



# THE 2010 SHANGHAI EXPO: CHINA BEYOND THE STEREOTYPES

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In 2009, China became home to the world's largest consumer car market for the first time, topping a league table the United States had led for decades. It was an item of news that obviously dominated the front pages around the world.

Nevertheless, this is precisely the type of news that hides more profound and far-reaching questions when it comes to approaching the immense, complex reality that is China. It stopped being an emerging country and economy some time ago and transformed itself into what is clearly a political and economic power of the first order in the new world in this, the twenty-first century. However, China is much more than this. It would be impossible to try to understand China if we only examined the economic dimension, its commercial power or the extent of its political influence. China is art, culture and tradition with all the strength resulting from inheriting and continuing a civilisation that spans millennia.

It is from this perspective, and with a desire to delve deeper that we wished to bring ourselves closer to China in this special issue coinciding with the 2010 Shanghai Expo. Beyond the

cultural, political and economic viewpoints, we wish to generate reflection, analysis and thought that evade dogma and outdated stereotypes.

The challenge for democracy and human rights is a common one, facing the whole of humanity. Inhuman practices like the death penalty have to disappear from the penal code of any nation that wishes to participate in world leadership or that wants to be a key player, whether they are the United States, Japan, Saudi Arabia or China. In the same way, every country needs to invest in and strengthen mechanisms of social participation that guarantee disagreement and dissidence. As I have said, this is a common challenge for the international community and it is unfair to highlight one particular area as the object of our concerns in order to hide and cover up fears that have little to do with the promotion of democratic values.

The Western world faces the challenge and obligation of moving closer to China with curiosity, respect and a genuine search for understanding and exchange. This is the same challenge and the same obligation that we should ask of China in its dealings with the rest of the world.