriculture, its major economic sector; but at the same time a nuclear power since 1964.

Deng moved his plan on internal "normalization" and at the same time on an economic shock opening to foreign investments and a new responsibility on agriculture. Four Modernizations were the goals posed by Deng to strengthen China in the World competition and integration in international economic relationships. In 1980 China joined the International Monetary Fund and to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in 1983 to the International Atomic Energy Agency and 1985 to the Asian Development Bank.

The results of these policies are evident in the economic field. Salary growth, increase in domestic demand, the attraction of foreign investments, the constant growth of GDP, have characterized China in recent decades (Bergere 1994).

Jian Zemin's leadership, followed to Deng's one, face internal contradiction in which the development and growing gap between internal and coastal



areas can difficult coexist. A new China, economic power not only in Asia but also on the world stage has to face the internal problem about poverty, corruption and organized crime. These are the main problems that Jian faced under his leadership. On the international front, every effort are addressed to have stable diplomatic relations with Russia and the US. “China’s peaceful development” is the doctrine that has characterized the years in which the Asian giant has been led by Hu Jintao, that succeeded Jian<sup>1</sup>. A way to pursue soft power that extended China’s influence in different world region, especially Africa and South America. This type of foreign policy is due to both ideal and economic factors. China permanently became the second world economic power during the last decade of the XX Century and the first one of the new century can be ready to be a new big player on the world scene, ready for the “National revival” (国家复兴) that Xi Jinping has been theorizing since his election in 2012.

### **The 2018 Constitutional Reform and the Xi Jinping’s Era**

Until 2017 the constitutional reforms in China were limited to economic affairs rather than political matters. In 2018 a critical revision occurred and, differently from the previous cases, was focused on the political and institutional basis (Malaschini 2019).

The First Session of 13<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress (NPC) on March 11, 2018, has brought some remarkable Constitutional amendments, after the proposal arrived from 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (October 2017). In particular, the NPC voted a constitutional amendment abolishing the two-term limit for the Chinese President and approved a new version of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国宪法). The same reform represents a significant change within China’s political system since Xi is expected to further centralize his political power, with significant consequences to be felt shortly.

The new Preamble of the Constitution includes the “Xi Jinping Thought” close to the ideas of other crucial Chinese political leaders: “[...] the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of Three Represents” in Paragraph 7, the Preamble of the Constitution shall be amended to read as: “[...] the guidance of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important thought of

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<sup>1</sup> See Ewing, Richard Daniel. “Hu Jintao: The Making of a Chinese General Secretary”. *The China Quarterly*. Cambridge University Press (20<sup>th</sup> March 2003).

Three Represents, the Scientific Outlook on Development, and the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era”<sup>2</sup>.

The text of the document underlines the reassertion of “Chinese Dream” with particular attention for the modernization, and “harmonious values”<sup>3</sup>: “[...] improve the socialist rule of law, apply a new vision of development, and work hard and self-reliantly to modernize the country’s industry, agriculture, national defence, and science and technology step by step, to promote the coordinated development of the material, political, spiritual, social, and ecological civilizations, to turn China into a strong modern socialist country that is prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful, and to realize the great rejuvenation for the Chinese nation”<sup>4</sup>.

After this reform, many observers warned that Xi’s personalization of power could have negative consequences for China’s future political stability and their relationship with Western Liberal Democracies or with other post-authoritarian countries able to start a democratization process (He 2013). On the contrary, internal effects are very impressive and also the construction of Chinese image around the world appears solid and modern: the same reform appears able to reaffirm Chinese role as a great Nation, President Xi continues to enlarge its power and to construct its popularity, not only inside his Country. Today, eight years later the Congress that crowned Xi Jinping leader and two years after the constitutional reform that allows him to keep his office even after a two-term mandate ends, it is possible to see «the image of a man capable of stepping back from the position he pursued most of his adult life and temporarily plunging into deep uncertainty both his allies and his rivals if the conditions to obtain leadership did not precisely correspond to the terms he had already dictated» (Talia 2018: 3).

