There were two important contributions made recently neither of which received much in the way of attention from the western mainstream media. The first of these was the speech given by Xi Jinping, the Secretary General of the Communist party of China and its current president. Xi commenced his speech with a stern warning to would-be opponents of China. “we would never allow,” he said, “anyone to bully, oppress or subjugate China.”

He referred to the dark days beginning in the 1840s with the so-called opium war, where China was reduced to a “semi colonial, semi feudal society” and suffered greater ravages than ever before in its history. This was a reference to the British invasion of China, where the colonial heritage lasted until just before the beginning of this century with Britain agreeing to return Hong Kong in the 1997 agreement between the two countries. It is astonishing that a colonial power would seek to impose conditions on a country for the return of its own territory. Yet that is what happened until this year when China finally asserted its right to control its own territory.

The People’s Republic of China was established, he said, “by toppling the three mountains of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism” which led to the foundation of the People’s Republic of China.

Xi held out an olive branch to those who sincerely wished to aid the PRC when you said that they welcomed “helpful
suggestions and constructive criticism.” China would not accept however, “sanctimonious preaching from those who feel they have the right to lecture us.”

He committed China to a peaceful future, working “to promote the shared common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom.” China, he said, had never “bullied, oppressed, or subjugated the people of any country.” He committed China to a continuation of this history.

Referring to Taiwan near the end of his speech, Xi defined the complete reunification of China as “an historic mission and an unshakable commitment” of the Communist party of China. Precisely how this will be achieved is giving the occupants of Taipei much anxiety, as it is clear that China sees reunification of Taiwan with the mainland as essential.

By the same token, China would take “resolute action to defeat any attempt towards Taiwan’s independence.” This will be the litmus test in the coming months and years as Taiwan continues to make noises about becoming an independent nation, and in this it has the implicit support of the Americans. It is an issue that is more likely than any other to create a potential for armed conflict between the United States and China.

Perhaps naturally enough Xi wished to stress the positive aspects of China’s progress since his party took office. There was therefore no mention of the terrible famine that struck China in the late 1950s and killed at least 10 million people. There was similarly no mention of the political unpleasantness that occurred when Mao’s widow, as part of a gang of four, made her bid for power following Mao’s death.

Xi did credit the work of Deng Xiaoping who many regard as the true architect of the modern Chinese economic miracle. Deng came to power in the late 1970s and transformed the Chinese economy, setting the basis for the its current economic dominance.

The other recent major contribution to modern geopolitical thinking was in a paper written by Russia’s foreign minister Sergei Lavrov “The Law, the Rights and The Rules” published in Moscow on 28 June 2021. It is worth quoting extensively from this publication as it discussed issues of vital contemporary significance. In the paper Lavrov pointed out that “the documents adopted at the Cornwall and Brussels summits cemented the rules based world order concept as a counterweight to the universal principles of international law with the United Nations Charter as its primary source.”

He went on to say that “in terms of international affairs, Beijing is accused of being too assertive, pursuing its international interests (the Belt and Road Initiative) as well as expanding its military.

Lavrov went on to argue that while “proclaiming the ‘right’ to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries for the sake of promoting democracy as it understood it, the West instantly loses all interest when we raise the prospect of making international relations more democratic, including removing arrogant behaviour and committing to abide by the universally recognised tenets of international law instead of “rules”.

Rather, Lavrov argued that what was needed was “mutually respectful dialogue involving the leading powers and with due regard for the interests of all members of the international community. This implies an unconditional commitment provided by the universally accepted norms and principles of international law.”

What Lavrov argued rather, was that the rules based order is the embodiment of double standards “while preaching equality and democracy in their countries and demanding others follow its lead, the West refuses to discuss ways to ensure equality and democracy in international affairs.”

These are all crucial points that need wide dissemination and discussion. Lavrov is currently the leading foreign minister in the world today. What he had to say in this paper was of critical importance.

It is clear from both Xi’s speech and Lavrov’s paper that the world is currently undergoing a major transition, with a new political system emerging. It is equally clear that these developments are not to the Americans taste. They will do everything in their power to subvert these trends in a hope of retaining the pre-eminent position they held in the post-war era.

In that, they will fail, but one should not underestimate their potential to cause serious problems along the way.

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