

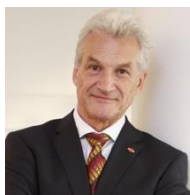


NEWSPEAK AND NEWTHINK: China's "Rejuvenation" of Its Memory

29 September 2026 | Venue: KOL-G-221 | Time: 18:15 - 19:30 | 19:30: Apéro riche

Commemorative events, monuments, museums, and other forms of remembrance play a more significant role in international politics than may be apparent at first glance. States and governments draw on interpretations of the past and its defining moments to explain and legitimise political choices—through historical narratives and appeals to collective memory, and, not infrequently, to justify the use of military force. This dynamic, situated at the intersection of political authority, public discourse, and collective memory, is particularly evident in the People's Republic of China, where both traditional and modern narratives and myths frequently serve to legitimise the actions of the Party and the government. Calls upon citizens to contribute to national "rejuvenation," for instance, are embedded in historically constructed narratives promoted by the political leadership. In recent years, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has thus developed a distinctive politics of memory that shapes the language and actions of the Chinese state in both domestic and foreign policy. It also informs decisions concerning China's relations with Western states, making an understanding of its origins, development, and political functions all the more important.

About the speaker



Dr. Volker Stanzel received his doctorate in 1982 in Japanese Studies, Chinese Studies, and Political Science from the University of Cologne, following studies in Frankfurt and Kyoto. He served in the German Foreign Service from 1979 to 2013. His positions included Commissioner for Asia-Pacific Policy at the Federal Foreign Office (2001–02), Director-General for Political Affairs (2002–04), German Ambassador to China (2004–07), Political Director of the Federal Foreign Office (2007–09), and German Ambassador to Japan (2009–13).

In 2014, he was Visiting Professor at Claremont McKenna College in California and at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He subsequently held visiting professorships at Freie Universität Berlin (2015), Dokkyo University in Saitama (2016), and the Hertie School of Governance (2017–23). Since 2015, he has been a Senior Distinguished Fellow and member of the Executive Board of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in Berlin. Since 2017, he has served on the board of the Academic Confucius Institute at the University of Göttingen, and since 2018 on the board of the German-Japanese Business Association. From 2018 to 2026, he served as President of the Association of German-Japanese Societies.

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