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Pursuing Common Values of Humanity

China's Approach to Democracy, Freedom
and Human Rights



DECEMBER 2021

Countries vary in history, culture, system and economic development level, but peoples of all countries uphold the shared human values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom.¹

Peace and development are our common cause, equity and justice our common aspiration, and democracy and freedom our common pursuit.²

— Xi Jinping

¹ Keynote speech delivered by Xi Jinping at the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties Summit. July 6, 2021.

² Speech delivered by Xi Jinping at a conference marking the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the lawful seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. Oct. 25, 2021.

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Introduction

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China-- the world's most populous country and home to 56 ethnic groups-- the Communist Party of China (CPC) has led the Chinese people in creating miracles in the achievement of rapid economic growth and long-term social stability. To understand these miracles, one needs to gain a deep understanding of the economic logic behind China's policy of reform and opening-up, and the political logic behind modern China's exploration of the practice of democracy and the protection of freedom and human rights in the pursuit of the common values of humanity.

There is widespread familiarity with the Western notion of democracy characterized by competitive elections between multiple parties and the separation of three powers -- executive, legislative, and judicial -- to define whether or not a country is democratic. But such methods cannot explain how China has managed to produce its two miracles for the benefit of its vast population.

The Chinese people have come to the conclusion based on

experience that there is only one criterion for democratic governance: that ordinary people enjoy the dividends of peace and development and live peaceful and happy lives. The essence of modern state governance is democratic governance. Well-functioning democracy can guarantee and develop freedom and human rights.

The word "democracy," which first appeared in ancient Greece, originally meant "rule by the people." In China, "the running of the country by the people" has become a reality that is increasingly vivid and vigorous.

The Western-centric yardstick of democracy should not be the only criterion of judging good or bad governance.

Based on its own reality, China is exploring a path of inheritance and innovation in realizing democratic values and is pursuing a "substantial democracy" in which the people are the masters of the country. The democracy China practices is a "whole-process democracy" that covers all aspects and all procedures, a "governance democracy" for good governance, an "efficient democracy" with vitality, a "democracy as a driving force" with collective wisdom, and a testable "systematic democracy." All in all, it is the broadest, most genuine and most effective socialist

democracy.

China has achieved remarkable results in implementing "the running of the country by the people." The success of China's democracy can be attributed to three leading features of its approach to governance: an advanced non-partisan party, people-centered philosophy, and development-focused worldview.

China is a faithful practitioner and innovator in the practice of the concepts of democracy, freedom and human rights. Although its journey is not yet complete, China's exploration has established important principles for the realization of common values of humanity:

-- Result-oriented: The effectiveness of democracy must be tested and perfected by solving the practical problems of the vast majority of people.

-- Self-determining: The path of democracy, freedom and human rights must be chosen based on national conditions, and so-called democratic transformations imposed from the outside will cause endless harm.

-- Steady-paced: To promote democracy, safeguard freedom and protect human rights, a country needs to proceed in a gradual

and orderly fashion, rather than rapidly shift beyond its current stage of social development.

-- Ever-progressing: The pursuit of democracy, freedom and human rights never ends. A country should always strive for better.

With "the running of the country by the people" as its essence and characterized by a "whole-process people's democracy," China's democratic governance is constantly improving. Its criteria are whether this governance conforms to national conditions, whether it is effective, and whether it wins the support of the people. The freedom, rights and well-being of the people are also constantly increasing. Socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics has demonstrated a new form of political civilization.

Chapter I

The Running of the Country by the People: The Overarching Logic of Pursuing the Value of Democracy

"Socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics is a new thing, and a good thing."¹

— Xi Jinping

¹ Speech delivered by Xi Jinping at a conference marking the 60th anniversary of the National People's Congress, Sept. 5, 2014.

How would Alexis de Tocqueville, famous for writing "Democracy in America" nearly 200 years ago, observe and reflect on the story of China today?

With a population of more than 1.4 billion, the country has eliminated absolute poverty and is forging ahead toward the goal of common prosperity for all.

It has the world's largest social security system, with basic health insurance and basic old-age insurance covering almost every Chinese.

It is the second-largest economy and the largest trader in goods in the world, contributing over 30 percent to the global economic growth every year.

Its new-energy vehicles, accounting for half of the world's total, run on the world's longest expressways.

It has the longest high-speed railway system and the most convenient express-delivery network in the world.

It has more than 1 billion netizens continuously publishing and sharing information online. It has the world's largest number of college graduates annually.

Each day, it witnesses the creation of 16,000 new enterprises

and more than 120 new foreign enterprises entering the world's largest consumer market and largest investment destination.

It sees about 100 million Chinese travel abroad every year, visiting all parts of the world and returning safely.¹

Across its more than 9.6 million square kilometers of land, 4.864 million primary-level branches of the CPC and more than 95 million CPC members actively perform their duties.²

A country cannot remain stable without a sound system, and a strong system contributes to a powerful country. Through China's achievements in governance featuring security, stability, growth and development in the long term, we can draw the conclusion that a vigorous democracy -- socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics -- has become a reality benefiting more than 1.4 billion people. This democratic path conforms to the logic of history, theory, practice and value, adheres to the common values of humanity, and has achieved innovative development based on China's conditions.

¹ Some of the data above are taken from the speech delivered by Chinese Ambassador to the United States Qin Gang in a conversation jointly held by the Carter Center and the George H.W. Bush Foundation for U.S.-China Relations, official website of Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, September. 22, 2021.

http://www.china-embassy.org/dshd/202109/t20210923_9594567.htm

² Statistical Bulletin of the Communist Party of China, Xinhuanet, June 30, 2021.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-06/30/c_1127611673.htm

1.1 Logic of History: The People's Choice

The democratic path, which ensures that the country is run by the people, is chosen by the Chinese people historically.

-- The Road to Democracy

In 2021, a hit TV series "The Age of Awakening" brought the Chinese back to a historical scene over a hundred years ago: Faced with the tragic reality of a country enduring incessant foreign invasions and its people leading a life of extreme destitution, advanced Chinese intellectuals launched the New Culture Movement and called for saving China with democracy and science, thus leading to the founding of the CPC in 1921. This party, which struggled for the toiling masses, held high the banner of democracy and led the people to establish the People's Republic of China in 1949, which marked the victory of the New Democratic Revolution, and the country's great transformation from a millennia-old feudal autocracy to a people's democracy.¹

The facts above reveal the democratic path chosen by the Party

¹ The Resolution On Major Achievements And Historical Experience of the Party Over The Past Century, adopted at the sixth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee.

and the Chinese people: The Party led the Chinese to found the People's Republic of China, ensured the position of the people as masters of the country and launched the country's process of modernization.

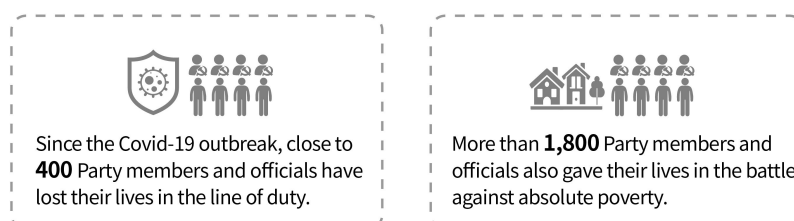
To understand this model, we must first understand the CPC. It is a "mission-driven political party," whose original aspiration and mission is to seek happiness for the people and rejuvenation for the nation. It is a "people's party," which is born for the people and successful because of the people. In leading and relying on the people to advance the revolution and found New China, it has become the vanguard and leading core trusted by the people.

