



中國制度

研 究 中 心

Research Hub on Institutions of China
Faculty of Social Sciences, HKU

Newsletter | Summer 2019 | Inaugural Issue

News & Events

3

- *Research Hub on Institutions of China officially launched by the Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR*

6

- *Inaugural lecture of the "Distinguished Lecture Series" delivered by Grzegorz Ekiert of Harvard University*

8

- *A speech by Xie Feng, Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong*

10

- *Yan Xiaojun talks about political stability during visit to Institute of Public Policy in Guangzhou*

12

- *Fieldwork trip to Gutian Town, Shanghang County*

Viewpoints

14

- *Vision, Institution and a Community of a Shared Future: Speech on "Focus on Bay Area, Jointly Build Belt and Road" luncheon*

Briefings

16

- *February 20 - April 15, 2019*

**The Honourable Mrs. Carrie Lam
Chief Executive of HKSAR
officiated at the inauguration of the
Research Hub on Institutions of China**



The Research Hub on Institutions of China at the University of Hong Kong was formally established on February 20, 2019. The Honourable Mrs. Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-Ngor GBS GBM, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, attended the opening ceremony of the research centre and delivered the inaugural address.

The Research Hub is a new research initiative for contemporary China studies founded and operated by the Faculty of Social Sciences, the University of Hong Kong, through the generous donation from Mr. Hui Wing Mau GBS JP, Chairman of the Shimao Group.

The new research centre on China aims to become a world-class platform that facilitates interdisciplinary cross-institutional and cross-regional research collaboration, a coordinator for the communication of great minds that share a common interest in China's past, present and future, and an incubator of innovative research that inspires a younger generation of scholars on contemporary China.



From left: Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Professor William Hayward, Mr. Hui Wing Mau, Mrs. Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-Ngor, Professor Paul Tam

It will also serve as a reliable source of policy advice, and a centre for university education and professional training with a local, national and international impact.

The ceremony was held at the Wang Gungwu Lecture Hall, Graduate House, HKU, at 2pm on February 20, 2019.

"The development of China has always been a public subject for research and studies, given the nation's long and eventful history. In the past 40 years, we have seen fundamental changes and significant developments in China. China's reform and opening-up is an excellent subject for research and studies, and I believe the findings will provide valuable inspirations, not only for China but also for the world, particularly the emerging economies, in planning how to move forward," Mrs Lam said.

"Hong Kong, as China's most international city, will be an ideal place for the hub to operate and grow." Mrs. Lam added.

Mrs. Lam and Mr. Hui, together with Professor Paul Tam, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of HKU, Dean of Social Sciences Professor William Hayward and Director of the Research Hub Dr. Yan Xiaojun, unveiled a plaque to launch the new facility.



Following the ceremony, an academic forum entitled “China in a Global Perspective: A Dialogue” was held.

Professor Timothy Colton and Professor Grzegorz Ekiert from Harvard University, and Professor Yuan Ming from Peking University delivered keynote speeches at the forum. The keynote speakers discussed issues related to Sino-U.S. relationship, relationship between China and the European Union as well as Sino-Russian Relationship.

Mrs. Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai, former President of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR, Professor James Tang, Secretary-General of the University Grants Committee, and Ms. Leonie Ki Man-Fung, Managing Director of New World China Enterprises Projects Limited, along with more than 250 guests and members of the public, also attended the function.

First Public Talk under “Distinguished Lecture Series” of the Research Hub Successfully Held

Grzegorz Ekiert, Professor of Government and Director of Centre for European Studies at Harvard University, warned against potential political problems on the road of transformation for Eastern Europe



On February 18, 2019, the Research Hub on Institutions of China at the University of Hong Kong hosted the first event of its “Distinguished Lecture Series.” Professor Grzegorz Ekiert, Director of Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University, delivered an academic report entitled “From Communism to Authoritarianism via Democracy: The Puzzle of Political Transformations in East Central Europe.”

Professor Ekiert pointed out that in the 20 years after the 1989 revolutions in Europe, the Central and Eastern European countries had experienced rapid democratization and a relatively smooth transition to the market economy, which opened the door for them to join NATO and the European Union.

However, after the global financial crisis of 2008, the governments of Central and Eastern European countries began to deviate from the Western liberal democracy. For example, Hungary and Poland were once seen as pioneers of reform and success; but in recent years, the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz) in Hungary and the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in Poland have begun to strongly criticize the basic values of the rule of law and European integration, increasingly alienating their European allies, and turning to authoritarian rule. Among young people in the region, extreme nationalism and even fascist trends have also spread rapidly.



