

# The New Era In Today's China

## Preface

This book is a collection of my articles published in Chinese media, speeches delivered at international forums and selected media interviews over the past three years. It covers a range of topics relating to the rise of China, including its development path, global view, China-United States relations, China-Asean relations, poverty reduction, common prosperity and the Belt and Road Initiative.

I have followed China's economic and political developments closely since its Reform and Opening Up, and witnessed how China has transformed from a global economic backwater to emerge as one of the most powerful countries in the world, economically, technologically and militarily.

China's rise has inevitably altered global power dynamics, relatively speaking. The US, which has been the sole superpower since the collapse of Soviet Russia, deems China's rise as a challenge to its global supremacy and posing a threat to the liberal international order.

"China, in particular, has rapidly become more assertive. It is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system," US President Joe Biden said in the *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* released in March 2021.

The fact is: China has benefited and realised its development within the current world order. It has no intention of destroying it, much less supplanting it. Nevertheless, China sees inequities and unfairness, tinted with historical prejudices, in the current international system. As a country which now accounts for over 18 percent of world GDP and which has contributed close to 30 percent to global growth annually for the last 10 consecutive years, China rightfully would want to have a bigger say in shaping the global order.

"A community with a shared future " is China's concept of global governance promulgated by President Xi Jinping. It envisions a fair, equitable and just global order built upon the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, mutual respect, and love for Mother Earth.

China's economic success is not due to the largesse of the West. It took an untested path not traversed by others—a mixed economy under a centralised authoritarian system. Under this mixed economy, while market forces determine the allocation of resources and the prices of goods and services, the state continues to play a major role.

After 40 years of Reform and Opening Up, China's GDP exceeded 110 trillion yuan in 2021. However, its economic success has also brought about income inequality among the people and a widening wealth gap. China's Gini coefficient jumped from 0.20 before Reform and Opening Up to 0.46 in 2020, crossing the internationally recognised "warning line" of 0.4.

To reduce income inequality and achieve common prosperity, China in recent years has introduced a slew of policies aimed at "expanding the proportion of middle-income groups, increasing the income of low-income groups, reasonably adjusting high incomes and outlawing illegal incomes."

China successfully eliminated absolute poverty in 2021, setting the prerequisite condition for achieving common prosperity. President Xi has said, "Common prosperity is an essential requirement of socialism and a key feature of Chinese-style modernisation."

The Belt and Road Initiative launched by President Xi in 2013 is a mega transcontinental economic cooperation project with the goal of enhancing regional infrastructure connectivity and boosting trade and investment flows. However, it has often been misperceived by the West, with some accusing China of practising "debt trap diplomacy" with geopolitical motives.

Due to the domination of international mainstream and social media by the West, China is not well understood by outsiders. I hope this book will help the readers to better understand China in the new era, i.e., under President Xi's administration.

Last but not least, I want to thank my wife, Tan Shook Kheng, for her valuable input and suggestions, and for meticulously editing all my articles and speeches. I would also like to record my acknowledgement and appreciation for all the help and contributions from my associates and friends, in particular Ma Liang and S Mahmud Ali for their comments on the book.