

**The 43rd New Buds Salon**  
**Thirty Years of Cooperation Between China and Israel**  
**and the Way Ahead**  
**November 24, 2022**

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Israel, the 43rd New Buds Salon invited the former Israeli Consul General at Shanghai, Dr. Eyal Propper, to give a lecture titled *30 Years of Cooperation between China and Israel, and the Way Ahead* on November 24. With his decades of diplomatic experience, Propper analyzed the history of diplomatic relations between China and Israel over the past 30 years and their future development. After the lecture, he exchanged ideas with the student audience. The lecture was moderated by Prof. Wang Yu and final remarks were given by Prof. Wang Suolao of Peking University.

Dr. Propper first shared his long experience of working in China over many years. He said he had first arrived in China with his family in 1992, and gained broad knowledge about Beijing; for example, he became familiar with Beijing's *hutong* and the Great Wall, which he visited many times, including once with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and President Shimon Peres.

He said that China and Israel had something in common: a very long history and a culture stretching back for centuries. Yet,

the connections between the Jewish people and Chinese people were not always as they are today. When Jewish migrants first came to China, they were few in number; however, they later formed very big communities in Harbin and in Shanghai, and this had a tremendous influence on China and the development of China, he said.

As Consul General in Shanghai, Dr. Propper was very impressed to see the importance and influence of the Jewish community in China starting from the middle of the 19th century. He thanked the Chinese people again for hosting thousands of Jews during the Second World War, and said he could still observe their traces when he went to the Hongkou district and to other places around Shanghai. Propper said that this was something between the people of Israel and China which would always be remembered. There was a kind of goodwill and very good faith between our peoples. The Israeli people had a very warm heart toward the Chinese people. When he traveled in China, when he spoke with the Chinese people and when he said that he was a Jew from Israel, people were very warm and very friendly. This friendship was something that we always take with us, he said.

Dr. Propper divided the 30 years of relations between Israel and China into three periods. The beginning period, in the 90s, was the time to understand each other, trying to build new channels, because previously, the two countries didn't have any

contact. That is when Propper came to the embassy and helped to build the first agreements between China and Israel. Very good formal and informal channels were built between the governments and between the people during the first ten years, he said.

Dr. Propper continued, saying that then there was the visit of President Isaac Herzog, in December 1992, and the visit of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, in May 1993. Propper accompanied Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in October 1993 when he met President Jiang Zemin. This was the first meeting of the Israeli prime minister and the Chinese president, and it led to more cooperation in many fields. The Israeli ambassador at that time told Propper that he still remembered that during the meeting between Prime Minister Rabin and the then Chinese president Jiang Zemin, Rabin asked the president, “Tell me, Mr. President, what do you want? What do you think that you need from Israel?” Jiang told Rabin that China wanted more cooperation in agriculture and to learn from Israel about its very advanced agricultural technology.

Following this meeting, the first demonstration agricultural farm was set up in 1994, south of Beijing. It was very successful. Many party secretaries from all the provinces, many leaders of China and, of course, many professionals visited the agricultural farm. They witnessed many ways to achieve a better result in agriculture. This was the beginning. Following this, Israel

helped to set up another agricultural demonstration farm, in Xinjiang, as well as a dairy farm in Beijing. That was because, at that time, there were not a lot of dairy products in China, Propper said.

Dr. Propper said that his biggest achievement was to arrange the Israeli Philharmonic concert in November 1994 at the Great Hall of the People, with the Israeli conductor Zubin Mehta and the Israeli violinist Itzhak Perlman. There was an audience of 10,000 people, and it was broadcast live on CCTV.

In 2000, there was a big crisis between China and Israel. The US was the strongest ally of Israel in bilateral terms, and also in the multilateral arena. In that year, the US rejected the selling of civilian aircraft by Israel to China, and it brought about a big crisis between Israel and China. Following this crisis, the two countries' relations became more mature. This was the beginning of the second period, Propper said.

The third period started in 2013, when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met President Xi Jinping. They agreed on cooperating in civil economy and civil trade and also in innovation. During the second visit of Netanyahu to China, in 2017, Israel and China agreed to have a comprehensive partnership on innovation. This symbolized the third part of our relations, Propper said.

To sum up the period of China and Israel's 30-year relationship, the first part was the first decade of the 90s, in

which the two countries explored and tried to understand each other better. The second was following the crisis of the 2000. And the third was during the last 10 years, in which they built a new method of civilian cooperation. In this period, the two countries understood the limits between them and learned in what fields they could have better cooperation. As the Israel's Consul General in Shanghai, Propper helped to facilitate cooperation in the environment, green energy and agriculture. Israeli companies now have joint projects with China in many provinces, and much better cooperation in agriculture. The two countries have learned how to work with each other better and understand the limits of their relationship due to the geopolitical situation — especially, in these years, when there is competition between China and the US, Propper said.

