

## ***Section 8 – Relazioni internazionali***

### **Panel 12. China's changing shape between domestic constraints and international opportunities. Chair: Giuseppe Gabusi**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is changing shape. Its domestic political landscape is moving away from the collective leadership of the past two decades, while its foreign policy has left aside Deng's 'low profile' to actively promote Chinese interests overseas. On the one hand, in fact, following the abolition of the two-mandate limit for the President of the Republic, and a major restructuring of central government structure under the control of the Communist Party, China seems to be heading to a return of personal rule under Xi Jinping. The 19th Communist Party Congress has also enshrined in the Constitution his thought – 'socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era'. This turn, meant to address the widely known challenges the PRC is facing in the years ahead, is unlikely to improve China's image abroad, at least in Western democracies. On the other hand, the implementation of the Belt And Road Initiative (BRI) – a major foreign policy idea launched by Xi himself in 2013 – projects Beijing's power and money in Eurasia, in Africa and in the Mediterranean, with increasing assertiveness. Undoubtedly, Washington's open challenge to the liberal order opens up new windows of opportunities for Beijing, as with the BRI China is shaping the political and economic space in a way that looks like a re-articulation of the liberal order itself. How will domestic constraints influence China's foreign policy-making and power projection? How will they impact on China's perceptions abroad, and on the effective implementation of the BRI? Is domestic restructuring in line with Beijing's foreign policy goals? The panel will reflect on these two dimensions of China's transformations, as they are clearly intertwined and can help to understand the Party's delicate exercise of firmly maintaining the grip on power while promoting overseas the image of a benevolent China, defender of global open markets.