According to again to Talia (2018), now that all the key roles – including top positions in the security and intelligence apparatus – are filled with loyalists, Xi Jinping became the “Chairman of Everything”, and he focuses his main discourse on “National Rejuvenation” (国家复兴 – *Guojia Fuxing*), a political mission that could be defined as the ultimate goal of restoring China’s central role in the world. President Xi – now with an indefinite time at his disposal – is injecting into this system code strings based on Marxism with

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<sup>2</sup> English version is available here: <<http://en.pkulaw.cn/display.aspx?cgid=311950&lib=law>> (last seen: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020).

<sup>3</sup> See Garrick, John and Yan Chang Bennett. “Xi Jinping Thought. The realisation of the Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation?”, 1.2 (2018): 99-105.

<sup>4</sup> The full text of the Chinese Constitution is available here: <[http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content\\_5276318.htm](http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2018-03/22/content_5276318.htm)> (last seen: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020).

Chinese characteristics and a strong revival of Confucianism (Bell 2015, Scarpari 2015). Xi Jinping's thought remains marked by the motto: "To realize the China Dream we must keep to the Chinese way, to realize the China Dream we must advance the Chinese spirit, to realize the China Dream we must consolidate Chinese power".

Summarising, under Xi Jinping guidance, China is entered into a new era characterized by a strong national unity, and cohesion. In the same framework, the formal role of President Xi, the personalization of his power, the mediation of its reputation around the World (for example the Xi Jinping's book has been translated in more than twenty languages, according to data diffused by Xu Bu, President of Foreign Languages Press)<sup>5</sup> Can put China at the core of the international political arena. China appears more and more like a cohesive, modern and effective country, and it can improve its role under a geopolitical point of view.

Recently (March 2020), after the health emergency caused by the dissemination of the so-called virus COVID-19, the China of the New Era has proven to the organization and strong efficiency. As reported by the *People's Daily* (人民日报, *Rénmín Ribào* – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020)<sup>6</sup>, President Xi visited the area of Wuhan using impressive, ceremonial and triumphalist manners. At the same time, he has symbolically stated the end of the tragic and more acute phase of the crisis, and he opened in practice a sort of "post-emergency phase"<sup>7</sup>. In particular, during a public speech, Xi announced a new step focused on prevention instead of care that will change the health system. At the same time, other Xi's discourse focused on poverty aims to reduce internal differences. According to the press agency *Xinhua* (9<sup>th</sup> March 2020), at the beginning of March, Xi participated in a meeting centred explicitly on poverty underling the intention of reducing the same poverty levels and reduce inequalities, with specific attention to rural areas. These topics appear as the keystones in Xi Jinping political agenda, since at least 2013. The PCC has embedded these policies in the programme of the XIX Congress (2017) in order to improve the standard of living for an ever-wider portion of the Chinese population.

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<sup>5</sup> See the original Chinese version of the book: 习近平, 谈治国理政. In particular, the Foreign Languages Press has distributed 4 million printed copies, more than 400 thousand abroad, only.

<sup>6</sup> The full print copy version is available here: <[http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2020-03/11/nbs.D110000renmrb\\_01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2020-03/11/nbs.D110000renmrb_01.htm)> (last seen: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020).

<sup>7</sup> See Lavagno, Fabio "La Cina entra nella fase 2: la 'post-emergenza' (e la 'solidarietà' all'Italia)", Gli Stati Generali. <<https://www.glistatigenerali.com/geopolitica/coronavirus-cina-italia-emergenza/>>, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (last seen: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020).

## **From China to Europe (and Italy): future challenges**

The Chinese New Era is not only characterised by an adequate internal power but also by a great project under a geo-political point of view, aimed to drive China in a more international arena.