From left: Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Professor Grzegorz Ekiert, Professor William Hayward

After an in-depth analysis of the two typical cases, Professor Ekiert pointed out that although democratization and marketization in the region seem to be smooth, the relationship between old and new forces has been tense. During the 1989 revolts, there were still a large number of young people in Poland and Hungary who had received Soviet education. They could have successfully entered the system and gained relatively decent positions. However, they simultaneously learned about nationalist ideas and, therefore, supported the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

On the one hand, they lost their original path of promotion and became difficult to become the backbone of the system. On the other hand, their Soviet educational background also made it difficult for them to adapt to an entirely different institution epitomized by democratization and marketization. In this context, they began to moan the status quo and hope to return to the old system that they were more familiar with. Therefore, they hoped to reshape their dominance through a nationalist, authoritarian regime.

Professor Ekiert warned against China's diplomatic undertakings with European countries that have bypassed the European Union and argued that this might not be helpful to the healthy progress of the China-EU relationship in future.

Xie Feng, Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR, talks about China's "Major Country Diplomacy"

"Hong Kong is a city that is good at international communication which can certainly add a share of Chinese wisdom to building a community of shared future for mankind", said the Commissioner



In the afternoon of April 4, 2019, at the invitation of the University of Hong Kong, Mr. Xie Feng, Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, delivered a two-hour speech at Loke Yew Hall – a historical landmark of the university. He introduced the concept and achievements of "major country diplomacy" with Chinese characteristics in the new era. The event was hosted by the Research Hub on Institutions of China.

Professor Terry Au, Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Staffing and Resources) of HKU, delivered welcoming remarks before the Commissioner's talk.

Mr. Xie explained the connotations of President Xi Jinping's recent comments on the "unprecedented great changes in the past century" and, from there, discussed "ways of examining the current world trend". He argued that the world today is in a period of "great development, great change and great adjustment". Despite growing instability and uncertainties, peace and development are still the themes of our time. A peacefully rising China shall play an increasingly important role in international affairs, and thus it is inevitable for China to face growing and fierce competition with other countries. Yet, it is essential for China, Mr. Xie emphasized, to maintain its strategic commitment to peace and development and strengthen strategic confidence.



© Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China

With regard to other countries' concerns about the Belt and Road Initiative, Mr. Xie noted that the strategy has been in place in the past six years, stressing that China is committed to "achieving shared growth through discussions and collaboration" instead of hegemonic rule. China has also been promoting the alignment of development strategies of all nations rather than engaging in "the inconsistency of words and deeds", along with upholding openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation instead of "clique behaviour".

As for Sino-US relations, Mr. Xie clarified China's position on the most contentious policy issues and stressed that the 40-year history of Sino-US interaction showed that the only correct choice for both countries is to promote bilateral ties based on mutual coordination, cooperation and stability.

Regarding the role played by his office in foreign affairs in relation to Hong Kong, Mr. Xie said the Commissioner's Office has three goals – to be a firm guardian of national sovereignty, security and development interests; an active promoter of external relations and cooperation in the HKSAR; and a faithful defender of the legitimate rights and interests of Hong Kong people who travel and live overseas.

Commissioner Xie later devoted more than an hour to answering questions from teachers and students of HKU.

Yan Xiaojun, Director of the Research Hub, Talks about Political Stability during Visit to Institute of Public Policy in Guangzhou

“Globally, the ability to establish a ‘learning regime’ with high adaptability is the key for developing countries to maintain political and social stability amidst drastic economic and social changes”, Dr. Yan said



On February 27, Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Director of the Research Hub on Institutions of China, visited the Institute of Public Policy at South China University of Technology and delivered a public talk entitled “Maintaining Stability: Some Thoughts on an Important Aspect of China’s National Governance.”

Professor Yang Lijun, Executive Dean of the Institute, presided over the event. Professor Zheng Yongnian, Chairman of the Academic Committee of the Institute and Director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore, served as the discussant.

Dr. Yan said, the conventional wisdom has never been optimistic about the ability of developing countries to maintain a stable political order amidst drastic economic and social changes. Political scientists usually tend to believe that, drastic socio-economic changes are bound to change the internal and external environment—from class structure to mainstream ideology— in which governments of developing countries exercise effective control over their societies and populations. The dramatic changes at the social economic level and the subsequent interest adjustment greatly increase tension and friction between the state and society, deepening the hostility between them.

He added, meanwhile, traditional politics believes that developing countries often have disadvantages over state capacity. Their governments are often caught off guard and act clumsily in the face of rapid changes in the social economic structure. When social movements come suddenly and on a large scale, it will be even harder for the ruling clique to hold its ground and thus lead to the overthrow of the regime.

Dr. Yan added, world history has also shown that the impact of rapid economic and social development on the established political order is more than often dangerous.

He also analysed the international environment during the first decade of the 21st century. He said, from Eastern Europe, Central Asia to the Middle East, the waves of anti-government movements in the name of colour revolutions and Arab Spring had brought huge shocks to relevant state regimes. After the revolutionary waves, political power changes, society is in turmoil, and civil war is still frequent.

