

LUISA LEAL DE FARIA

CHINA AND THE WEST

1. Welcome

First of all, let me welcome you all to the session called **China and the West**, and let me take this opportunity to thank professor João Carlos Espada and his wonderful team for this “tour de force”: to recreate the atmosphere and the spirit of the Estoril Political Forum at the iconic Palácio Hotel, this time on line. From what I have been able to see so far, this is really the next best thing. Nothing matches the charm of the past events, of course, but the organizers were able to develop this time a dynamic that leaves no one indifferent, or to borrow a very well used expression nowadays, that leaves no one behind. So here we are, able to communicate across the world and to meet at this virtual crossroads to approach together this crucial topic for our lives as citizens called **New Authoritarian Challenges to Liberal Democracy**.

2. The session

Previous sessions discussed issues around institutions like the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance, the relations between countries like the UK, Portugal and Europe, approached France and European Sovereignty, America at a crossroads, to mention just a few; and future sessions will discuss, among other topics, challenges ahead for Russia and China, for NATO, for Portugal, Brazil, Latin America, Lusophone Africa. This is the context where this session, dedicated to reflect upon **China and the West** takes a very particular relevance. The focus will be on China, and not primarily on the West. But the choice of speakers that we are privileged to have with us today may provide by anticipation an inkling of the focus of

this session and following debate. Martin Hála, a Sinologist with Charles University in Prague, who is the founder and director of Sinopsis.cz, a project that provides analysis of China-related topics in Europe, and who has worked for several media-assistance organizations in Europe and Asia ; Susan Corke, who has been a skilled expert and practitioner for 15 years in protecting human rights, promoting tolerance, and supporting democratic reform on the ground in Europe and Eurasia; and Xiao Qiang, a research scientist who became a full time human rights activist after the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989, who has been working tirelessly in international organizations for the promotion of democracy and human rights, who has published numerous articles on China, human rights, and Internet politics.

3. Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins

But our distinguished speakers are going to be introduced by Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins, the chair for this session, whom I am proud to call my long-time friend. He has achieved, throughout his life, so much more than can be put into words in a couple of minutes. We can all read a summary of his professional trajectory in the information provided by the organizers. But I would like to add to it something that is not there: the human qualities that make Guilherme a humanist in classical and in a modern sense of the word. Guilherme has written and published extensively on a wide range of subjects, like history, political science, philosophy, literature, the arts, and he is always there, to lend a hand when needed, to honour a friend, to lend his learning and experience to a variety of cultural and philanthropic organizations. Thank you so much, Guilherme, for being here, and now I give you the floor.