



## Reviewing the 'East meets West: Reviewing Post-Covid Economics, Business, Innovation and Politics' Event

On Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the University of Surrey's [Centre for Britain and Europe](#) (based in the Department of Politics, University of Surrey) and the [Chinese Economic Association \(Europe/UK\)](#) undertook an exciting new venture by co-hosting their first event, entitled 'East meets West: Reviewing Post-Covid Economics, Business, Innovation and Politics'. Supported by the *Institute of International Studies of [Shandong University](#)*, this half-day event brought together a range of high-profile academics, analysts and decision-makers, who reflected on the major trends that have arisen from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the past year.

Looking in depth at the host of sectors, countries and regions affected by Covid, as well as the range of responses undertaken in the weeks, months and year that has followed, the perspectives proved truly insightful. Moderated by [Professor Amelia Hadfield](#), Dean International and Director of the Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey, the opening session featured [Professor Max Lu](#), President and Vice Chancellor, University of Surrey, who commented on the exceptional importance of gathering cross-regional viewpoints to produce workable policy suggestions to help guide governments and inspire academics in developing a host of useful post-Covid innovations. Vice Chancellor Lu was joined by [Professor Yuan Li](#), Vice Dean of Institute of International Studies and Professor of School of Northeast Asia Studies, Shandong University, who concurred that both sector-specific insights as well as strategic insights were very much required by local and national decision-makers, as well as key international organisations, in facilitating the gradual shift from Covid to post-Covid phases. [Professor Yu Xiong](#), Chinese Economic Association (CEA) President and Associate Dean International, University of Surrey provided a key overview of the role of the CEA, and the great potential for engaging with the key partners invited to the half-day forum.

The **Economics Panel** comprised perspectives by [Professor Shujie Yao](#), Professor of Economics and Deputy Dean of Faculty of Social Science at Chongqing University, who looked at China's role and recovery in international trade, followed by [Professor Martin Fransman](#) from the University of Edinburgh who used a particular modular approach to constructing innovate ecosystems to assist decision-makers to 'build back better'. **Innovation and Technology** were then explored, including an overview by [Professor Thomas Hoerber](#) from the EU-Asia Institute (ESSCA, France) of the surprising range of space-based development that continued during the pandemic as well as the scope for both national and trans-national cooperation. [Professor Wim Vanhaverbeke](#), Professor of Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship, at the University of Surrey then presented a fascinating series of insights into the all-important role of Digital Technology, comparing the different approaches by Europe and China taken in key sectors like health and online market places.

[Professor Liming Wang](#), University College Dublin then moderated the remaining panels, starting with the **Comparative Perspectives** session featuring Dr Prem Sharma, OBE, who provided both a stirring overview of the need to respond in a generous, supportive and progressive manner in order to genuinely alter post-Covid social behaviour for the better, an introduced the group to the mission of his Magna Carta foundation, dedicated to World Peace and Sustainability, of which he is Chairman. Dr Sharma was followed by [Professor Rongping Mu](#), from the Chinese Academy of Science presenting a helpful and focused analysis of 'Innovation-driven Development Performance'. The group then turned to the role and impact of **Politics**. [Emeritus Professor Emil J. Kirchner](#), Jean Monnet Chair, and Co-ordinator of the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence, University of Essex provided a clear-eyed appraisal of the potential and downsides of the *EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment*, and its ability to *alter the pattern of EU-China relations* in terms of improved trust or entrenched difficulties. Professor Kirchner was then followed by [Professor Zhang Yunling](#), Dean of Institute of International Studies, Shandong University, who outlined a number of regional, national, and cultural issues that both could equally facilitate cooperation, or provoke conflict, calling for patience during the phases of transition as well as improved scholarly collaboration in key geopolitical and geo-economic areas.

The group then turned to the eagerly-anticipated insights on **business**, starting with an encouraging series of outlooks propounded by [Professor Ji Bo](#), Chief Representative for Europe and Assistant Dean for Global Executive Education, Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business (CKGSB), in which he outlined both broad opportunities and key strategies by which key Chinese companies may consider key opportunities in the European marketplace, with innovation again the watchword of the session. [Professor Peter Williamson](#), from the University of Cambridge's Judge Business School brought the event to a neat conclusion by pithily deconstructing the range of recent views surrounding the 'on-shoring' of key supply chains, suggesting that Covid and post-Covid trends show very little by way of *de-Globalisation and decoupling*.

Professor Amelia Hadfield thanked all the speakers on behalf of the University of Surrey and her colleague Professor Yu Xiong, commenting on the "original and challenging insights provided by each of the speakers, and the need to look in detail at what these ideas mean in practice". Professor Hadfield suggested that the next step would be the post-event circulation of the recording of the event, alongside a working paper to which all participants could contribute, helping to capture workable policy suggestions and build towards future events.