A hundred years ago, the Communist Party of China was founded, with the goal of making the country stronger and people richer as well as seeking happiness for the people and rejuvenation for the nation. Over the past 100 years, the original aspiration and the mission of the CPC has never changed.

In the past eight years, the Party has led the people to win the fight against poverty, with nearly 100 million people living in rural areas lifted out of absolute poverty. To achieve this arduous task, China sent 255,000 work teams to the villages, more than 3

million Party first secretaries and village-stationed officials fought on the battlefield of poverty, and more than 1,800 of those officials sacrificed their lives in the line of duty.¹

CPC Members Devoted to Fight Against COVID-19 and Poverty



Source: The CPC: Its Mission and Contributions

The legitimacy of the CPC is derived from history and is determined by people's hearts and minds. It is the choice of the people. The Party knows better than any other that gaining this position does not mean that it can henceforth rest on its laurels. Therefore, it repeatedly admonishes all members that maintaining close ties with the people is the Party's "biggest advantage," and distance from the people the "biggest danger."

-- Avoiding History's Cycle

¹ Statistics are from the speech at the National Conference to Review the Fight Against Poverty and Commend Individuals and Groups Involved delivered by Xi Jinping, February 25, 2021.

Chinese history has witnessed the sudden rise and fall of past dynasties.¹ In 1945, Mao Zedong replied to visiting democratic personages in a cave home in Yan'an: We have found a new path, and we can break free from this cycle and the new path is democracy.²

The key question is, what kind of democracy? Regarding the choice of political systems, modern China has tried various models such as constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary system, a multi-party system, and a presidential government, but they all ended in failure. In September 1949, when the birth of New China was in sight, the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference reached a consensus on the political system of the new country, that is, making the National People's Congress the highest organ of state power. When the National People's Congress is not in session, the Central People's Government is the highest organ exercising state power. Governments at all levels should adopt the system of democratic centralism.³ In 1954, the First Session of the First

¹ From "Chronicle of Zuo", a commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals, a chronicle ascribed to Confucius.

² Building the Cornerstone of Democracy for National Rejuvenation -A Review of China's Whole-process Democracy Developed by the Communist Party of China Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the Core, Xinhuanet, October 12, 2021.

http://www.news.cn/2021-10/12/c_1127948849.htm

³ A Brief History of the People's Republic of China, published by People's Publishing House, Contemporary China Publishing House, 2021, page 6.

National People's Congress (NPC) of New China was convened, which adopted the country's first Constitution, and established China's system for governance, with a system of people's congresses as the fundamental political system.

"The system of people's congresses ensures that all power in the country belongs to the people; ensures that the country is run by the people to the fullest extent; upholds the unity of Party leadership, the running of the country by the people, and law-based governance; effectively guarantees that our national governance can avoid the cycles of history," said Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2021 when reviewing the 67-year history of people's congresses.¹

Column: China's people's congresses

The Chinese Constitution stipulates that all power in the country belongs to the people. The people not only have the right to vote but also have the right to widely participate in governance according to the law. In China, the NPC and local people's congresses at various levels are the organs through which the people exercise state power, with the NPC being the supreme body of state power. China's NPC is also a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world's most influential parliamentary organization.

At the same time, China's people's congresses are also very different from the parliaments of Western countries. For example, unlike Western parliaments, there is no parliamentary party group in the people's congresses, and seats in the people's congresses are not allocated

¹ An important speech delivered by Xi Jinping at a central conference on work related to people's congresses, Xinhuanet, October 14, 2021. http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2021-10/14/c_1127956955.htm

according to parties. Deputies to the National People's Congress, whether CPC members or members from other political parties or personages without party affiliation, all shoulder the expectations of the people and perform their duties for the people in accordance with the law.

Direct elections are conducted for deputies to the people's congresses at the county and township levels in China, and indirect elections are held above the county level. The people can elect their representatives to participate in the deliberation and administration of state affairs as well as to elect leading members of state organs. Deputies to the people's congresses have close ties with the masses. All major legislative decisions in China are made in accordance with procedures, through democratic deliberation, and through scientific and democratic decision-making.

In the practice of the NPC, it is rare to veto a resolution. Perhaps some people will think that the National People's Congress is not so important. However, the fact is that there will be a very thorough discussion before the vote, and good suggestions will be adopted. Finally, when deputies enter the great hall to vote, their concerns and opinions have already been taken into account and absorbed into a more well-rounded version of the text. Of course, there will always be negative votes and abstentions, which are normal practices.

Source: the website of the NPC and Qin Gang, Fu Ying's introduction to the National People's Congress system

1.2 Theoretical Logic: The Work of the People

After the draft of the first Constitution of New China was made public in June 1954, about a quarter of the country's population, or 150 million people, participated in the discussion and put forward more than 1.18 million opinions.¹

¹ Material from the Museum of the 1954 Constitution in Hangzhou, Zhejiang

This unanimously adopted constitution is known as "the people's constitution," and "all state power belongs to the people;" the country's name includes "people;" the organs of state power are the people's congresses, and governments at all levels are the "people's governments." Defining the country's system in the name of "the people" signifies that the people are placed at the moral high ground, and the government must be accountable to the people.

-- Grasping the Essence of Democracy

Slogans of the Western bourgeois revolutions, such as freedom and democracy, were exciting, but only a fraction of people's democracy had actually been achieved. It was not until the rise of vigorous labor movements in the middle of the 19th century, after the resolute efforts of the masses, had mass democracy – with the pursuit of equality and justice as its core – gradually become a modern trend sweeping across the world and a common value of humanity.¹ The Chinese democratic practice of "the running of the country by the people" is part of this global trend.

¹ Yang Guangbin: *The Dimension of Democratic Socialism -- Comments on the myth of the bourgeoisie and democratic politics*, Social Sciences in China, 2009

New China, which embarked on the road of democracy as a pursuer, tried to grasp a democratic path of its own from the values of modern democracy, that is, the logic of democracy as revealed by Karl Marx: the state system is the product of human freedom, and the people are not the work of the state. On the contrary, the country is "the people's own work." The people become the masters of the country. The goal of the country is to maximize the free and comprehensive development of the people.¹

The socialist orientation of New China's democratic practice means that it is a critic of and transcends bourgeois democracy. The people's sovereignty to be realized -- "the running of the country by the people" -- is a broad, genuine, and effective democracy. It is a people-centered democracy, not capital-oriented democracy.

-- Taking root in China

The adaptation of Marxism to the Chinese context -- adapting the basic tenets of Marxism to China's specific realities and China's fine traditional culture -- is the theoretical code for the

¹ Lin Shangli: *The People, Political Parties and the State: Political Analysis of the Development of People's Democracy*, Fudan Journal (Social Sciences Edition), 2011.

Communist Party of China to lead the people from standing up and growing prosperous, to becoming strong. Similarly, democracy can only flourish when it is deeply rooted in Chinese soil.

China's democratic development combines the "goal-oriented" realization of people's happiness, national prosperity and national rejuvenation, the "reality" on the ground of the world's most populous developing country, and the "historical dimension" of a history of 5,000 years of civilization. By remembering its roots, absorbing outside ideas, facing the future, continuous integration, summarizing, refining and sublimating, China has formed a new form of democracy.

Through long-term socialist practice, China has deeply realized that "poverty is not socialism" and that "people's democracy is the lifeblood of socialism."

