

Daily Times

Lahore

4 November 2017

Long Live China's Revolutionary Zeal

Dr Ahmad Rashid Malik



" Over the last 30 years alone, China has lifted more than 700 million out of poverty; with the remaining 40 million to be similarly elevated by 2020"

Sixty-eight years on and China is still reaping the rewards of mass revolution. Today, the Middle Kingdom stands proud as a wealthy nation. Indeed, it has never broken from its commitment to socialist ideology – the very premise of its revolution that led to the founding of the People's Republic of China back in October 1949. Presently, the world's largest socialist democracy has entered into a new era of prosperity, peace and development. It is all set to further transform the lives of over 1.3 billion people. The Chinese model should be admired on multiple fronts.

Yet a word of caution to Pakistan's media: due attention must be made when disseminating news analyses pertaining to China and getting facts straight; meaning that anything uncorroborated should be left well alone. As should personal opinion when reporting on Chinese society and economy. Not only does this represent journalistic misconduct – it could also jeopardise Pakistan's long-term national interests by inviting Beijing's ire.

Over the years, China has emerged as a model for developing countries, not least of all Pakistan. Thus is it incumbent upon the media to follow professional guidelines when it comes to detailing Chinese internal politics, for example. Irresponsible reporting and sensationalism should be avoided at all costs.

That being said, however, we would still do well to suitably contextualise the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) that convened last month. The Congress elected its seven-member Standing Committee of the Politburo, which is described as the country's most powerful decision-making body. The CPC bestowed its full confidence upon Xi Jinping after he was elected to the presidency back in 2013. Indeed, his ideas are today enshrined in the constitution of the CPC – the world's largest party comprising some 90 million people countrywide. Thus we can say that the Chinese socialist democratic paradigm is collective rather than individualistic in nature.

The revolutionary system of direct participation paved the way to lift the rural poor out of poverty. Over the last 30 years alone more than 700 million have been positively impacted in this way; with the remaining 40 million to enjoy a similar change in circumstances by 2020. And the focus is not only on GDP growth per capita. Meaning that China is nailing on it the human development front, too. Prior to 1949, literacy ran at a lowly 15-25 percent. Today it has soared to 96.4 percent. These are the country's biggest achievements – from Chairman Mao through to President Xi. No western democracy or India, if we look closer to home, has come near to matching this.

Another way China is changing fast is that there is now zero-tolerance for corruption. More than 1.4 million have been caught up in President Xi's anti-graft net. This underscores the Politburo's commitment to providing better services to the people where all are accountable. In fact, the new anti-corruption chief has called on the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) to relentlessly pursue a 'clean' China, while planning for a 'super anti-corruption' agency. And even those who managed to temporarily flee abroad will be brought back to face the music at home. This is because the CPC recognises that graft represents the biggest threat to its very existence.

Of course, when development takes place the cost of living rises in major towns but China has prevented this from spreading countrywide. This is because it follows a balanced regional policy of urbanisation and addresses poverty at the grass-root level. Over 90 percent of its population own a house; which is almost equal to that of Singapore and remains the highest proportion of any socialist or capitalist country. This was the promise made by Chairman Mao and one that has been fulfilled by successive leaders. It would not be a stretch to describe this as the pinnacle of Chinese socialism.

Lined to this is the fact the China's economy is solid and has not precipitated an artificial boom; no country of more than 1.3 billion would be able to. In reality, per capita income was up to US\$8000 back in 2016, which represents yet another indicator of its poverty alleviation drive. In addition, Beijing has been taking the lead in terms of global GDP growth rates; contributing to around 30 of the world's economies.

In short, China has remained committed to its revolutionary socialist zeal. And yes, it is true, this is certainly rooted in the country's cultural history. All the signs are that this will continue well into future. To all the naysayers, therefore, this proves one thing: the Chinese communist revolution is sustainable. Thus it is especially heartening to see how the spirit of this was celebrated at the National Convention. China's star is well and truly rising.

The writer is Director, China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI). He writes on East Asian affairs.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/134786/heralding-new-era-china/>