

# REVIEWS

UDC 329.15(510):338.26(510)

DOI: 10.5937/spm99-70204

Review

Српска политичка мисао  
(Serbian Political Thought)

No 5/2026.

Vol. 99

pp. 233-243

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## **SPEECH ON THE 105TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA AND THE 15TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN Belgrade, 30 June 2026**

This meeting is dedicated to the Communist Party of China's great anniversary: its 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The numbers speak volumes, as surviving for 105 years is a truly magnificent achievement for any political party. This is especially true of the Communist Party of China (CPC). When the CPC was established, it was a group of around 50 enthusiasts inspired by Marxist ideology, seeking to change the reality of a humiliated China, oppressed by foreigners, ruled by warlords fighting against one another, and dominated by peasants who were suffering greatly from poverty, illness, violence, and other hardships.

At the beginning, the Party learned from foreigners, especially the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. However, very soon CPC's leaders realised that, if they wanted to succeed, they needed to focus on domestic Chinese conditions. When they turned their attention and political mobilisation towards the countryside and the peasants, they gained the nation's real power behind them. They managed to defeat the occupying forces, liberate the country, and re-establish a great Chinese

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state. Over the years and decades that followed, and even today, China has continued to work towards completing the process of national unification, because the Chinese Constitution states that it is a sacred duty of every Chinese citizen to fight for a truly and fully reunified China.

Over the decades, the CPC fought, grew, and learned, ending centuries of humiliation and establishing the People's Republic of China, an independent country, on October 1, 1949. However, the conditions were especially severe because the People's Republic of China was isolated. Taipei was recognised by the dominant Western political bloc, while the People's Republic of China remained isolated and could not represent the Chinese people in the UN.

Nevertheless, CPC leaders did not give up despite the injustices and the expulsion from the UN. They continued to build the state's institutions, industrialise the country, and work for the benefit of the majority of the people. That first phase, which also included tremendous political violence, suffering, mistakes, and periods of considerable success that brought advancement and well-being of all kinds – a mixture of these elements – led the People's Republic of China into what could be called the second phase of its history and of the CPC's history: the period of implementing the reform and opening-up policy (The National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference [NCCPPCC] n.d.).

This was the era of the paramount Chinese leader at the time, Deng Xiaoping, and his reformist group, which gained a leading position in the CPC Central Committee. At the Third Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> CPC Central Committee, they decided to reform China, begin deep reforms, and open the country to the world, and formulated their policies based on reality – “seeking truth from facts”, learning from them. This meant departing from the rigid ideological course that had guided China during the previous period and proved devastating.

They decided to focus on reality and facts, basing new solutions on the existing problems of the Chinese state, economy, society, and cultural environment. China had been devastated by the previous period of political instability and was lagging behind some of its neighbours, a few of which had moved from Third-world status into the elite group of First-world economies, such as South Korea, Hong Kong (then a British colony), Taiwan, Singapore, and, of course, Japan, a leading model for the others to follow. Chinese leaders saw that China, once the

leading civilisation and state among its neighbours and beyond, which dominated the global economy, culture, and technology, had, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, lagged behind many of them, isolated, poor, egalitarian, and far below its true potential. They decided to “wake up” these potentials and lead China to stand up again among the world’s leading nations.

China sought to learn from the world about new technologies, a free-market economy, modern trade, management, international financial organisations and their roles, various political and economic systems, and other elements of dynamic and successful economies of the time, as well as the experiences of other countries. Chinese leaders drew on Western, Eastern, and neighbouring experiences to rethink other models, identify the one most appropriate for China, and implement it. As we know, they were extremely successful.

The reforms, which included introducing market forces into the economy, began in the countryside. They unleashed the great creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese people, yielding tremendous results that greatly improved peasants’ lives and increased peasants’ savings. These savings provided the basis for Chinese leaders to begin further reforms, often called “urban reforms” but in fact reforms of Chinese industry, education, the military, and other areas beyond the “Four Modernisations”.