Dr. Propper said he very much appreciated and admired Peking University. He visited PKU for the first time in 1992 and observed the Hebrew language class there. At the beginning, there were nine students in this class, and the teacher was an Israeli. During his visit, he toured the Yanyuan campus, visited the gardens, and observed the students studying and speaking in Hebrew. On another occasion, he visited PKU together with Prime Minister Rabin. Rabin met the president of PKU and they visited the class, where the students spoke with him in Hebrew. One of the students of Hebrew was Professor Yang Yang, and he and Dr. Propper became good friends. Propper used to be in

charge of cultural and academic exchanges. One of the first students to come to China from Israel was Yuri Pines. He became a professor and was one of the most distinguished professors dealing with China in Israel, he said.

Dr. Propper said the two countries still had a lot to learn from each other and needed to understand better each other. There were not yet enough people-to-people exchanges. There have been many Chinese tourists visiting Israel, and many Israelis visiting China, but unfortunately, during the last three years since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no exchanges of tourists between the two countries. He said he hoped that sooner than later there would again have an exchange of tourists via direct flight between the countries. The two countries could have a lot of cooperation in education, in knowing better each other. Thirty years in Chinese time means nothing and was only the beginning, so the two countries still have a lot of ways to explore their relations, he concluded.

Prof. Wang Suolao commented on the speech. He said he remembered well the first period since the establishment of two countries' relations. He first visited Israel in 2002 as a visiting scholar at Hebrew University. During the third period, while he was in Shanghai, from 2017 to 2020, Prof. Wang Suolao visited Israel several times. China experienced great progress and development in the last three decades. During the same time, Israel also witnessed huge development, especially Israeli

diplomatic relations with surrounding countries, especially Arab and Muslim countries. Azerbaijan, a Shia Muslim country, opened its embassy in Israel three decades after the establishment of formal relations. Israel has clearly improved its relationship with other countries in the world and also in the region. And just as China has come very close to the center of the world power, Israel has also come very close to the center of power in the Middle East. There are a lot of things that China and Israel can do together. The China–Israel mutual relationship has already become very mature, he said.

When, in 2000, the Israeli government was forced to stop its deal with China on the Falcon system, Prime Minister Ehud Barak sent a letter to China, sincerely apologizing to China for the failure of the deal just because of the US. The competition between China and the US, as well as the competition between China and Israel and our mature relations, may mean something good or not so good. The most important thing is mutual respect for each other's interests and foreign relations. China highly respects Israel's unique relationship with the US. All the world knows that Israel cannot ignore the US, and the US cannot ignore Israel. As for China, all the world knows that China cannot ignore the Arab countries and also some other countries in the Middle East, such as Iran. That's because the two countries need to import a huge amount of energy, especially oil and gas. Therefore, China respects the US's relationship with

Israel, but, at the same time, other parties should also respect China's relationship with Iran or other countries in the region that are not a friend of Israel. In the last decade, the two countries' relationship has been quite good, no matter which leader there was in Israel, right-wing or left-wing. For China and Israel, the two countries have already made the commitment that the Israel–China relationship must not be influenced by other big powers, whether the US, Russia or any other countries. If the two countries all respect this rule, both can make further progress in the future, he said.

Dr. Propper emphasized that it was very important to understand the context. The two countries did not exist in a void, but rather existed in the context of geopolitical reality. This could affect the relations between the two countries. Israel understands that China does things for different reasons: for example, it makes decisions based on its energy needs, its economy and also the need to have many Arab countries, many Muslim countries, to be on the Chinese side. On these matters, the two countries have to respect each other. Regarding the existence of Israel, we need American support. The Chinese leaders know and understand and respect this. And the two countries should try to find the balance. Sometimes even it's a good way to achieve cooperation in a time of competition. Competition could be bad, but it could also be good, in that it



can bring all the parties to higher level of achievements, so long as this competition is not driving us to a war, Propper said.

Prof. Wang Yu posed a question. Earlier this month, there was the Knesset election in Israel, during which Netanyahu got the mandate to establish a new government in Israel. Wang asked Propper whether, as a professional diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he had felt any difference between the attitudes of different governments towards cooperation with China?