1.3 Logic in Practice: Initiative in Institutional Design

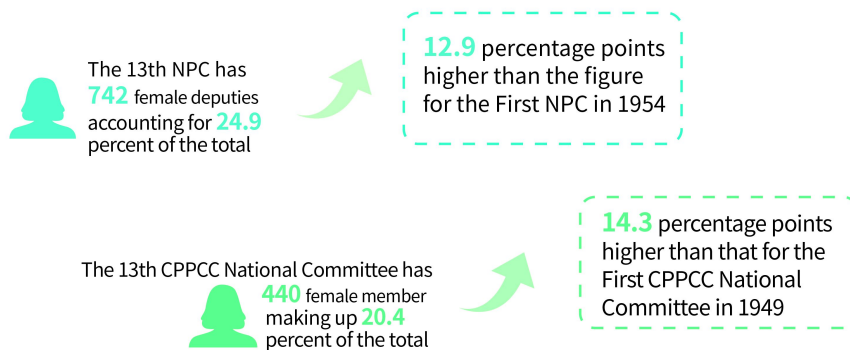
Shen Jilan, a woman from a humble background in rural Shanxi Province, witnessed the beginning of the people's congress system in China.

In September 1954, 25-year-old Shen made her way from her

home in mountainous Shanxi to Beijing for the first session of the NPC as a lawmaker chosen through a democratic election. Her journey was difficult. She first rode a donkey, then a bus and took several train rides before arriving in Beijing. Through her initiative, women in rural cooperatives gained the right to equal pay for equal work. The first Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which Shen voted for, stipulates, "Women in the People's Republic of China shall enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life: political, economic, cultural, social and familial."

In June 2020, Shen died at the age of 91. She served as a national lawmaker at 13 consecutive NPC sessions and spoke up for the people throughout her life. Her story reflects the essence of the people's congress system.

Protecting women's rights to participation in the administration of public affairs



Source: Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China

-- Broad Representation

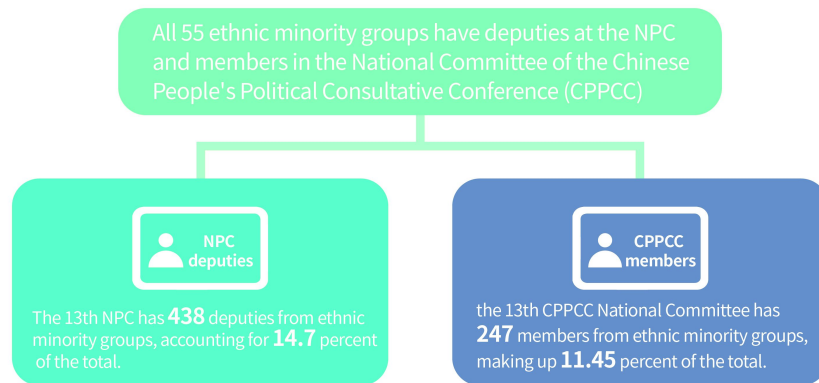
The people's congress system puts into action the constitutional principle of "all power in the People's Republic of China belongs to the people." The general public elects deputies who represent their will and interests to form organs of state power at various levels. The NPC is the highest state organ of power.

Broad representation is the hallmark of the system. Currently, there are more than 2.6 million deputies to people's congresses at various levels. They proportionately come from different regions, trades and ethnic groups, ensuring that organs of state power fully represent the will of the people. In the current NPC, 15.7 percent of the deputies exercise state power on behalf of workers and farmers, and 55 ethnic minority groups have deputies from their respective ethnic groups.¹

¹ State Council Information Office: white paper titled "The Communist Party of China and Human Rights Protection – A 100-Year Quest" released in June 2021.

<http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/Document/1707301/1707301.htm>

Percentage of deputies and members from ethnic minority groups



Source: The Communist Party of China and Human Rights Protection – A 100-Year Quest

Deputies to people's congresses do not work as full-time lawmakers but have their own jobs and careers. Many of them work in primary-level positions.¹ The logic behind this is to stay connected with the people. With this approach, deputies to people's congresses could better play their role of connecting with the people so that legislation will better reflect the will of the people, pool wisdom from the people and deliver benefits to the people.

Shen's story serves as a case in point for democracy and is a victory for women's rights. Chai Shanshan, a deliveryman serving as a lawmaker, has personal experience indicative of how China's democracy has evolved with the times. One of the

¹ The Law of the People's Republic of China on Deputies to the National People's Congress and to the Local People's Congresses at Various Levels, official website of the National People's Congress, <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c12488/201508/87e9a47af39c4480b952e1ab76b8e9cb.shtml>.

millions of Chinese working in the country's booming courier service sector, Chai was elected deputy to the NPC in 2018. At the fourth session of the 13th NPC held in 2021, he drafted proposals including one on improving social security for workers on flexible jobs in sectors like ride hailing, courier service and food delivery, which directly prompted legislation in this regard.

-- Democratic Centralism

China's Constitution stipulates, "The state institutions of the People's Republic of China shall practice the principle of democratic centralism." The NPC and the local people's congresses at all levels shall be created through a democratic election and shall be accountable to the people and subject to their oversight. All administrative, supervisory, adjudicatory and procuratorial organs of the state shall be created by the people's congresses and shall be accountable to them and subject to their oversight.¹ Under the Party's leadership, organs of state power constitute an integral body, in which the organs of state power have their respective functions but act in coordination,

¹ Constitution of the People's Republic of China, People's Publishing House, March 2018, P8.

fully uphold democracy and effectively exercise centralism. The arrangement leaves no room for talkfests, decisions without execution, or execution of decisions without concrete outcomes.¹

Democratic centralism is a principle as well as a method, meaning that by fully practicing democracy, the right decisions are thereby reached and rigorously implemented. For this reason, the system of people's congresses has created a powerful synergy in governing the country, so that different state organs do not hold each other back or waste energy on quibbling with each other. It has provided an important institutional guarantee for the CPC to lead the people in creating the miracle of rapid economic growth and long-term social stability.

After a long period of practice, Chinese leaders have come to the conclusion that the system of people's congresses is "a great creation in the history of human political systems and a brand-new political system of great significance in the history of political development in China and even in the world".²

¹ Xi Jinping: On Upholding the System of Running of the Country by the People, Central Party Literature Press, 2021, P277.

² Speech by Xi Jinping at a central conference on work related to people's congresses, xinhuanet.com, Oct. 14, 2021.

http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2021-10/14/c_1127956955.htm

-- The Party-People-Law Synergy

The CPC has not only accomplished its mission of establishing the People's Republic of China, but also taken up the challenge of large-scale democracy after it came to power: how to make hundreds of millions of people become one whole and ensure that the state power is in the hands of the people?

China has found the answer in practice – to generate synergic interaction of Party leadership, the running of the country by the people, and law-based governance. The Party leadership answers the question of "who shall unite the people," the running of the country by the people answers "what is the purpose of democracy," and law-based governance answers "how to govern the country."

The inherent mechanism involves the following aspects: the people, under the CPC's leadership, unite as an organic whole; the common will of the Party and the people is embodied in the Constitution and the law; the state is organized, run and developed with the Constitution as the fundamental law; power must be exercised within the framework of the rule of law; the people, with the CPC at the core, manage state, economic, cultural and social affairs through various ways and forms in

accordance with the law; and the Constitution and law and their enforcement must reflect the will of the people, protect the people's rights and interests and spur their creativity.

-- Institutional Framework for the Running of the Country by the People

The very design of the democratic institutions of New China incorporates foresight to prevent chaos.

The system of CPC-led multi-party cooperation and political consultation aims to strengthen the cooperation and coordination of various social forces and avoid factional strife between different political parties. The system of regional ethnic autonomy aims to forge a strong sense of community among the Chinese people and guard against estrangement and conflict between ethnic groups. The system of community-level self-governance aims to ensure that the people directly exercise their democratic rights in accordance with the law and prevent the emergence of a situation in which the people have nominal but not real power.

The three "basic political systems," together with "the fundamental political system" of people's congresses, underpin

the institutional framework for the running of the country by the people.

-- "Two Wheels" of Election and Consultation

Some describe Chinese democracy as "running on two wheels," namely electoral democracy in which people exercise their right to vote in elections and consultative democracy in which people from all sectors of society undertake extensive deliberations and reach consensus on common issues before major decisions are made. These two forms of democratic setting greatly improve the efficacy of democracy as they play their respective roles at different levels and in different areas while being complementary to each other. The annual "two sessions" of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference are seen as prolonged "democracy open days" where people witness the robust performance of the "two wheels" of Chinese democracy.

The essence of the people's democracy lies in reaching a consensus on the aspirations and needs of the whole society by enabling the people to discuss their own affairs. "Consultative democracy," which originates from the CPC's practice in the old

revolutionary base of Shaanxi Province more than 80 years ago, is a distinctive feature of China's socialist democracy that fully embodies this spirit.

An important aim of the current reform of China's political system is to promote an extensive, multi-level, and institutionalized development of consultative democracy. In China, new policies have been smoothly introduced because a large number of conflicts and demands have been resolved or absorbed beforehand in the consultation process.

1.4 Logic in values: Emancipating the People

Karl Marx said that only through true democracy can humankind achieve complete emancipation. An ideal Communist society in Marx's vision was defined as "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

Marx defined "human emancipation" as "the free development of each," and the "free development" of human beings was upheld as the most important democratic value. Based on Marx's understanding, a democratic political system that ensures the people run the country is the prerequisite for realizing the value

of freedom.

Column: Democracy, Freedom and Human Rights in China's Constitution

The current version of China's Constitution makes 14 references to "democracy," 13 to "freedom," and 31 to "human rights" and "rights."

In regards to democracy, New Democratic Revolution, socialist democracy, people's democratic dictatorship, democratic centralism and democratic management, among other terms, are mentioned in the general principles of the Constitution.

In regards to freedom, Article 4 of the Constitution provides that all ethnic groups shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own traditions and customs. According to Chapter II, where the Constitution stipulates the fundamental rights and obligations of citizens, all citizens shall enjoy various kinds of freedom, including freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, procession and demonstration, freedom of religious belief, personal freedom, freedom of correspondence, freedom to engage in cultural activities and freedom of marriage.

In regards to human rights, Article 33 of the Constitution provides that the state shall respect and protect human rights. A total of nine articles refer to the protection of civil rights, such as property rights, the right to work and rest, the right to receive education, and the rights of women, all ethnic groups, foreigners in the territory of China and Chinese nationals overseas.

Source: Constitution of the People's Republic of China amended in March 2018.

It had been made clear to the Chinese people that, from years of suffering from the Opium War in 1840 to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there would be no true freedom and human rights without national independence and liberation. The founding of New China and the establishment of a socialist system had crushed the old social system that stood in

the way of people's access to freedom, bringing various rights of the people under the protection of the Constitution. Through the reform and opening up and the development of a socialist market economy, society's creativity has been fully unleashed, the economy has maintained rapid growth on a long-term basis, and the Chinese people have led more prosperous lives. Entering a new era, China, in a historic move, has put an end to absolute poverty and ushered in moderate prosperity in all respects for a population of over 1.4 billion. Seeing their aspirations for a better life become a reality, the Chinese people now enjoy greater confidence, independence and strength.

"Freedom means having an environment that allows you to achieve your goals," said world-renowned trend watcher John Naisbitt in his observations on China.¹

The pursuit of democracy, freedom and human rights also serves as the driving force behind China's development and prosperity. Following the roadmap of reform and opening up - poverty eradication - moderate prosperity - common prosperity, the Chinese people have shaken off poverty and live well-off lives with dignity because of the firm implementation of a people's

¹ John Naisbitt&Doris Naisbitt: *China's Megatrends: The 8 Pillars of a New Society*, Jilin Publishing Group, September, 2009, p. 176.

democracy.

China's Achievements in Poverty Alleviation

China's fight against poverty entered a critical stage after the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012. At the end of 2020, through eight years of hard work, China achieved the goal of eliminating extreme poverty. The **98.99 million** people in rural areas who were living below the current poverty threshold all shook off poverty.



All the 832 designated poor counties and **128,000** impoverished villages got rid of poverty.

China has eliminated poverty over entire regions. ✓



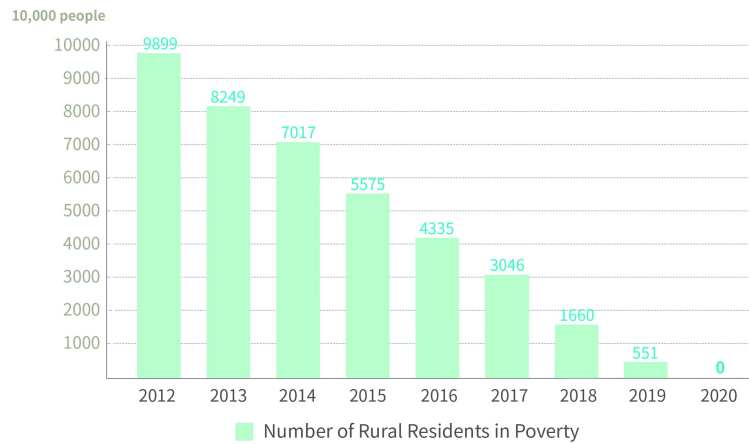
Since reform and opening-up, more than **770 million** of China's rural population living below the current poverty line have been raised from poverty

accounting for more than **70** percent of the global total over the same period according to the World Bank's international poverty standard

Source: Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution

China's Achievements in Poverty Alleviation

Number of Rural Residents in Poverty (2012-2020)



Source: Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution

Chapter II

Whole-process Democracy: a New Form of Implementing People's Sovereignty

If the people are awakened only at the time of voting but go dormant soon after, if they listen to slogans at the time of the election but have no say after the election, or if they are favored at the time of canvassing but are left out in the cold after the election, such a democracy is not a true democracy.¹

— Xi Jinping

¹ http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2021-10/14/c_1127956955.htm

Democracy means that the people are the masters of their country. They participate in and manage the affairs of their country and society. The Chinese people have the right to participate extensively in state governance, a right which is embodied in all aspects of China's democratic elections, democratic consultations, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision.

"Whole-process democracy" pursues the unification of process and results-based democracy, procedural democracy and substantive democracy, direct democracy and indirect democracy, as well as people's democracy and state will.

"Whole-process democracy" can be described in four areas: electing officials, deliberating state affairs, making policies, and overseeing the use of power.

2.1 How Does China Select Officials?

Capable state leaders and officials at all levels are necessary to run a country with a territory as vast and a population as large as China.¹ In the Chinese mechanism of selecting officials, moral integrity, professional ability and past governing performances

¹ https://www.guancha.cn/HuAnGang/2017_10_24_432019.shtml

are the basic requirements for selection involving a democratic election to determine qualified officials. Canadian political scholar Daniel A. Bell noted that the meritocracy that has existed in Chinese politics since ancient times laid the cultural underpinning of China's modern official selection system.¹

-- Pyramids for Official Promotion

Studies have found that Chinese cadres often begin their careers at the primary level, and are promoted step by step through the township level, county level and prefecture level before becoming high-ranking provincial or ministerial-level officials. Among the over 7 million Chinese cadres, only one in 14,000 will be promoted to the executive ministerial level. On average, it takes 23 years to earn a senior position.²

Unlike leaders in Western countries, who can often assume their offices through elections alone, Chinese statespeople are selected through multiple tests. Only cadres with outstanding achievements and adequate experience are qualified to undertake important roles in China's governance.

¹ Daniel A. Bell: *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*, CITIC Press Group, September, 2016.

² <http://jingji.cntv.cn/special/wlznldz/bhy/39/index.shtml>

The CPC focuses more on selecting competitive cadres than any other political organization around the world, said Eric Li, a venture capitalist and political scientist.¹ The CPC's elite group maintains high mobility, noted Cheng Li, director of the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution. He said that more than 60 percent of the members of the recent CPC Central Committees, with a term of five years, have been new faces.² Such high mobility in an elite political group is rare around the world, and it ensures the competitiveness and optimization of democratic governance.

-- 94 Percent of People's Congress Deputies are Directly Elected

It's rarely known that the overwhelming majority of Chinese grassroots public representatives (equivalent to councilors) are directly elected. The first constitution of the People's Republic of China promulgated in 1954 endowed Chinese citizens with universal and equal suffrage, and more than 99 percent of adult Chinese citizens had the right to vote and stand for election. By

¹ Eric Li: The Great Power of Chinese Democracy, People's Daily, April 1, 2013.

² Yuan Jing: The Mechanism of Power Balance and Anti-corruption in China: Interview with Li Cheng, director of the John L. Thornton China Center of the Brookings Institution, People's Tribune, Volume 12, 2014

then, many other countries still restricted voting rights based on race, gender, and other factors.

As of April 2021, deputies to people's congresses at all five levels, including the state and township levels, exceeded 2.62 million. Of the total, 94 percent were from the county and township levels, all directly elected on a one-person-one-vote basis.¹

Giving play to the role of deputies to people's congresses at all levels is a significant manifestation of people being masters of the country. Those deputies must give full play to the principal role of a whole-process people's democracy. That means the deputies should constantly enrich the vehicles of connections with the people to maintain close ties and better reflect social conditions and public opinion.

2.2 How do People Participate in Public Affairs Deliberations?

The whole-process people's democracy emphasizes citizen participation in the whole process of public policy making. This

¹ Zhang Yesui, spokesperson for the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress, answered Chinese and foreign reporters' questions at a press conference of the session.
http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-03/05/content_5590356.htm

allows citizens to participate before, during, and after the decision-making, and safeguards people's right to be informed, participate, be heard and oversee in order to find the best solution while drawing on the pooled wisdom of the people.

-- Local Legislative Outreach offices

As of April 2021, the national legislature has publicly solicited opinions on draft laws on 230 occasions. In recent years, the Commission of Legislative Affairs of the National People's Congress Standing Committee set up local legislative outreach offices, which offered a direct channel for grassroots opinions to reach the highest legislature of the country. As of October 2021, 22 outreach offices nationwide had put forward more than 7,800 opinions and suggestions for 126 draft laws and annual legislative plans, over 2,200 of which were absorbed and adopted to varying degrees, creating a more refined legislation process. ¹

One of the opinions was from Li Junhao, a high school student from Shanghai. In August 2020, relevant parties visited the high

¹ Building Bridges to Connect the People and the Highest Legislature -- Roundup of the Work of Local Legislative Outreach Offices of the Commission of Legislative Affairs of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, xinhuanet.com, Nov.2, 2021.

<https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1715313995789558909&wfr=spider&for=pc>

school, affiliated with East China University of Political Science and Law, to solicit opinions on the revised draft of the Law on the Protection of Minors. Li put forward a suggestion -- "The economic conditions of each minor's family are different. If the guardian who has committed domestic violence against the minor refuses to accept family education guidance, the guardian is to be punished with the confiscation of the security deposit. This will worsen the situation of families." His suggestion was adopted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The newly-revised law was passed, removing the requirement from the draft that the guardians of minors pay a security deposit.

China's process to solicit proposals from the public



Since the 18th CPC National Congress, central committees of the other political parties and non-affiliates have submitted more than **730** proposals to the CPC Central Committee and the State Council. From the First Session of the 13th CPPCC National Committee held in March 2018 to April 2021, the CPPCC National Committee received **23,048** proposals.



By April 2021, the state legislatures had solicited public opinion on **230** draft laws.



A total of **425,762** comments were received for the draft Civil Code alone, collecting **1,021,834** pieces of opinion.

Sources: The Communist Party of China and Human Rights Protection – A 100-Year Quest

-- Democratic Discussion

Originated in Wenling, Zhejiang Province, in 1999, "democratic discussion" is a type of "grassroots democracy" that manages public affairs through full consultations. Local people review the public budget and employees of enterprises negotiate their salaries through discussion. Such discussions have become a necessity for the township government when making major decisions. "When there is a conflict, a democratic discussion is held." This model of handling related affairs has become habitual for Wenling locals.

In fact, various forms of grassroots consultative democracy created in local areas play a vital role in realizing good governance in China. Examples include the "township counselors' meeting" in Deqing, Zhejiang Province; the "Gubei citizens' council" in the Changning district, Shanghai; the "night talk" in Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province; and the "'2+4' grassroots governance" in the Changle community in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province.

2.3 How are Policies Made?

For a long time, China's reform has been referred to as "crossing

the river by feeling the stones." But what is fascinating to uncover is why China has so often been able to feel the "stones" correctly. It reflects the scientific nature of policy-making in China's democratic governance. For example, outlines of the five-year plan for national economic and social development and other policies well illustrate democratic decision-making procedures. Moreover, with full respect for the pioneering spirit seen at the grassroots level, the central government applies valuable grassroots experience in the decision-making of national reforms. The central government also first tests out major national reform measures at the regional level to gain experience before expanding them nationwide.

-- Target Management

Chinese administrators are good at planning, and managing goals and expectations.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China has prepared and implemented 14 five-year plans. "The Party puts forward suggestions, the government drafts plans, the National People's Congress deliberates and approves plans, and the whole country implements the plans, creating an overall positive

experience created by the CPC in state governance."¹

-- Grassroots Experience

Medical reform is an enduring problem across the world. China, with a population of more than 1.4 billion, has made remarkable progress in medical reforms in recent years, and one of the important reasons is that it has popularized the local pioneering experience -- "the Sanming Model." Thanks to the interconnectedness of medicine, medical insurance, and medical treatment in Sanming, Fujian Province, the problem of "difficult and expensive medical treatment" has been effectively resolved. Based on Sanming's good practice, China set up the National Healthcare Security Administration, carried out collective procurement, and reduced the prices of medicines and consumables considerably, much to the satisfaction of the local population. After the central government put forward the new goal of a "Healthy China," Sanming actively worked with local hospitals to shift from treating diseases to focusing on overall health in its medical reforms. The experience was once again

¹ What Makes the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee So Important and Special? -- An Exclusive Interview with Li Junru, Former Vice President of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, www.chinanews.com, Oct. 25, 2020.

<https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2020/10-25/9321975.shtml>

affirmed by the central government and promoted across entire country.

-- Decision-making in the Fight Against COVID-19

In some cases, decision-making is an extremely difficult process. One example is the decision of the Chinese leadership to lock down the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, when the COVID-19 epidemic broke out at the beginning of 2020. To stop the epidemic from spreading to the whole country, it was necessary to control the flow of people into and out of the city, home to over 10 million residents. At the same time, the central government mobilized the whole nation to support Wuhan and Hubei and carry out an unprecedented rescue operation. Not long after that, the epidemic situation in Wuhan and Hubei, and the whole country, was effectively brought under control, achieving a breathtaking victory in epidemic prevention and control .