At the same time, radical Islamic religious forces, as well as terrorist and separatist forces, are posing an increasingly serious threat to many countries, including China. From Paris to Ankara, from London to New Delhi, the international political scene of our time is facing great uneasiness and instability.

On the other hand, America's rebalance to Asia strategy during the Barack Obama administration and the uncertainties of President Donald J. Trump's diplomacy have further deepened the instability of global political and military situations.

For this reason, Dr. Yan said, how the Chinese state maintains its high adaptability and the stability of the country's basic political order in an extremely complex international and domestic environment has become an important question that international academia are keen to find answers to. He said, generally speaking, the two most important components of the "Chinese solution" to maintain regime security and political stability are regime inclusion and preventive control.

He added, the key factor for the stability of political and social order lies in how a regime learns fully from the internal and external environment, adapts flexibly, innovates governing methods, and achieves the dynamic coordination and unification of governance, economic development and social reforms.

After the public talk, Mr. Zhang Shuofu, a member of the Standing Committee of Guangdong Provincial CPC Committee and Secretary of the Guangzhou Municipal CPC Committee, met with and hosted a dinner for Professor Zheng Yongnian, Dr. Yan Xiaojun, and company.

First Field Research Trip in Grassroots China: Gutian Town, Shanghang County, Fujian Province

The Research Hub and the Government of Shanghang County to jointly establish a permanent fieldwork site in Gutian Town



*Front row from left: Professor Chen Yaohua, Mrs. Luo Xiaohong, Dr. Yan Xiaojun
© Gutian Cadre Institute*

Led by Dr Yan Xiaojun, a delegation comprising staff and students of the Research Hub on Institutions of China of HKU undertook their first field research trip to Gutian Town, Shanghang County, Fujian Province, between March 27 and 29, 2019.

The Gutian Conference in 1929 is an important starting point and origin of the institutional framework of the People's Republic of China after 1949.

The Gutian Conference was the 9th meeting of the Fourth Red Army and the first after the Nanchang Uprising and the subsequent southward flight of the rebel troops. It was convened in December 1929 in the town of Gutian in Shanghang County, Fujian Province, amid fierce discussions and debate among the earliest revolutionary soldiers about the leadership relationship between the Communist Party and the Red Army.

In 2014, proposed by and presided over by President Xi Jinping, the Political Work Conference of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was held in Gutian Township. This new Gutian Conference was held two years into President Xi's presidency in 2012, amid the national anti-corruption campaign that toppled a number of senior PLA generals. It has a far reaching impact on the political work and institutional reform of the Chinese armed forces.



In the afternoon of March 27, after arriving at the Gutian high-speed railway station, the staff of the Research Hub visited the meeting site where the Political Work Conference of the People's Liberation Army was held in 2014. Mrs. Luo Xiaohong, a principal official of the Shanghang County, accompanied the delegation.

On the morning of March 28, the delegation visited the Gutian Cadre Institute, listened to a briefing on the institute's history, mission and current situation, and had discussions with the leaders of the institute on the nation's political developments, as well as the possibility of establishing a more permanent fieldwork site in Gutian Township. The delegation then toured Buyun Township, one of the poorest administrative units in the region, as well as the Meihuashan Mountain Natural Reserve.

In the afternoon, the team visited Mao Zedong Memorial Park and other historical sites, such as the site of the Gutian Conference, the Gutian Conference Memorial Hall and the former site of the first-column headquarters of the Fourth Red Army (Xiecheng shop) and held talks with directors of the Gutian Conference Museum.

Through the visit, the Research Hub reached a preliminary understanding with the Shanghang County on regular personnel exchanges and research collaboration.

Vision, Institution and a Community of Shared Future for Mankind

Speech at “Focusing on the Bay Area, Building the Belt and Road Together” Luncheon by Dr. Yan Xiaojun (April 15, 2019)



It's a great pleasure for me to attend today's luncheon, and I am impressed by all the speeches just now. Thank you so much for the insights.

The topic of today's event— “Integrated Talent in the Greater Bay Area: “Co-existence, communication & mutual gains” is timely. In my view, these three terms – “co-existence, communication and mutual gains” – accurately reflect the vision of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) project, as well as the Belt and Road Initiative.

The development of the Greater Bay Area is an essential chapter in the grand blueprint for the next phase of China's reform and opening-up programmes. Today, I wish to share some of my recent thoughts with three words, concerning how to implement the Greater Bay project, especially how Hong Kong can play its unique role in this significant undertaking.

The first word is “vision”. The Greater Bay Area includes nine cities in the Pearl River Delta region and the two special administrative regions set up by the Chinese Constitution. It is one of the regions with the highest degree of opening-up and the strongest economic vitality. Since 2012, the Chinese government has started the Greater Bay Area project in Southern China, the integration of Yangtze River Delta in Central China, and the coordinated development project of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei in the north.