Dr. Propper answered concisely. He emphasized that his division of the 30 years of Israel–China relations into these three periods was not in regard to the different governments but rather to the circumstances. It was not the people nor the government, but the situation on the ground. He denied that there was a big difference between the different prime ministers because, as he said, we're talking about a very strategic relationship that is in the interest of both sides to manage well. Netanyahu was one who visited China twice. He came in 2013, two months after President Xi became president. And he came again in 2017. Netanyahu knows China and he knows the way to build good relations. He was the one to initiate this innovative cooperation, but he also knows very well the geopolitical situation, he said

Propper went on to mention a chapter in his book in which he talks about an issue called *China core interests*. China's core interests are something very important. And Israel understands

that each country has its own core interests. To have mutual respect, China should understand Israel's core interests. That's because the relationship between countries based on good interests. To have good cooperation and not harm each other's interests is something basic in international relations. The two countries should understand how to navigate their relationship. Israel should learn about and continue to play by China's core interests; likewise, China should learn about Israel better. This is something for both sides, as it is very important to build good relations between the two countries, he said

Prof. Fu Youde then posed a question about the relations between China and Israel. Are there limits to the relations between China and Israel because of the US? He wondered to what extent could the American government limit Israel to develop its relationship with China. A few days ago, President Xi and President Biden talked at the G-20 Summit on Bali. Fu asked Propper to comment on that. Also, how did he evaluate the direction of the relationship between China and Israel?

Propper began by recognizing Prof. Fu for his work in publishing books in Chinese about Israel and about Judaism. Propper said: "We have learned from mistakes and from the crisis and problems that we have had in the past, and this is very important. Because today, China is the second biggest economic partner of Israel. There are a lot of things that coming from China to Israel. Unfortunately, there is not enough exports from

Israel to China. This trade imbalance has continued in the last several years despite the tension between the US and China. This is important to understand because even though there has been a lot of tension between the US and China, the two countries do continue their cooperation in many fields. The trade between the US and China continues in many aspects.

“The readout from Bali regarding President Xi’s meeting with President Biden is that it was a very important meeting. They discussed many issues without the interference of having to wait for consecutive interpretation. They had headphones so they could speak openly for more than three hours, during which they spoke about a lot of issues of common concern and also a lot of differences. China and the US are the two superpowers today in the world. As a superpower, China also has its own responsibility. This is a Chinese interest and also its responsibility because China is so strong. The Middle East is a very delicate area. There are no quick solutions for the issues facing it. The problem between Israel and the Palestinians is very deep rooted. It needs time to solve it, just like the problem of Taiwan will not be solved in one week, and it will take time to see how a peaceful solution can be found. This is the same with the issue between Israel and the Palestinians. And in all this, there is the US, sometimes as mediator, sometimes as a country that very much influences this matter and China in their behavior, in their statements, in anything relating to the

relationship. All this should be balanced between the relations of countries, between the US and China and between China and Middle East countries, because, with many issues that relating to China and Middle East countries, Chinese people listen to scholars in China. It is very important to understand about the delicate situation. And it should be in a very balanced manner and with a step-by-step approach. There should be no rush to solutions. Israel wants to have peace in the Middle East, but we know how complicated it is. It is complicated within the country, and it's complicated in the neighborhood. For these reasons, there is no need to rush, and China needs to understand this", Propper said.

PhD student Zhang Xuan asked about the agricultural cooperation between the two countries. He asked Propper (1) Why he thought the agricultural cooperation between the two sides was not deep enough and should have more development? (2) What specific agricultural cooperation areas he thought could potentially develop more in the future? (3) Does he see any shortcomings in the present agricultural cooperation? (4) Would he elaborate on the ongoing process of the free trade agreements negotiation between Israel and China? And (5) Was this free trade negotiation proceeding during the past three years or influenced by the competition between China and the US?

Propper started with agriculture. After 1992, there was a lot of cooperation based on a Foreign Ministry expertise and

Moshav (the department for cooperation). There were a lot of courses in China in the field or in Israel. For thousands of Chinese experts, there were courses to learn about Israeli technology, while from the Israeli side, sometimes they didn't have enough matches between companies. For example, in water conservation, there was not enough cooperation. As for very specific cooperation between the governments, there was an agreement to take area in Shandong to have Israeli technology; however, because of different bureaucratic issues, it didn't succeed in the goal that Israeli companies would bring more of their technology and that China would buy more Israeli technology. In the 90s, Israel asked why China said that they needed this technology but they didn't buy more. Many Chinese and leaders told us that Israeli technology is the best but it's very expensive. Over the years and, especially, during the last ten years, price has not been a factor. There can be more cooperation that benefits both China and Israel. And China still has needs in many areas, such as a better system of drip irrigation, which is common in the desert in the south part of Israel. China is becoming more desertified in many areas, he said.