Of course, this also included technological upgrading, the expansion of productive forces, entry into the global market, and the introduction of a system previously unknown in China for decades. From the beginning of PR China, everyone knew the prices of everything; now prices were beginning to change, mostly going upwards, and market forces were entering people’s everyday reality. The era of “eating from the same iron pot” or total equality was over. For the first time, workers could lose their jobs, but also be rewarded for better work. The same applied to factory managers and to work units across various sectors of the economy. Industrial or trade factories could go bankrupt, but also make a profit and grow while competing with others.

The concept of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics was introduced in 1982 by Deng Xiaoping at the 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China, emphasising Chinese characteristics (International Department, Central Committee of the Communist Party of China [IDCCCPC] 1982). China has been modifying and reinforcing the concept of socialism by focusing on its own needs and conditions,

introducing the market economy while remaining a socialist country. Chinese leaders were learning from their mistakes and testing major new ideas on an experimental basis. If experiments carried out in certain municipalities or areas proved very successful, they were then spread across the country and introduced more broadly. Step by step, reform by reform, and by expanding into the global market, China learned from its early experiences and from others, creating special economic zones and open coastal cities and areas as “free market entities”, with even a different legal system from the country’s main one and special preferences for foreign companies invited to operate there. Its coast still hosts around 60% of its export-oriented industries, making it very convenient to export by cargo ship from numerous Chinese ports, strategically located across Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, etc.

Today, seven of the ten busiest global ports are in China. However, before today’s situation, in which China is admired and its model and success are influential, Chinese reformers faced a long, bumpy road. Let me remind you that all these reforms were conceived, planned, introduced, and controlled by the Communist Party of China and its brave and wise reformist leaders. Many inside the Party, or at least some, questioned whether this was the right way, whether introducing markets was wrong, whether China should stick to previous solutions, and whether the Marxist doctrine would be betrayed if so. But the reformist core prevailed and continued, although not without occasional disruptions from inside and from abroad. The Party followed the Four Cardinal Principles: maintaining the socialist road, the people’s democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the CPC, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (IDCCCPC 2018).

Along the way, through learning from practice and ideological work, the CPC underwent a new theoretical upgrade, including Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents”, under which the Party must represent the most advanced productive and cultural forces of society and the fundamental interests of the majority of the people (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Bulgaria 2004). This significantly and strategically broadened the Party’s base, as the CPC became not only a working-class party but also one that represents the most advanced productive forces, including new private entrepreneurs.

Later, Hu Jintao’s “Scientific Outlook on Development” emphasised that development should be grounded in scientific research and findings, and that China should build a Harmonious Society

to address wealth inequality, social injustices, and environmental degradation caused by the extremely rapid growth of previous decades (The State Council Information Office [SCIO] 2022). It also emphasised sustainable growth, which should be more balanced and people-oriented, and lead to sustainable socio-economic development.

The Party articulated the CPC's previous general secretaries' ideas and transformed them into a continuous endeavour, framed by the Five-Year Plans and by daily work and learning on the road of reform. That continuity, and the ability to look far ahead – to think about where China should be in 50 or 100 years, and about the two centenary goals that we have heard about, namely where China should be in 2021 and where China should be in 2049, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China – show that these leaders had great vision. They were courageous, creative, strong, and knowledgeable enough to introduce new solutions and build the path towards a successful future.

China used five-year plans to implement what was conceived as party doctrine and to provide developmental direction and solutions for a set period. The five-year plans introduced specific policies for the period for which they were adopted – the next five years – while keeping in mind the final vision and the achievement of goals and results that the Party set as priorities. Different external environments, stages of Chinese development, and the needs of the Chinese people required different policies. Through reforms, China lifted around 800 million people out of poverty. That is a real contribution to all of humankind. It is even more significant when we consider that some of these results were achieved at a time when the international community was less friendly towards China than it had been at the beginning of Chinese reforms.