Whether the lockdown of Wuhan or its rescue, the principles of decision-making were always "people first" and "life first." Under the epidemic, the people of Wuhan made a significant contribution to the national fight against the epidemic with their

commitment to "protecting a nation by locking down a city," while the people of the country supported Wuhan, quickly contained the epidemic, and saved lives so that the city restarted and restored its vitality as soon as possible. Witnessing how the Chinese people have balanced collective freedom and individual freedom, Japanese director Ryo Takeuchi, who produced the documentary "Long Time No See Wuhan," exclaimed: "China's success in controlling the epidemic and restoring its economy at the same time is the result of the joint efforts of its more than 1.4 billion people."

2.4 How is "Power" Exercised?

Power without supervision is bound to produce corruption. Power is a "double-edged sword." Exercising power by the law can benefit the people, while the illegal and unlawful exercise of power is bound to harm the country and the people. China uses a series of institutional arrangements such as intraparty oversight, oversight by the National People's Congress, democratic oversight, administrative oversight, judicial oversight, public oversight, and oversight through public opinion to set up, regulate, restrain, and oversee the exercise of power by law. These measures ensure that power is exercised within an

institutional cage.

-- The "Goldbach's Conjecture" of State Governance

The CPC has compared self-monitoring to the Goldbach Conjecture of State Governance, and one of the strategic arrangements for institutional innovation to solve this problem is "inspection." The central government sends inspection teams to lower-level departments, giving them the authority to independently monitor and investigate. This mechanism strengthens political inspections and identifies problems, focusing on six aspects such as the Party's political, ideological and organizational conduct and discipline and the task of securing an overwhelming victory in fighting corruption. The top-down organizational supervision and the bottom-up supervision of the masses are effectively combined, which is more conducive to finding problems and exerting a deterrent effect.

-- Oversight by Non-CPC Political Parties

Democratic oversight in China is multidimensional. It is a particular form related to China's new model of political party

system. Under this system, the CPC works in cooperation with eight non-CPC political parties, among others. Non-CPC political parties are not opposition parties but parties that participate in state governance and are regarded by the CPC as "friends with admonitions" -- true friends who can offer frank criticism and suggestions.

Since 2016, the central committees of China's non-CPC political parties have launched a "democratic oversight over poverty alleviation" initiative in eight central and western provincial-level regions with large, poorer populations and high poverty incidences, respectively. It was the first time China's democratic parties carried out such supervision over the implementation of major national strategies. Having put forward more than 2,400 comments, criticisms, and advice to these provinces and more than 80 reports to the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, the initiative played a significant role in securing a victory in the battle against poverty.¹

¹ The State Council Information Office, white paper titled China's Political Party System: Cooperation and Consultation, June 2021.

<http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/44691/Document/1707421/1707421.htm>

-- A New Model of Oversight on State Power

"If we let a few hundred corrupt officials slip through the cracks, we would let down all 1.3 billion Chinese people."¹ Based on this recognition, since 2012, the CPC launched an unprecedented anti-corruption campaign, striking "tigers" (high-ranking offenders) without limit, swatting "flies" (low-level corrupt officials) without hesitation, and hunting down "foxes" (corrupt fugitives) without stopping. By making government employees not dare, not able to, and not want to commit corruption through institutional arrangements, the CPC has effectively curbed the corruption from spreading.

With the establishment of the National Supervisory Commission and promulgation of the Supervision Law in 2018, China has launched a new model of oversight on state power. It covers all Party members and public officials exercising public power, fundamentally shaping a standardized and sound anti-corruption system.

Through more than 70 years of exploration and practice, China has developed a broad, genuine and effective democracy and embarked on a path of democratic development suited to its

¹ A speech by Xi Jinping at the fifth plenary session of the 18th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) of the CPC on Jan.13, 2015.

national conditions.

Column: China's View of Democracy

China's view of democracy positions the people as masters of the country. The "whole-process people's democracy" is a fundamental feature of China's democracy, an all-dimensional, democracy with a complete set of institutions, and the broadest, most genuine, and most effective socialist democracy.

This democracy adheres to a people-centered approach. It transcends "democracy for the few," "one-time democracy," and "pseudo-universal democracy," ensuring that the broad masses of the people enjoy democratic rights and democratic achievements and that the concept of democracy is deeply rooted in people's minds.

Chapter III

A Democracy that Works: a Touchstone for Testing Institutional Effectiveness

"Whether a country's path of development works is judged first and foremost by whether it fits the country's conditions. Whether it follows the development trend of the times, whether it brings about economic growth, social advancement, better livelihoods, and social stability, whether it has the people's endorsement and support, and whether it contributes to the progressive cause of humanity."¹

— Xi Jinping

¹ Chinese President Xi Jinping's remarks at the conference marking the 50th anniversary of the restoration of People's Republic of China's lawful seat in UN, Oct. 25, 2021.

"It is not what is said but what is done that matters." The saying reflects Chinese pragmatism. In this sense, democracy must be real and effective. If it cannot translate into good governance and benefit the people, it must be viewed with suspicion no matter how attractive it looks.

3.1 "Governance Democracy" for Good Governance

According to a poll jointly released by Alliance of Democracies, Rasmussen Global and the German institute Dalia Research in June 2020, 84 percent of the Chinese respondents viewed democracy as important, and 73 percent of them believed that China is a democratic country, the sixth-highest proportion among all 53 countries and regions surveyed. China also ranked second on the government serving the majority of its people.¹

The poll results have justified the conclusions of several observers: for the Chinese people, democracy means that the government, in the process of decision-making, should always keep in mind the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people, solicit and listen to the opinions of the people, and serve

¹ Democracy Perception Index 2020, Alliance of Democracies, Rasmussen Global, and Dalia Research, June 2021.

<https://www.allianceofdemocracies.org/initiatives/the-copenhagen-democracy-summit/dpi-2020/>

the people. Chinese people care about the goals of a democratic system, which is primarily concerned with achieving good governance, rather than establishing a multi-party system or universal suffrage.

-- Effective Response to Public Opinions

The Chinese perception of democracy echoes with the viewpoints of some Western scholars. Arend Lijphart believes that a democracy that cannot respond to public opinion is invalid democracy; Giovanni Sartori believes that a good democracy must respond to public opinion, and Robert A. Dahl believes that under an ideal democracy, voters have ultimate control over the political agenda.¹

In 2020, the Chinese government, for the first time, solicited public opinion and suggestions through the internet in the formulation of its 14th Five-Year Plan. More than one million suggestions were submitted to the top decision-making officials. Li Dianbo, a college-graduate village official in Inner Mongolia's Dalad Banner region, was surprised that his suggestion on elderly care, submitted online, was adopted by the

¹ Yang Guangbin, *Delimiting Democracy*, China Renmin University Press, January 2015.

central authorities.¹

Under the people-centered development philosophy, the CPC prioritizes issues like food safety, winter heating, air quality, water pollution and housing costs, echoing the top concerns of the public.

As American journalists Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby noticed early in 1946, the CPC simply understood that the people wanted change, and it embraced change.²

The CPC's promises to the people are announced not in campaign rhetoric but via party policies and resolutions, and the promises must be delivered in practice. "No individual should be left behind in China's battle against poverty," Xi Jinping said during his inspection tour in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in 2021. "The Chinese people, the CPC, and the CPC leaders always keep their word."³

¹ "In-Depth: A netizen's suggestion included in CPC central document", Xinhuanet, Nov. 5, 2020.
http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-11/05/c_1126703529.htm

² Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder out of China*, Xinhua Publishing House, February 1988.