Regarding the Free Trade agreement, Propper mentioned that the Free Trade agreement didn't start three years ago—it was started in 2016. This is why each country didn't have too many free trade agreements. The situation has been dealt with

for six years already, but there is goodwill on both sides and an aspiration to have different kinds of agreement between the countries since the beginning, to build many kinds of agreements. This is another tool to have better cooperation. Economic trade is a professional discussion between the ministries of trade of China and of Israel. To be frank, COVID-19 stopped face-to-face meetings between the countries in many fields. There have been good areas of cooperation, such as civilian cooperation and civilian trade between China and Israel in specific areas, such as green energy, as Israel has a lot of technology and green energy. Agriculture and the environment is also an issue raised in the cooperation between the US and China, following the meeting between Biden and Xi. They spoke about the need to work together on environment, so this is something that the countries have to learn better between each other, Propper said.

Zhang Yezhou asked a question about the Nanjing Museum, which is a memorial to the victims of the massacre perpetrated by the Japanese army on the citizens of Nanjing, and the Yad Vashem Museum in Israel. He asked: "Considering the atrocities done by the Japanese army, it is pretty natural to compare those with what was done by the Nazis. Do you think the citizens of China and Israel share the same feelings and thoughts on the issue of the mourning and commemoration of those who suffered in misery?"

Dr. Propper mentioned his knowledge about Nanjing and his friendship with Nanjing University professor Xu Xin. In 2004, Professor Xu Xin and he published a brochure listing all the publications that were published in Hebrew and Chinese, which they dedicated to the UN. Sometimes countries are very much concerned with their own problems, which, in Israel, means people learn about the Jewish Holocaust. He expressed his hope that people would have more time to learn something much broader from it, but it is very important to understand each other. He mentioned people from Nanjing came to Yad Vashem many years ago to understand better in what way the Israelis have commemorated this issue in Israel. Israelis learn from the past and are determined that these kinds of atrocities should never happen again in the future. He said he hoped that the only competition between Japan and Germany would be on the football field in the World Cup, and not in any other field. He likewise said he hoped that China would be better in football just as Israel needs to do too, as Israel and China are not good enough in football. To take it very seriously, he said he hoped that this competition would be in football and not in any other battlefield. We all have to learn from the past, and strive to have a more peaceful situation, but sometimes this is not easy. There are extremists all over—whether among the Arabs, Palestinians, Israelis, Japanese or Chinese. The moderate forces should be much stronger in order to bring all sides to talk with each other,

and if there is any problem, there should be negotiation, and there should be compromises and solutions—on no account should the parties go to war! Most leaders today are living in a situation where they don't want to see another war between countries. He said he hoped that there would never again be a big war between countries. Not in Europe, not in the Middle East, and not in Asia. It is the responsibility of everybody not to have any kind of escalation and misunderstanding, where we find ourselves in a situation because of miscalculations and misunderstanding. This is the responsibility of the leadership and people such as diplomats and professional scholars. We all have to learn from the past in order to get a better future, he said.

Chen Guomeng, from Sichuan International Study University, asked about the public opinion toward China in Israel. His questions: “The *Jerusalem Post*, the famous English newspaper of Israel and of the Middle East, occasionally publishes negative articles on China. For instance, on August 9, it published an article titled “Time for Israel to pivot away from Beijing. Could you comment on that?”

Dr. Propper gave a frank answer. He said that Israel was established as a democracy, and its people have many different attitudes. Everybody is free to have his own opinion—this is very different from China. This is a fact and is part of the cultural heritage of the Israelis and Jewish people. He said many



articles have different opinions. Sometimes people wrote these articles without facts. He suggested China should look at facts, not in all these opinions of different writers that write different things about China, or, for that matter, about Israel. Look to the facts: What are the numbers of trade? What are the numbers of cooperative projects and in what fields are they, and so on. Look at the declarations of the country's leaders.

Dr. Propper also mentioned his new book, of which he was the editor along with 16 best experts in Israel writing about China and which was published by the biggest publishing house in Israel; the book was about China, about its demographic issues, religion, borders, and the core interests of China. The book was written to give the Israeli people more understanding about China, because sometimes people didn't know enough about China, he said.