Simultaneously, in the northwest, southwest and northeast regions, local governments also launched their respective plans to deepen reform and promote all-round development. From my perspective, as to the construction of the Greater Bay Area, especially Hong Kong's participation in this process, we must first have a vision of this national overview and then starting out, standing in the overall framework of coordinated development throughout the country and opening up in a comprehensive way. It is only when you stand high that you can see far, and those who have great vision can walk even farther.

The second word is “*institution*”. As we all know, the world’s famous Bay areas include the New York Bay area, the San Francisco Bay area, the Tokyo Bay area and so on. The planning and construction of these bay areas were carried out within the framework of the same regime and institutions. Comparing with them, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area is in the framework of “one country, two systems, three jurisdictions and customs zones, circulation of three currencies,” thus, the system is quite different. There are also significant differences in economic freedom, market openness, trade and social welfare facilities among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. These differences determine that our Greater Bay Area is facing systematic and institutional problems that are not encountered in other places. The key is to promote the efficient and convenient movement of people, logistics, capital flow and information flow in the Greater Bay area through systematic institutional innovation, to optimize the allocation of resources, and to enhance the vitality and competitiveness of the economy.

The third word is “a community of shared future”. As mentioned before, the Greater Bay Area is a unique region at the institutional and development level in terms of the economy, finance, society, the rule of law and so on. It is a new exploration to build a community of a shared future in the 21st century by carrying out connectivity and communication, economic integration, and talent integration in such a region, so that different areas and residents with significantly different concepts, systems and lifestyles can coexist in harmony, live and work in peace and contentment, and seek common development. This is also the ultimate source of strength and confidence for the proper implement of the “One Country, Two Systems” policy in Hong Kong and Macao, as well as the eventual realization of the policy’s Taiwan version.

“Though having suffered greatly in the past, one shall not lose his original intention.” This is part of a poem by Wei Fu, Prime Minister of the Tang Dynasty. In order to pursue China’s genuine wish of implementing Hong Kong policies, my colleagues and I spent more than a year talking to people who have participated in the formation of “One Country, Two Systems” policy and the whole process of Hong Kong’s return to the motherland since the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In these interviews, what touched us is that many of these elders were in their eighties and who have been witnesses to the policy of “One Country, Two Systems”. What they still have in mind is the complete integration of national sovereignty and governance, and the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. They said that what they eagerly want to see is a successful path to building the socialist mainland of China, as well as capitalist Hong Kong through the development of the Greater Bay Area. They hope we—the younger generation—can find a new path for the development of human society in which people in different social systems, different lifestyles, and different stages of development can coexist harmoniously, live and work in peace and contentment, and work together for a happy life.

“Difficulty is the nurse of greatness.” I think the success lies in the creativity, hard-work and spiritual strength of the people of Hong Kong and Macao across generations. I also believe that the expectations of the older generation will undoubtedly be realized.

Thank you.

February 20 - April 15, 2019

On February 21, Ms. Chen Jianwen, Deputy Director of the Research Office of the HKSAR Basic Law Committee of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, visited Hong Kong and exchanged views with Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Director of the Research Hub, on issues concerning the Basic Law.

On February 22, Mr. Xie Feng, Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, met with and hosted a dinner for Professor Yuan Ming of Peking University, who was invited to the inaugural ceremony and forum of the Research Hub on Institutions of China. Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Director of the Research Hub, attended the dinner meeting.

On March 13, Mr. John Wong Chung, Executive Director of the New Home Association, visited and discussed ways of strengthening Hong Kong's social welfare system.

On March 19, Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Director of the Research Hub, attended a luncheon with Mr. Yang Tao, Deputy Director of the Department of International Organizations and Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and exchanged ideas on issues regarding Hong Kong youth.

On March 21, Ms. Cai Guoxuan, President of Guangzhou Institute of Socialism, and company visited HKU and discussed the possibility of research collaboration with the Research Hub.

On March 30, Ambassador Mitsuhiro Wada, Consul-General of Japan in Hong Kong, held a dinner meeting with Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Director of the Research Hub on Institutions of China, Dr. Tomoki Kamo, Professor of Policy Management at Keio University, and Dr. Zhang Bohui, Professor of Politics at Lingnan University. They discussed Sino-Japanese relations, cultural and educational exchanges between China and Japan, and related issues.

On March 15, Dr. Yan Xiaojun, Director of the Research Hub on Institutions of China, was invited to a luncheon on "Focusing on the Bay Area, Building Belt and Road Together". He gave a speech entitled "Institutions, Vision, and Community of Shared Future".

Research Hub on Institutions of China, Faculty of Social Sciences, HKU

Contact: Kang Xiangyu, Li La

Phone: 39170014, 39171791

Address: Room 702.E, Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU
