

Understanding China

An Interview with Anla Cheng,
 Founder and Chief Executive Officer, SupChina

EDITORS' NOTE *Anla Cheng has been a Partner at Centenium Capital and Sino-Century, a China hedge fund and cross-border private-equity firm, and has decades of experience in the U.S. and major Asian financial markets. She is a trustee of the boards of the China Institute, Committee of 100, The Nature Conservancy and Facing History. Cheng is also a member of the China Council of Brookings, Columbia China Global Council and National Committee on United States-China Relations. Cheng received her M.B.A. from Wharton Graduate School of Business and graduated magna cum laude from the Pratt Institute.*



Anla Cheng

COMPANY BRIEF *SupChina (supchina.com) is an independent digital media and events platform that informs and entertains a global audience of influencers and leaders with smart, accessible content, helping them make sense of a complex country that is reshaping the world. SupChina is divided into three principal components: a daily newsletter that keeps readers up to speed on China's most important business, political and cultural news; an ever-expanding podcast network anchored by the award-winning Sinica Podcast, the crown jewel of English-language China podcasts; and a website with the day's news along with original content, original reporting and deeper analysis which are also available on its app and all social media channels. Some recurring weekly features include a sports column, a music and movie feature and a monthly quiz. SupChina currently hosts two large-scale annual events: NEXT CHINA and SupChina's Women's Conference.*

Will you discuss your vision for creating SupChina?

Most children in the U.S. get very little time to learn about China in their history classes. When students graduate from high school, their knowledge on China is minimal.

However, because many of the main media companies, such as Bloomberg, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist* are banned in China, what is being written on China tends to be skewed and is not providing the 360 view that Americans should have of China.

Now, with China's engagement on the Belt and Road initiative, which involves 69 countries and \$1.3 trillion, many countries are writing a great deal about China, but much of this is still not disseminated to Americans.

The view of most Americans is that China is a "communist" country, but they don't realize it is also very capitalistic – in many ways even more so than the U.S. because of its regulations and the ease of doing business there in specific sectors.

It's my way to bridge the knowledge gap and inform and educate those who want to learn about China.

What platforms are you using to accomplish this goal?

We have a newsletter, videos and seven different podcasts available via an app and on our website covering politics, business and culture. The website is geared more towards millennials and the newsletter is geared more for the business and academic community and Fortune 500 companies. We are on several social media platforms from Twitter to Facebook to WeChat.

We have the largest number of podcasts under the umbrella of our award-winning Sinica Podcast Network. The seven podcasts on China include a number of topics including politics, business, economics, tech, culture and women's issues.

We have from 100,000 to 150,000 listeners per month. The newsletters and videos on our sites, in total, are accessed by about four million visitors per month.

How many events does SupChina host?

We host over 30 events per year, two of which are signature events. The two large events are called Women in China conferences which highlight women who are making a difference. We also host the Next China Conference with over 50 speakers and 500 attendees.

You mentioned earlier about China as a capitalist environment. Will you discuss this transformation, which many outside of China and in the West might not realize is taking place?

The word "communist" is something that causes Americans to shudder but, within China, it means a group of people who believe in socialist capitalism and who believe in a community that allows communism and capitalism

to thrive side by side. Today's Chinese communism means making prosperity more available to everyone.

When I say China is more capitalist than the U.S., there are two sides to that: the Chinese have made it very easy for entrepreneurs to start businesses, especially in technology and in science. China lost 50 years of economic growth due to Mao, who ordered people to make steel in their back yards, which caused peasants to melt pots instead. China doesn't want to miss out on the next technological revolution, so they have invested heavily at the government and corporate level.

The U.S. may argue that this is not a level playing field because the Chinese give start-ups interest-free loans, free rent and professional assistance to help them get started.

There has been a huge growth of venture capital, and there were almost 100 unicorns that went through IPOs in China last year.

This is probably the largest concerted effort ever undertaken by one country to develop a whole industry in science and technology. China has ten times as many STEM graduates each year than the U.S. and applies for twice as many patents. It has been phenomenal.

With issues such as trade impacting China/U.S. relations today, how critical is it that this relationship remains strong and grows in a positive way?

The U.S. and China need to resolve their trade disagreements and, hopefully, learn to agree to disagree. Once we get to that point, these two strong countries have the resources to come together to solve our most pressing global issues. The U.S./China relationship is one of the most important in the world, which is why we launched SupChina to help people on both sides to understand each other.

Some may hold the view that Trump might not be the President the U.S. deserves and some say Trump is the perfect President for China because he provided a wake-up moment. It is true that China sometimes took unfair advantage of their entry into the WTO.

The U.S. hoped that growth in trade would lead to China becoming a democratic country. Now that this appears less likely, the U.S. is taking a much harder stance on trade.

Should the U.S. and China agree to disagree, we can look to renewed prosperity, which benefits both sides. ●