At the end of the salon, Prof. Wang Yu made final remarks. She compared Propper's expression "mature relations" to the Chinese saying *sanshi er li* (三十而立), as a way of celebrating the 30th anniversary of the relationship between China and Israel. As she explained, in Chinese, *sanshi er li* literally means "one should establish himself at the age of 30". Now the relationship between Israel and China is at this very important age. After the ups and downs in these 30 years, overall, China and Israel have developed very good relations and carried out many fruitful cooperative projects and achieved mature

beneficial goals, she said. Finally, she expressed her belief that China and Israel would continue to cooperate and increase mutual understanding for a better world.

**The 44th New Buds Salon**  
**The Anatomy of ‘The People’ in the Context of**  
**Contemporary European and American Populism**  
**December 8, 2022**

The 44th New Buds Salon invited Prof. Andrew Vincent at Cardiff University’s School of Law and Politics to give a lecture titled “The Anatomy of ‘The People’ in the Context of Contemporary European and American Populism” on December 8.

The talk was spearheaded by Prof. Duan Demin from Peking University and Prof. Howard Williams from Cardiff University as the first of a collaborative online lecture series hosted by Cardiff’s Centre for Political Theory and PKU’s Institute of Area Studies in the fields of political theory and area studies. Prof. Vincent, former dean of the Institute of European Studies at Cardiff University, is a renowned political scientist specializing in European studies and the history of political thought, and so was the perfect first speaker of the initiative’s line-up. The panel consisted of the hosts, Prof. Duan and Prof. Williams; the main speaker, Prof. Vincent; and the Q&A respondent, Luis Cordeiro Rodrigues, a professor of philosophy at Hunan University.

Prof. Vincent began by giving a comprehensive outline of his paper, “The Anatomy of the People,” and contextualizing

its conception. The piece was originally written and presented in 2018 for a conference in Lyon themed on the concept of community. The framework and theme of this conference pushed Prof. Vincent to think about the concept of “the people” in the language and context of collective identities and groups. First, Prof. Vincent began by taking three group-oriented binaries and using these as analytical models for understanding the concept of “the people” through different lenses. Second, he offered another approach to understanding “the people” by tracing the term’s origin and conceptual history. Last, Prof. Vincent discussed his third and final angle of considering “the people” via political concepts and terms that often are explicit or implicit vehicles for understanding “the people.”

### **Part One: Binaries for Understanding ‘The People’**

Prof. Vincent presented three binaries for understanding “the people”: aggregative vs. self-collecting groups, organic vs. artificial groups, and normative vs. empirical groups. From the beginning, these oppositions of understanding group identity are meant to create a broad framework for conceptualizing the vastness and messiness of “the people” rather than giving a false impression that this concept is something one can pinpoint down to an exact definition.

Beginning with aggregative vs. self-collecting groups, Prof. Vincent defined aggregative groups (also known as groups of association) as a group that collects together for an external

reason. Members of this group intentionally enter and leave the group as they please. In this sense, Prof. Vincent argues that the interests of the individuals within the group and the group itself are independent of each other. On the other hand, self-collecting groups are not reducible to the individual interests or reasons of people within the group. Therefore when “the group” acts, it is qualitatively different from the aggregation of the individual members acting together and takes on a metaphysical status of its own. In this way, the group and its identity, purpose, and will take precedence over the individuals and their personal wishes within the group. The debate of viewing groups as aggregative vs. self-collecting can be seen in discussions on “group rights” in which thinkers such as the Canadian political philosopher, William Kymlicka, have engaged. In such debates, Kymlicka takes more of an aggregative approach, arguing that group rights derive from and adhere to a normative understanding of justice by the individuals within that aggregate when rights are claimed; this contrasts with a self-collecting understanding of group rights in which rights hang upon the group itself and come prior to the individuals who compose the group and their thoughts.

Moving to the second binary of organic vs. artificial groups, Prof. Vincent explores to what extent people’s participation in groups is natural or contrived by imposed social structures for a particular purpose. On a daily level, we often hold opposing definitions within common terminologies, such as

community and civil society, an understanding popularized by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in his work *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Community (or *gemeinschaft*) is a grouping based on feelings of solidarity, affinity, and love, which is implied to be natural. Meanwhile, society (or *gesellschaft*) is a grouping based on association or aggregation, often arising out of situational necessity. Classic examples of these contrasting natures of group formation are a family as opposed to a company of workers or passengers on a bus. Other parallel comparisons of group formation motivation include German legal scholar Otto von Gierke's *genossenschaft* vs. *herrschaft*, French sociologist Émile Durkheim's organic solidarity vs. mechanical solidarity, and American political theorist Iris Marion Young's involuntary (*geworfenheit* or "thrownness") groups vs. voluntary groups.

The final binary discussed by Prof. Vincent investigates the existence of groups in a normative vs. empirical sense. On the normative side, this theory claims that groups are not about ontology, metaphysics, affinities, or anything of this sort; instead, they are only about achieving justice. In other words, this means the group contains an identity that people choose to adopt, and the members agree upon the purpose. On the other side, the empirical view of groups echoes the organic understanding that groups are commonplace, natural, and an observed occurrence; in other words, they are not a choice but a part of human

existence. The empirical view of groups also encompasses the Darwinist and Social Darwinist understanding of groups as having an organic natural scientific status.

Having introduced these three binaries about group formation, Prof. Vincent pointed to where “the people” fit into these understandings. To use the terminology just introduced, most examples of “the people” in recent scholarship think of “the people” as a self-collecting, organic, and empirical group. This is not to say that other notions of “the people” do not exist; however, the current trend leans toward these aspects of the binaries.

## **Part Two: Conceptual History of ‘The People’**

Moving on to another method for understanding the concept of “the people,” in his paper Prof. Vincent uses history as a guide for the changing definition of who the people are (and are not) in various circumstances and understandings. Interestingly, Prof. Vincent noted how the standalone concept of “the people” did not appear much in political thought writing for a considerable time (albeit mentioned in conjuncture with more frequently discussed terms, such as justice, equality, liberty, and democracy). However, this does not represent the long-standing existence and genealogy of the concept of “the people”, which Prof. Vincent dates to Roman thought.

*Populus*, or “the people” in Latin, dates to Roman Republican thought (pre-Roman Empire) and was defined as

male citizens (plebeians) who had a limited degree of power to authorize laws via bodies such as a senate or council. This conception of “the people” explicitly excluded women, slaves, guest workers, and barbarians. This definition of “the people” was carried forward into the Roman Empire and expanded into identities such as *populus Romanus* (a legalized status version of the *populus*) and *res publica Christiana* (a Christianized non-regional version of “the people”). These transitions also extended into the embodiments of the people and their power through concepts such as *lex regia* (the idea of the necessity of popular authorization of rule, e.g., the power of the Roman emperor being derived through the will of the people). Although the concept and definition of “the people” date back to this time, Prof. Vincent contends that the *populus* lacked objective power and influence until later.

Two other methods of understanding “the people” develop slightly later but take their origins in these historical Roman conceptions. The first of the two is a more universalized take on the *res publica Christiana* view of the “the people.” In this admittedly areligious understanding, “the people” are almost synonymous with “human beings.” This is the broadest sense in which the term “the people” can be used. The second understanding takes this more universalized notion of “the people” and takes it one step further by identifying it as a legal, jural, corporate entity.



Another meaning of “the people” in Western thought develops around the 16th-century wars of religion in Europe. Emerging from these conflicts was the doctrine of resistance theory in which the people had the right to resist centralized authority when appropriate, thereby acting as a “standby” authority when necessary. In this way, the actualization of the power of the executive as conditional upon the power of the people could be seen. This was even argued as far as being justification for tyrannicide (should the ruler be wrong or impious) by thinkers, such as the Jesuit priest Juan de Mariana in his work “*De rege et regis institutione*.” During this period, both the notional and actual power of “the people” was clarified. Furthermore, upon conflict resolutions, such as the Treaty of Westphalia, Prof. Vincent remarked that the development of “the people” as a term for a bounded territorial entity of citizens solidified. The origins of this view of “the people” and modern states resonates back to the previously discussed Roman Republic definition and has been carried forward as a critical term in the discipline.

Thus, Prof. Vincent identified a subsequent significant development of the concept of “the people” (as we currently know it) as the actualization of the people’s power through events such as the English Civil War (1642–51), the Glorious Revolution (1688–89), the American Revolution (1775–83), or the French Revolution (1789–99). As can be seen in writings

developed in and around these events, the definition of “the people” expanded to both an encompassing view of the individuals within a territorial state but also a universal understanding of humanity at large. Such expanded definitions of “the people” can be seen in publications such as the *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen de 1789*. In this process of defining and re-defining “the people”, European and American Western thought simultaneously expanded the power and influence of the “the people,” not just an existing group or a “standby” background authority, but as a substantial, legitimate, and authorizing source of power in and of itself.

This presents itself in the rise of parliamentary, republican, and democratic governance via these wars and revolutions. These forms of representation claim that it is the assembly itself that embodies “the people.” However, this becomes a contested assertion, particularly by the later idea of “the common people” (or the proletariat) as the “true” version of “the people” instead of the bourgeoisie or peasantry. In reaction, another more negative terminology of “the people” arose from those who disagreed with the politics of the prior; by labeling the working people as “the rabble, the mob, or the masses,” conservative thinkers implied that though the people existed, they should not be trusted as an authority.

Lastly, the final stage of developing the concept of “the people” within representative government discourse has been

the transfer of the term onto an electorate. This is to say, “the people” are those who vote. However, this concept has been quite elastic and had internal development over time, as the definition of who met the criteria for the electorate changed and the specific method of the election system varied.

In summarizing the many versions, histories, and usages of “the people” presented, Prof. Vincent expressed his sympathies for the hypothetical student of this concept as it comes with a considerable amount of complicated intellectual baggage. Therefore, it is difficult to conceptualize what is happening or being referred to when “the people” is used in general discourse. Subsequently, Prof. Vincent moved on to discuss the final section of his paper and lecture: contextual understandings of “the people” in the present-day popular discussion.

### **Part Three: Common Vehicles of the Concept of ‘The People’**

It is here that Prof. Vincent pointed to three other concepts that continue to carry the discussion of “the people” and its complication forward in contemporary discourse: sovereignty, democracy, and the nation.

To begin with sovereignty, Prof. Vincent reminded us that sovereignty comes in many forms; thus, its relationship with “the people” is also multifold. You do not see a clear connection between “the people” and sovereignty until the French

Revolution. For instance, one linkage that emerged was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's definition of sovereignty, which identified "rule" with the unified decisions of a body of citizens through assemblies and such. Therefore, the total people constitute the position of the sovereign, and "the people" and "the sovereign" are linked by the legitimating *volonté générale*. Contrastingly, thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes believed that the identity of "the people" relies on the sovereign. Here, the people (as individuals) exist prior to the creation of a sovereign, however, "the people" as an identity is only made possible by the existence of a sovereign person or body. In this conception, "the people" is even more mysterious and can only take form through the existence of a sovereign. The third concept of sovereignty that Prof. Vincent pointed out is a blend of the previous two components. Pointing to the ideas of French clergyman Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, this conception of sovereignty presents the view that the people have a constituent power but this power is only taken up when transferred into a representative body. This theory attempts to meld the ideas of Rousseau and Hobbes into a singular theory on the origins of sovereignty.

The second typical vehicle for discussions of the identity of "the people" is through the idea of democracy. Democracy in its many forms (participatory, representative, pluralist, elitist, etc.) all interact with the concept of "the people" in different

ways and amounts. The most well-known form of democracy is representative; however, in the popular discourse, we wrongly equivocate representative democracy as a device that embodies or acknowledges “the people.” Prof. Vincent pointed out that representative democracy is a mediated or controlled form of “the people” and their desires via a determined body, such as a parliament or congress. Founding thinkers of representative democracy, such as James Madison and Emmanuel Sieyès, wanted representative democracy to create a mediated form of “the people” as they feared dealing with what they considered to be the unruly and expansive identity and will of “the people”, which was unpredictable and unpalatable. Thus, this original perspective on “the people” and democracy was against the Rousseauian approach that sovereignty should be the responsibility of the people and prefers the representative format to mediate the excesses and dangers of “the people.” This debate has been echoed multiple times, for example, between Austrian legal and political philosopher Hans Kelsen and Nazi German jurist Carl Schmitt. Overall, Prof. Vincent concluded that the relationship between “the people” and democracy could be understood in two ways. The first is through a representative democracy, in which one must be content with democracy not fully encompassing the identity, desires, and concept of “the people” in exchange for its ability to provide realistic and practical mediation. The second is through popular democracy,

which would be considered emancipatory and a direct and complete representation of “the people” in all forms; however, it has the tradeoff of what conservative theorists would consider “apocalyptic” — that is, unruly scenarios, such as frequent revolution or the “politics of transfiguration.”

Finally, the nation and nationalism are the third medium through which discussions about “the people” frequently appear. Prof. Vincent first clarified that although people make this association, he disagrees with considering these terms synonymous. Prof. Vincent also remarked that there tends to be a common rhetorical association of the nation with popular sovereignty, which he argued ultimately blurs the distinctions between these two concepts and “the people.” In his understanding, the will of “the people” of a nation can be transformed into nationalism by evoking emotive unity through shared territorial identity. However, in this process, the popular will of a nation (i.e., nationalism) is an unwieldy vessel that can be dangerous when applied to extreme populist movements and often is altered so heavily that it becomes unrecognizable and unrepresentative of the populace. Therefore, Prof. Vincent concluded his view that the nation and nationalism are a superficial expression of “the people” and are not useful for grasping the concept on a deeper level because there are often underlying motives unrelated to the identity of “the people” at large.

