

Speech by Minister Faith Muthambi:

Book launch – Governance of China

Your Excellencies
Ambassadors present
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

At the very outset, let me express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for inviting me to this auspicious occasion. I would have been satisfied with simply gracing the occasion with my presence. You have however in your wisdom decided to ask me to say a few words. The honour and privilege is not lost to me.

The challenge is more humbling if one considers that the insights in here are not those of an ordinary citizen of the world. As the President of the People's Republic of China, the most populous nation in the entire world, President Xi Jinping's words surpass in value even the most precious of metals. These are words and insights that shapes the trajectory of not only of People's Republic of China but that of the world.

The world is blessed with very few individuals whose greatness defy any description or categorisation. William Shakespeare tried with his observation that "some men are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them". President Xi Jinping is among those for whom such descriptions do not sit comfortably. The best that could be said is that he is among those who are made by the times and also makes the times. In other words, he embodies the history, the character, values of the Communist Party of China while at the same time redefining its future trajectory. This is the essence of the collection of the essays, interviews, reflections, and musings that are contained in this book; THE GOVERNANCE OF CHINA. In doing so, President Xi Jinping succeeds in perching himself in the pantheon of Chinese philosophers, writers, heroes and activists that have contributed in various ways to China's evolution and 5 000 years civilization.

Indeed, one cannot help but be impressed by the attitude to problems and challenges that jumps out of the book pages. Whereas lesser mortals are wont to bemoan problems and challenges, President Xi Jinping sees these as opportunities presented for national and societal re-invention.

As indicated in the Publisher's Note of the Book the Communist Party of China under the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping confront problems to

Drive reform
Open up to a deeper level

Modernize governance system

Marshal strength behind the Chinese Dream of rejuvenation

The book keeps on returning to the recurring theme of “Building a bright future for socialism with Chinese Characteristics”.

It is this unapologetic posture that has created interest in the People’s Republic of China.

Indeed, “the world wants to know what changes are in progress in China, and what impact they will have on the rest of the world.”

The significance of this posture, the posture of locating one’s development within one’s culture is the defining characteristics of great nations.

Like great philosophers before him, President Xi Jinping’s book *The Governance of China* is a distillation of thought. It covers a broad range of issues. In it he offers “his thoughts, views and judgments, and answers a series of important theoretical and practical questions about the party and the country in these changing time.”

The object of this book is to “enhance the rest of the world’s understanding of the Chinese government’s philosophy and its domestic and foreign policies.” We will be reading it carefully to draw from it the wisdom and lessons that are applicable in our own situation.

One veritable lesson that screams out is that the world has no respect for those who do not respect themselves. Imitators are not taken seriously.

The second lesson relates to what for lack of better words is protecting the nation’s sovereign capability when it comes to the realm of thoughts and ideas. In other words, the People’s Republic of China, may learn from others but it certainly does not outsource the responsibility of thought to outside experts – as is done in some developing countries.

The third lesson that jumps out is the attitude towards leadership. Despite being considered the most powerful leader on earth, President Xi Jinping assumes a humble posture. Upon his election, he was quick to point out

“We are deeply encouraged by both the trust from the party members and the great expectations from the people of all ethnic groups in China...We are taking on this important responsibility for the nation. Countless people with lofty ideals rose up for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, but each time they failed.”

In doing so, President Xi Jinping locates himself within the historic mission of the people of China which requires it stands “firmer and stronger among the world’s nations and make new and greater contributions to mankind.”

The fourth lesson that comes from the book is that leadership is about putting people first. We have a variation of that called Batho Pele in my department.

Most importantly is the realisation that despite a long history of hard work, diligence, bravery and wisdom, the people of China's demands and expectations are modest. President Xi Jinping points out

“Our people have an ardent love for life. They want to have better education, more stable jobs, more income, reliable social security, better medical and health care, improved housing conditions and a beautiful environment. They hope that their children will have sound growth, good jobs and more enjoyable lives. The people's wish for a happy life is our mission. A happy life comes from hard work”.

The fifth lesson that one comes across is that despite its exceptional strength and achievement, the People's Republic of China also has to address the weakness that are in themselves ordinary.

These are familiar to our part of the world.

“[There are] many issues within the party that need to be addressed, particularly corruption, being divorced from the people, and being satisfied merely with going through formalities and bureaucracy on the part of some Party officials...The party should supervise its own conduct and run itself with strict discipline, effectively solve major problems within the Party, improve its work style, and maintain close ties with the people.”

In what easily resonates with our understanding, President Xi Jinping returns to his theme on the centrality of people in guiding our activities. He writes;

“The people are the creators of history. They are the real heroes and the source of our strength. We are fully aware that capability of any individual is limited, but as long as we unite as one like a fortress, there is no difficulty we cannot overcome....Our responsibility is weightier than mountains, our task arduous, and the road ahead long.”

President Xi Jinping is unwavering with regard to project of modernization and of creating a prosperous socialist state. Only through upholding socialism with Chinese characteristics, “can we bring together and lead the whole Party, the whole nation and the people of all ethnic groups in realizing a moderately prosperous society.”

What is perhaps impressive about President Xi Jinping's approach is that it has elements that combines theory and practice. These are presented in a dialectical fashion.

“The approach synthesizes successful experience in practice into theories, uses these

correct theories to guide new practice and incorporates effective principles and policies into party and national systems”.

As if anticipating challenges, President Xi Jinping sounds a warning.

“We must adopt a holistic approach to the realization of the common ideal of building Chinese socialism and the long - term goal of realizing communism, stand firm against various erroneous views aimed at abandoning socialism, and rectify all erroneous and unrealistic mind sets, policies and measures that go beyond the current primary stage of socialism”.

Perhaps as a final signature to his contribution, President Xi Jinping reminds all his compatriot

“The most important thing for our party is to govern the country well... We must focus on economic development and promote coordinate political, cultural, social and ecological development on the basis of economic growth”.

But it is to the people of China that his writings are dedicated. He writes

The Party’s strength and its close ties with the people have ensured China prosperity and stability, and the Chinese people peace and happiness.

To run a country well we must first run the party well, and to run the party well we must run it strictly

We must organize our people, communicate with them, educate them, serve them, learn from them, and subject ourselves to their interests, and maintain close ties and share good and bad time with them

Ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests

I have no doubt that in cementing our relationship the insights of this book would become valuable. I have not even touch on the other matters such as the increasing role that the People’s Republic of China continues to play in world affairs. We are privileged to be partners in many multilateral platforms. Fortunately we are on the same side ideologically, politically and historically.

I want to thank you one and all.