In order to analyse the evolution of Chinese external influence, it is crucial to consider in particular one gigantic program named “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) or “One belt, one road” (一带一路, OBOR)<sup>8</sup>. It was launched in 2013 by President Xi during a speech entitled “Promote People-to-People Friendship and Create a Better Future” pronounced at Kazakhstan’s Nazarbayev University. The idea is to create different “corridors” and sea routes (a “belt” of overland corridors connecting China with Europe, via Central Asia and the Middle East and a maritime “road” of shipping lanes linking China’s southern coast to east Africa and the Mediterranean, with about 65 countries involved in three Continents) and to resurrect the ancient “Silk Road ideally”, the network of trade routes officially established during the Han dynasty (Wenxian et al. 2018).

The project can completely change relationships between China and the World, in particular, it produces many consequences on some European Countries (inside and outside the EU-zone), also distorting the balance between USA/Europe/China. Also, the OBOR project appears capable to enlarge Chinese interest in Europe, gradually undermining the central role of the US. In this framework, Italy represents a peculiar and controversial case<sup>9</sup>.

In order to consider relations between Italy and China is crucial to cite the signature of the so-called Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). It is a specific format-document chosen by China to sign bilateral (economic and commercial) treaties. The Italian-Chinese MoU is composed of 29 agreements (10 between private companies and 19 with institutional nature), with a value of 7 billion Euro. In addition to Italy, other 16 EU-Countries (with a marginal role inside UE) signed an MoU<sup>10</sup> with some consequences on the already fragile balance between Italy and the European Union. Beyond its economic value, the MoU represents a first significant and tangible signal to affirm the importance of current Italian-Chinese relations.

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<sup>8</sup> BRI official link: < <http://english.www.gov.cn/beltAndRoad/>>; OBOR Europe is a website specifically created to promote the project in Europe and the Chinese soft power: < <https://www.oboreurope.com/en/about-us/>> (last seen: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020).

<sup>9</sup> See Fardella, Enrico and Prodi, Giorgio. “The Belt and Road Initiative Impact on Europe: An Italian Perspective”. *China & World Economy* 25.5 (2017): 125–138.

<sup>10</sup> The first in 2015 was Hungary (2015), between 2018 and 2019 were also added Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

The same relationships have been intensified again in March 2020 during COVID-19 emergency when China decided to help Italian people directly. China wants to promote more and more an image of effective Country able to incrementally win the battle against the virus and then to become a player in an assistance/support phase (human and material) towards Countries facing with the crisis after China, first of all, Italy.

A press release circulated through the *Qiushi Journal* (求是) reports a phone call between the Chinese President Xi and the Italian First Minister Giuseppe Conte able to underline important aspects<sup>11</sup>. First of all, Xi ensures his effort to “defeat the epidemic as soon as possible and in a completely way” but he is able to go beyond asserting that “it should be to give confidence to the people in order to [...] contain the epidemic”. The new policy appears as clear Chinese disposal to «[...] work together in order to contribute to international cooperation, to fight against the epidemic and to construct a ‘health silk road’». In other words, China is pursuing and re-launches its geopolitical project with also peculiar attention for communication: in fact, the release uses the phrase “silk road” and not the more usual “one belt, one road” because the first sentence sounds more emphatic with the Italian tradition and rhetoric.

So, during the 2020 emergency phase, President Xi has a new opportunity to demonstrate a growing power, and he tests it exactly with Italy, the only G7-country that signed the MoU. At the same time, China continues to confirm its availability to other Country (inside and outside Europe) in order to reinforce its international role and to realise policies of the New Era, that of Xi Jinping. Under the described framework and after these key-events, China can continue its growing process with significant internal and primarily external effects.

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<sup>11</sup> Qiushi Journal, Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, <[http://www.qstheory.cn/zdwz/2020-03/17/c\\_1125722429.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/zdwz/2020-03/17/c_1125722429.htm)> (last seen: 20th March 2020).



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