In his final remarks, Prof. Vincent remarked to the listeners that despite the title of his paper, “The Anatomy of The People,” he has not offered a comprehensive framework or anatomy for understanding the complexities of “the people” in its various forms. If anything, he notes that the vagueness and incoherence in how “the people” are identified or deployed is the distinguishing feature of this quasi-amorphous term. Prof. Vincent’s concluding comment on “groups,” including “the people,” is that it may be better to regard them as fictions. This is not to say that these fictions are not inevitable, necessary, or helpful. Yet we should not lose sight of the fact that these are human, rational, conceptual constructions, and therefore should be skeptical of understandings of groups and of individualism that blindly ascribe and tolerate excess power self-assigned to the entity as such, and “the idea that underlying all the untidiness, messiness, and multiple differences of human beings and their differences in everyday life, there somehow lies a ‘real people’ or ‘real authority’ who speak with one stentorian voice.”

Following Prof. Vincent’s lecture was an engaging commentary and discussion by Prof. Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues of Hunan University. Prof. Cordeiro-Rodrigues began by offering three comments that prompted the discussion and posed some conceptual clarifications. The first of these remarks was that the concept of “the people” in historical and present-day practice ends up being inevitably exclusionary. Therefore, when linked to

concepts such as sovereignty, the nation, and democracy, Prof. Cordeiro-Rodrigues wondered whether populist movements are inevitable to this structure of governance we have set up and, secondly, whether these so-called populist movements represent the full view of “the people”, considering the exclusionary nature of the term when defined. Prof. Cordeiro-Rodrigues’s second remark linked “The Anatomy of the People” to other papers and work from Prof. Vincent, particularly his writings on unpatriotic patriotism. In his reflections, Cordeiro-Rodrigues wondered whether and how Prof. Vincent would link in the concept of “the people,” either within his discussion or in contrast. Lastly, bringing in his personal identity as being of Portuguese origin, Cordeiro-Rodrigues remarked on the rise of a far-right populist party in Portuguese politics, the Chega. This party, in its messaging, claims to represent the “good Portuguese” as compared to “the others”; however, their beliefs do not include nor are they supported by all Portuguese people (Chega is anti-Roma people and anti-left). Therefore, Cordeiro-Rodrigues wondered whether parties as such could truthfully claim to use the concept of “the people.”

Some further questions and critiques by Prof. Cordeiro-Rodrigues, then answered by Prof. Vincent, were as follows. The first was a discussion clarifying whether William Kymlicka’s thoughts on group rights of minorities could be considered pre-ontological. Prof. Vincent explained that



Kymlicka indeed accepts the social ontology of these groups. But rather than discussing the origins of that ontology, he takes the group's existence as a given basis for his arguments for group-specific rights and justice claims. In fact, in this way, Kymlicka is critical of the more theoretical discussion of the ontology of groups as such. Secondly, the two professors engaged in a debate on whether there exists a distinction between artifice and fiction with regard to moral standing. Prof. Vincent clarified that, depending on the scenario, artifice and fiction can have an assigned moral characteristic either within the concept itself or when regarded in contextual conditions. He gave the example of two takes on the usages of multiculturalism. Some view multiculturalism as a practical device within society to achieve the desired wishes of those within that group; this would be considered less morally associated. Others view multiculturalism as having a strong normative character, morally representing the views and identities of the individuals and the group. Therefore, he concluded that these binaries are not meant to be ultimate and discreet definitions but are only options — or rather guides — to approaching these questions. Finally, the two professors ended in a brief discussion about whether and how social platforms and new technologies have blurred the distinctness of “the people” (when trying to define it in a particular way) and created a more common culture of “the people”. Prof. Vincent acknowledged this question as an

important one that has arisen in the current discussion, with new terms emerging, such as “e-populism”; however, it still remains to be seen what will be the results of these developments.

The lecture’s conclusion reached the present-day applications of understanding “the people” in the context of American and European populism. Based on this encompassing analysis of “the people,” Prof. Vincent and many others see populism as a “permanent shadow” of democracy. This is to say that democracy in its current form cannot be entirely satisfactory of all definitions and wishes of “the people”; therefore, populist movements arise to claim their goals. However, of late, the professor remarked that populist movements have leaned toward embodying themselves in extreme right-wing politics, potentially in response to the predominantly liberal order of the 20th and 21st centuries. In conclusion, “the people” remains a mysterious concept. However, through extensive engagement with various forms and examples, one can continually chip away at our rough understanding of “the people” to slowly reveal more clarity.