³ Zhang Xiaosong, Zhu Jichai, Du Shangze, *Keep Going, Work Hard and Embark on Another Long March -- On-the-Spot Report of CPC General Secretary Xi Jinping's Inspection of Guangxi*.
http://www.xinhuanet.com/2021-04/29/c_1127388818.htm

-- Governance-oriented

Political science scholar Yang Guangbin believes that Chinese democracy is a "governance democracy" that seeks good governance. It has three elements – full public participation, autonomous state response, and responsible decision-making and its effective implementation. "Governance democracy" emphasizes not only the democracy of the political process but also the results of democratic politics, or good governance.¹

China's democracy is centered on governance rather than on elections. The country has maintained long-term social stability along with rapid economic growth and has become one of the safest countries in the world. China has set a new goal of modernizing its system of governance to better reflect the will of the people, protect their rights and interests, and inspire their creativity in all its institutions and aspects of governance. This "governance-oriented democracy" will be further strengthened.

3.2 "Efficient Democracy" with Vitality

In a big developing country like China, if there were no enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of the people, there would

¹ Yang Guangbin, *Delimiting Democracy*, China Renmin University Press, January 2015.

be no social dynamism; without social dynamism, there would be no great achievements since its reform and opening-up. In a country as complex as China, it would be difficult to imagine the country's current advancements without decision-making authority.

--- Ensembling "Multiple Voices" into "One Piece of Music"

It is observed that China's "democratic centralism" gives the country both dynamism and solid execution. The system gives full play to democracy in order to stimulate the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of the people. It also attaches value to proper centralism -- pooling wisdom based on democracy, forming scientific decisions, and putting these into practice. It is the art of combining "multiple voices" into "one piece of music." Thus, the country can effectively prevent decentralism, by which matters are discussed but fail to result in decisions or lead to action.¹

Democratic centralism is both an organizational principle of the CPC and a principle of state agencies at all levels as stipulated in China's Constitution. It is a principle of decision-making

¹ Xi Jinping, Zhejiang, China: A New Vision for Development, Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 2007, Page 22.

embodied in all aspects of governance and is becoming more procedural and institutionalized.

As affirmed in the provisional regulations on procedures for making major administrative decisions, implemented by China's State Council in 2019, legal reviews and collective discussion are necessary for making major administrative decisions, and executive heads of decision-making organs should make decisions on the basis of collective discussion.

3.3 "Democracy as Driving Force" with Collective Wisdom

China has realized in practice that socialism with Chinese characteristics is a cause for a people surpassing a billion in number. Therefore, the role of the people as the masters of the country must be given full play to ensure the people take the reins of the country. That means democracy is a driving force, that development is meaningful only when it is done for the sake of the people, and development is driven only when it relies on the people.

-- Motivating People Leads to Greatest Democracy

A strong foundation for the success of the CPC is to stick to ensure the principal status of the people and fully mobilize their

enthusiasm. Deng Xiaoping has a well-known saying that motivation leads to the greatest democracy. Without democracy, there would be no Chinese miracle. China has expanded its democracy through political, economic, and other reforms and stimulated the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of hundreds of millions of people. It has developed productive forces and encouraged the people to participate in reforms and social development. These have become important accelerators that explain the speed of China's modernization since its reform and opening-up.

A typical example is the household responsibility system, originating in Xiaogang Village, Fengyang County, in east China's Anhui Province. On a winter night in 1978, 18 villagers signed a contract with their red fingerprints, dividing the village's collective land into individual households. This initiative gradually spread throughout the country and aroused the enthusiasm of hundreds of millions of farmers, thus launching a new chapter in China's rural reforms. China's reform and opening-up began with the promotion of democracy. A national discussion on the standard of truth adopted the belief that "practice is the sole criterion of truth." Since then, society has become more active than ever, with productive forces

continuously unleashed and institutional reforms and innovations becoming the norm.

Convenient Transport Facilitates People's Travel

By the end of 2019, **12 billion** trips had been made on high-speed rail



and its share of total rail passenger transport had risen from **4.5** percent in 2007 to **65.4** percent.



Source: Sustainable Development of Transport in China

Creating a Comprehensive Infrastructure Network



By the end of 2019, China had a total of **139,000** km of rail track, of which high-speed lines represented **35,000** km.

China had a total of more than **5 million** km of highways, of which expressways represented **150,000** km.



Source: Sustainable Development of Transport in China

-- Interaction Between Development and Freedom

China is committed to empowerment through development and "investing in its people" to expand their free development. In

parallel, the expansion of freedom brings about the further liberation of productive forces and the increase of human and social capital, helping boost national development.

China's experience shows that development is a process of extending the real freedom enjoyed by people. As Nobel laureate Amartya Sen observes, long before its economic reforms, China was a pioneer in promoting social change in the contemporary world, specifically through massive progress in education, health care, and land reform. He notes China made remarkable progress after the reforms, and that the complementarity between social progress and economic development was well illustrated in China's experience. ¹

-- Dreams Illuminate Reality

Today, China's all-round development and progress has provided a broad space for every Chinese to pursue their dreams. Every Chinese individual's determination to achieve a better life brings together a majestic force to realize the Chinese Dream. The Chinese Dream is an organic combination of individual pursuits and the dream of national rejuvenation as well as the unity of

¹ Development As Freedom, by Amartya Sen (India), China Renmin University Press, 2013, preface of Chinese version.

people's comprehensive development and the overall progress of the country. The Chinese Dream offers a new vision for more than 1.4 billion Chinese to pursue democracy, freedom and human rights. It will also inspire the Chinese people to contribute their wisdom and strength.

Over the past 100 years, the CPC has delivered outstanding results for the people of China. Today, the Party is uniting and leading the people on a new road to achieving its second centenary goal. Democracy is a question that must be answered, because "without democracy, there can be no socialism, no socialist modernization, and no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."¹

3.4 Testable "Systematic Democracy"

It is not easy to evaluate whether a political system is democratic or advanced, and the difficulty lies in the lack of objective and comprehensive criteria. China has proposed eight criteria for measuring democracy.

¹ Xi Jinping, speech at the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the National People's Congress, September 5, 2014.

-- The "Eight Whether or Not" Criteria on Democracy¹

Column: The "Eight Whether or Not" Criteria on Democracy
Whether the succession of its leaders is conducted in an orderly way in accordance with the law;
Whether government affairs and social, economic and cultural affairs are managed by all the people in accordance with the law;
Whether the public freely voices its demands to advance its interests;
Whether all stakeholders in society are fully involved in the country's political process;
Whether government decisions are made in a sound and democratic way;
Whether outstanding individuals in all sectors can enter government leadership teams and the governance system through fair competition;
Whether the governing party exercises leadership over government affairs in accordance with the Constitution and the law;
Whether the exercise of power is kept under effective checks and supervision.

Political scholars maintain that the "Eight Whether or Not" criteria summarize lessons learned from the development of democratic politics at home and abroad, conform to the principles of modern political civilization, and reflect the systematic nature of the whole process of people's democracy. From a global perspective, this is a theoretical exploration deeply rooted in reality. ²

¹ Xi Jinping, speech at the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the National People's Congress, September 5, 2014.

² Zheng Changzhong, director of the research center for political party building and national development, Fudan

A comprehensive view of democracy. The criteria for judging whether a political system is democratic and its degree of democracy should not be one-sided but comprehensive and holistic.

A developmental view of democracy. Democracy is a process of continuous development and evolution, constantly evolving from low to high, from tradition to modern, and the building of democracy is a work in progress.

A result-oriented view of democracy. Effective democracy combines formal democracy and substantive democracy, indirect democracy and direct democracy, and objectively evaluates the political system based on actual results.

