

*Long live the Chinese Communist Party - ten thousand years!
How deep is the love of Chinese people?*

As a Pole too young to remember the era before 1989, I always had this tremendous feeling that liberal democracy is the ultimate goal of any political system. It is the very end of a road leading its citizens to the ultimate form of governance. Of course, some countries will need a longer time to catch up and evolve to this final form and while in some parts of the world liberal democracy will be tainted by local flaws, people from the four corners of the world will work their way there. In the midst of the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), questions about a form of governance very different from liberal democracy arises. How do Chinese people view their homeland?

Firstly, let us take a look at the party itself and the way it communicates with its domestic audience. The CCP has been putting a lot of effort into creating a positive image of itself, not only during the year that celebrates the 100th anniversary of the CCP's founding on June 1st, but continuously over the years. The messaging is so firm, that in the eyes of a Western observer it might sometimes look a bit too straightforward. This is not the case for the domestic audience. Putting aside the enhancement of soft power as an important feature of foreign policy, the CCP surely does not let its own people take a back seat. There is a lot going on out there behind the bamboo screen prepared for the eyes of the Chinese.

While soft power usually indicates that activities are conducted somehow alongside mainstream politics, the Chinese form (as there always exists a Sinicised version of any phenomenon worthy of mentioning) indicates a close relation to domestic politics. Exertion of soft power by the CCP is never a matter of chance, it has a specific purpose of promoting and highlighting pro-Chinese values in the depending on the appropriate context. The CCP is not merely a ruling party, as it embodies China itself and is crucial tenant of its core legitimacy to conveying an appealing, coherent image onto its citizens.

The World is changing and so does the CCP. Globalization and the information revolution have unlocked the door to a reality filled with a constant flow of opinions and data. The CCP Propaganda Department (or Publicity Department as it was rebranded at the end of XX century in its official English version, even though the original was kept in Chinese characters) adjusted to that as well with its system becoming very efficient reaching every person connected to the internet. Education of the masses is more successful than ever due to the national program of poverty reduction which includes the development of the internet. One could suppose that the size of China (roughly the size of Europe) could be an impediment to the creation of a mutual sense of belonging to one country. Here the CCP is acting as a bonding agent responsible for bringing it is 1.4 billion people together. Lifting citizens out of poverty quickly involved providing access to the world through television broadcasting and later by providing access to the internet— proactive tools shaping society.

“Do not give up! China is rising, aiming for victory!”

These words make up the lyrics of a 15-minute long [song](#) sung by a hundred rappers to commemorate the CCP’s anniversary. The Patriotic track is infused with pride of Chinese history, politics and brands like Huawei. It is not the first time rap music was chosen as a medium to convey a message. Few years ago, the press agency Xinhua presented a [song](#) which featured animation about the Four Comprehensives (political goals put forward by current General Secretary of the CCP Xi Jinping). From more recent examples, there is also a [song](#) that was made public this year explaining China's 14th Five-Year Plan for period 2021-2025, this time in English.

A quarter of a patriotic track is not even a fraction of centenary celebration. Chinese Big Tech Firms also joined the national celebration by adjusting the design of their websites. For example, WeChat, a messaging and calling app, and search engine Baidu turned red to mark the celebration. At a time of festivities, the top-50 trending topics listed on Weibo (the Chinese version of Twitter) were all [related](#) to the party centenary.

The tourism industry also turned red. Although it is not a phenomenon on its own, but the scale of it was. “Red tourism” means travelling to places associated with the CCP’s history and events that formed a new China. Visiting landmark sites marking the rise and victories of party promotes national ethos and the development of the country under the CCP’s leadership. Naturally, places like the city Yan’an where communist armies established headquarters after the legendary Long March have enjoyed great popularity for years. Other places, like the museum in Shanghai marking the First National Congress of the CCP just expanded its space providing a new wing of the site to better educate about the party’s birthplace. Last month, a special [train](#) loaded with more than 1000 tourists made its maiden voyage in Shanghai as well, taking passengers to Jiaxing, where the First National Congress was transferred to in 1921. In 2005, the authorities announced a plan to speed up the “red tourism” [program](#) to attract more travellers. [According](#) to the online travel agency Trip.com, the number of people booking tickets on the platform for sites associated with the CCP’s history rose by 208 percent on a year-on-year basis. In 2020, “red tourists” reportedly [made up](#) 11 percent of domestic travel. That shows a growth of interest in experiencing revolutionary era hardships has grown and is not only limited to school trips.

The culmination of the celebration was an impressive event that took place on Tiananmen Square with an audience of some 70 000 people (without masks, as it is said that the virus is under control). During the event, current leader of China Xi Jinping wore a Mao-styled suit and spoke for around an hour emphasizing that party would never let anyone to bully China. The memory of unfavourable treaties and the narrative of a “century of humiliation” is still very vivid. Referencing to that difficult period in Chinese history brings back the dichotomy – us and them and reminds the people of how the Western world exploited China.

Generation earn more, spend more

Many larger or smaller conflicts on the political stage begin with slogans about democracy and freedom of speech. If they don't begin with this argument, someone will eventually bring it up and use it as the worst accusation against their opponents. Pragmatic as they are, this is not a case for the Chinese people. Since implementing a policy of opening up the economy they have rather focused on growing rich. The CCP's rule has powered China's economic miracle. Following the initiation of reforms the annual GDP [growth](#) between 1979 to 2016 has amounted to about 9.6% on average. The pace of enrichment has changed the image of China drastically in just four decades. While Gen X prefers to save money, [Gen Z](#) is optimistic about future and eager to spend money they do not necessarily possess. Moreover, they are interested in purchasing luxury or unique goods, which doesn't always mean buying foreign brands. Quite the opposite – if any foreign company is in Chinese people's black books they will rush to express dissatisfaction and turn to domestic goods. Boycott is surely a powerful weapon in the hands of Chinese netizens (like this [year](#) when by burning Nike shoes Weibo users showed protest to Nike's statement).

The biggest sin that can be committed by the Western world is to point to so-called Western values with regards to China and understand the country in order to change it. While Chinese Millennials might be under the spell of Western civilisation, Gen Z seems to be favouring the culture of the homeland and not because they don't see outside world. Gen Z travels abroad more frequently than the previous generations, with many deciding to enroll into foreign universities as their diploma is still valued on the job market. At the same time though, they also make observations that conclude in the Western world being chaotic and irrational. It is worth noting that the number of Chinese students studying overseas choosing to return home is rising. [2016](#) saw a 57 percent growth in the number of students studying abroad and returning back home to China as compared to 2011. Again, it is the Chinese economy's strength and multiple opportunities that draw people back, but also an attachment to their own culture. The worsening relations between the USA and China will only strengthen this trend.

Chinese netizens love to express their support to the CCP' actions, especially in confrontation with the US Administration. However, they are rather not concerned with current political issues, always ready to fight back in case of any accusations. In the meantime the number of party members is rising. Global Times informs that more than a third of its 92 million members are under 40. The Chinese newspaper also [conducted](#) a survey that concluded that in 2021, 42 percent of Chinese youth look down on the West (compared to 18 percent five years ago). The CCP puts a lot of effort in order to bond with the younger generation of Chinese. They are the future of the nation. It is their attitude towards their homeland and the outside world that will determine China's prospective approach. The anniversary of the CCP emphasized all its great success stories highlighting the rising living standards. Chinese people have big ambitions and want to lead prosperous lives. The CCP's leadership promises all that.

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