Many Western analysts ask whether China's reforms were focused solely on economic outcomes. China first became a global manufacturing powerhouse. After joining the World Trade Organisation in 2001, China became the largest global exporter, the second-largest importer, and the largest global trading power. From that point onward, China's economic development relied predominantly on exports as its engine of growth. Chinese growth was unprecedented in modern economic history. For more than 30 years, China grew at around 9,6% per year. That was, as I said, unprecedented. Between 1960 and 2000, China's GDP per capita rose from \$96 to \$965. In the next twenty years, from 2001 to 2020, the Chinese economy expanded by approximately tenfold. One can imagine Chinese people living through those 10 or 20 years, witnessing

their country and economy grow so rapidly. China's economic growth represents one of the most significant transformations in modern history. According to World Bank data, China's GDP increased from approximately US\$1.22 trillion in 2000 to US\$18.74 trillion in 2024 (World Bank Group 2026).

For the first time in Chinese history – Chinese history is at least 2.000 years old as a continuous civilisation, because China is also a civilisation-state – most Chinese citizens began living in cities, driven by intense industrialisation and urbanisation that followed, with hundreds of millions of workers moving from the countryside into existing and newly built cities. The year 2011 marked a historic turning point, when more than half of the Chinese population lived in cities for the first time. Official data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the urban population reached 51,27% (about 690.79 million people), officially surpassing the rural population (China Data Portal 2024). China then became the second-largest economy in the world, measured by nominal GDP in US dollars. Using purchasing power parity, China had already become the largest global economy by 2014 (World Bank Group 2024; Worldometer 2026).

The 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan and the ongoing 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan have moved China towards a new, higher-quality production base and have transformed Chinese society in a way almost unprecedented in global history, especially in such a short period of several decades. Chinese industry has begun to be based on high technology, digitalisation, artificial intelligence integrated into the industrial ecosystem, robotics and green energy.

Of course, China has invested heavily, with the state organising these investments through five-year plans under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (The State Council of the People's Republic of China [SCPRC] 2025). The Party is horizontally organised and, for that reason, has been able to control the implementation of these plans from local communities to the central government. China invested heavily in world-class research, education, and the empowerment of its military, which became one of the most powerful militaries globally – a very respected, technologically advanced force.

The Chinese navy is especially fascinating, and so is the Chinese merchant fleet, the largest in the world. After centuries of neglecting its maritime potential, China has once again become a maritime power, as well as a terrestrial one. China now has first-class logistics in its ports,

thanks to modern technology and AI. At the same time, Chinese research and its results in materials science and chemistry have been applied to batteries for electric vehicles and energy storage. This ecosystem has enabled China to become a superpower in electric-vehicle production, with roughly 75% global dominance and 50% of global electric-vehicle sales. China dominates the entire EV lifecycle, from critical mineral sourcing and refining to battery cell manufacturing to car design and production. It is a decade ahead of all other competitors in this production (Information Technology and Innovation Foundation 2026).

China is also highly competitive in batteries and solar panels because it is a global leader in advancing the green energy transformation, from people's lives in local communities to research and the transfer of results across various industries and services. Because these products are high-quality and relatively inexpensive, they are exported to developing countries as they become available. Today, in many African countries, people have electricity for the first time in their lives. Traditional grids were never introduced in many areas, but now, thanks to ICT and new forms of high-tech green energy connectivity, these areas and countries have access to electricity.

Xi Jinping, the core leader of the CPC and China, presented his "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (The Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies [ACCWS] 2022), which consists of 14 principles, in his political report at the start of the party's 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress on 18 October 2017, and it was soon written into the Communist Party's constitution (IDCCCPC 2018) and the National Constitution of the People's Republic of China in March 2018 (SCPRC 2019). The essence of Xi Jinping's theory is national rejuvenation, absolute party leadership, integrating Marxism with traditional Chinese culture and conditions as the reality of Chinese socialism, deepening the Party's and China's reforms while pursuing high-quality economic growth and technological self-reliance, and sharing China's achievements with a changing world. It sets out a strategic roadmap to transform China into a leading global power, resilient, advanced, and oriented towards peace and domestic and global development. He stressed the Party's leadership over all work, as "among the Party, the government, the military, the people, academia and all circles, the Party leads all" (Xinhua 2018).

One of the core strategies of Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is the goal of achieving

the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by 2049, marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the People’s Republic of China (Hu, Zhou, and Xie 2025). It also stresses that realising complete national reunification is an inevitable requirement for fulfilling that goal.

When discussing Xi Jinping’s Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, we should consider his remarks on once-in-a-century global changes, as well as the difficult environment China faces due to containment and the Political West’s binary approach (Hu, Zhou, and Xie 2025). In the New Era, China has had to find appropriate answers to build resilience to global challenges. In the New Era, Chinese leader Xi Jinping introduced a vision that has led China to launch four global initiatives: the Global Civilisation Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Governance Initiative, and the Global Security Initiative. They are based on his theoretical stance that realising the Chinese Dream is inseparable from a peaceful international environment and a stable international order. That is why China has to be “the builder of world peace, the contributor to global development and the defender of the international order” (Xinhua 2018).

Driven by the strategic pursuit of the two centenary goals – completing a moderately prosperous society by 2021 and transforming China into a modern socialist country by 2049 – the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation has prompted the Central Party Committee to innovate in diplomatic theory and practice. While ensuring continuity in China’s foreign policy, it has introduced new ideas and proposals with distinct Chinese characteristics that reflect contemporary aspirations and aim for broader human progress (Yang Jiechi 2017).

We can frame the four global initiatives as part of a new global governance strategy and framework for achieving the goals of humanity’s shared future. It is a vision that China, as a responsible major power, is offering to the world in the field of “major country diplomacy” and as one of the leaders of the global new multipolarity. It is not only the idea that the world should be more just and equitable, but also the belief that all countries, civilisations, ethnic groups, and historical experiences should be treated equally. Many people wish for and desire that. But China and other partners in BRICS+, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and other initiatives led by China, by China and Russia, and by other emerging major countries also possess power – financial power, energy power, demographic capacity, production power, trade power, technological power, and political will.

For the past 10 years, China has been among the world's top three investors. Financial, production, trade, technological, and political power are also being focused and organised to reform existing international organisations, all grounded in international law and the United Nations Charter, for the good of humanity. The aim is for every country to have not only the right, but also the possibility, to pursue development, to improve the living conditions of its people, to be respected as an equal, and to be included in the financial, production, trade, and security tools and mechanisms that have been and will be further developed within these groupings, building a new multipolarity. What, then, is China offering to the world, including through the Belt and Road Initiative, the 16+1 format, China-Africa cooperation, China-Latin America cooperation, and other formats? Serbia, luckily, plays an important role in these initiatives, as a reliable, long-standing friend of the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China.

I am returning to tomorrow's date once again: the CPC will mark an impressive anniversary tomorrow, and it can be extremely proud of its achievements. The achievements of the Communist Party of China are people-centered; they were not for the benefit of a single leadership, a single leader, or a small group of extremely wealthy people. They were achievements for the Chinese nation and for humankind. As Xi Jinping's Thought points out, the Party must adhere to the principal position of the people, serve the public interest, and govern the country for the people. To keep the Party ready and up to its calling, Xi insists on "developing a positive and healthy inner-party political culture, resolutely correcting all kinds of unhealthy tendencies, cracking down on corruption with a zero-tolerance attitude [...] and always maintaining the Party's flesh-and-blood ties with the masses of the people" (ACCWS 2022).

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\* This manuscript was submitted on 19 August, 2026, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on 8 October, 2026.