According to studies by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, the Chinese people's degree of trust in the Communist Party of China has exceeded 90 percent for more than 10 years in a row.¹

According to a survey conducted by York University in Canada, 98 percent of the Chinese public is satisfied with the central

University, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency in September 2021.

¹ Edward Cunningham, Tony Saich & Jesse Turiel, *Understanding CCP Resilience: Surveying Chinese Public Opinion Through Time*, Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center, July 2020.

government; for local governments, satisfaction exceeds 90 percent.¹

Some international observers have concluded that few in the West have realized that the Communist Party of China has provided the best governance in China's history. The essence of democracy means government by the people, said former Singaporean foreign minister George Yeo. "And by that definition, China is a democracy."²

¹ U.S. Media: Poll shows Chinese people's trust in government is up to 98 percent, Reference News' website, May 8, 2021, original English version from The Washington Post's website, May 5, 2021.

² Former Singaporean Foreign Minister George Yong-boon Yeo in an Exclusive Interview with Global Times: China Has Its Own Way of Realizing Democracy, Global Times, June 8, 2021.
<https://world.huanqiu.com/article/43RmktCXG2J>

Chapter IV

The Wisdom of Practice: The Enlightenment of Pursuing Common Values of Humanity

The right approach is to act on the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind. We should uphold the common values of humanity, i.e., peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, rise above ideological prejudice, make the mechanisms, principles and policies of our cooperation as open and inclusive as possible, and jointly safeguard world peace and stability.¹

— Xi Jinping

¹ Special address by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the World Economic Forum Virtual Event of the Davos Agenda, Jan. 25, 2021.

The common values of humanity are the natural results of the interconnection and interaction of human beings in the long-term process of socialization, and also the natural outcomes of the evolution of human history from the nation to the world. These values are the wealth of human civilization, the key to solving the problems of our time, and the greatest common denominator in building a better world.

Under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese people have carried out a large-scale democratic practice from scratch and unremittingly pursued freedom and human rights, not only for the happiness of the Chinese people and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, but also for the progress of humankind and the common prosperity of the world. China has created more opportunities for the world by promoting its own development, and explored the laws of human social development by deepening its own practices.

China's experience shows that democracy, freedom and human rights are interconnected, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. A good democracy is a guarantee of freedom and human rights, and people with freedom and human rights are a dynamic force for democracy and progress. Among the three, democracy can be implemented as the carrier of institutions. By

enhancing the linchpin of democratic construction, people's freedom and rights will have institutional guarantees.

If pursuing the common values of humanity means "doing the right thing," then "doing the right thing right" is a great practical challenge. China's path of democracy, freedom and human rights has provided useful insights.

4.1 Approach to Sound Governance: Three Leading Features

China's pursuit of democracy, freedom and human rights is carried out in two contexts: one is China's pursuit of modernization and the other is the sweeping trend of globalization. Dani Rodrik, a professor at Harvard, once put forward the well-known globalization trilemma: "We cannot have hyperglobalization, democracy, and national self-determination all at once."¹ The reality in China proves this assertion wrong. Over the past few decades, China has been an enthusiastic participant in globalization, adhered to the path of independent development, and creatively developed socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics. This shows China's

¹ (Britain) Edward Luce, *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*, Shanxi People's Publishing House, February 2019, 1st edition, page 70.

strong capacity for governance. A growing number of political scientists, including Francis Fukuyama who put forward "The end of history" idea, recognize the critical importance of national governance in global governance in the 21st century.

The practice of democracy, freedom and human rights in China has helped develop a series of effective governance ideas and methods. An advanced non-partisan party, a people-centered philosophy, and a development-focused worldview can probably be described as the three "leading features" of China's approach to sound governance.

Feature 1: Advanced Non-partisan Party

To understand today's China, one must understand the CPC. "Upholding the centralized and unified leadership of the CPC, adhering to the Party's scientific theory, ensuring political stability, and ensuring that the country always moves in the direction of socialism."¹ This ranks first among the remarkable advantages of China's state system and its governance system.

The CPC is a political party in a special sense. It represents the

¹ The Communist Party of China Central Committee's decision on some major issues concerning how to uphold and improve the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and advance the modernization of China's system and capacity for governance, adopted by the fourth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, on Oct.31, 2019.

fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people and does not represent the interests of any interest group, any powerful group, or any privileged class. Its governance focuses on the long-term stability of the country, not on short-term election campaigns. As a prominent feature of an advanced political party, the CPC has always acted in the interests of the people, followed the trend of the progress of humankind and the times, taken charge of the overall situation, coordinated with all parties, united and organized all political forces and resources, and striven for the happiness of all the people and the rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. It has its own logic of action.

Unlike the so-called "one-party dictatorship" misinterpreted by the outside world, China's new political party system can be perceived as a democratic practice of "1+8+N." Except for the CPC, there are eight non-CPC political parties in China. Despite being small in number, these parties consist of influential people, with a majority of them being intellectuals. Their participation in political affairs has provided an indispensable contribution of knowledge for the governing party's decision-making process. In addition to the CPC and eight non-CPC political parties, there are also those without any party affiliation and members of the

general public, who can also participate in the country's democratic agenda through a variety of means.

One-party leadership has ensured the authority of governance, the efficiency of democratic decision-making and the continuity of policies, while consultation by multiple parties has enabled the CPC to pool its wisdom from a wide spectrum of talent. The contribution by people as a whole has enabled those charged with the governance of the country to unite the greatest number of people. The combination of democracy and centralization has effectively reduced the internal consumption of political resources. Intra-party oversight and constantly developing social oversight have ensured democratic accountability both inside and outside the Party.

The CPC has endured an arduous struggle for the Chinese people to enjoy democracy, freedom and human rights, and created one miracle after another for the people's well-being. The CPC is highly conscious, disciplined and self-sacrificing. It can truly represent and unite the people and has sufficient authority. The leadership of the CPC is crucial to the governance of such a large country like China. As Deng Xiaoping, the chief architect of China's reform and opening up, said, "...without the unified leadership of such a party, it would be unimaginable, and

the country would only be divided and accomplish nothing."¹

Feature 2: People-centered Philosophy

"A country would collapse without the support of its people." Confucius had pointed out the key criteria for good government more than 2,000 years ago. Public support is the people's trust in those charged with the governance. Only when the "people-centered" approach is taken as the starting point of policy-decision can the effectiveness of politics be trusted by the people. It is a credo of the governing party in China that people's support is the highest political priority.

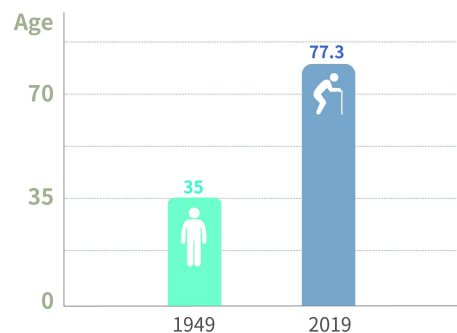
Today, about one out of 10 adult Chinese is a member of the CPC. They are everywhere. The Party's goal is to serve the people wholeheartedly; its original aspiration and founding mission is to seek happiness for the people and rejuvenation for the nation, and putting the people first is enshrined in its values. The flesh-and-blood ties between the Party and the people signify both the source and destination of power.

The "people-centered" philosophy has endowed China's politics and governance with solid value. In the governance of modern

¹ Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume II, People's Publishing House, 1994, P341-342.

Chinese society, "service" has become a keyword, "people's satisfaction" has become a new yardstick of political achievements, and the government and the society are forming a new kind of contract.

Increasing Average Life Expectancy of Chinese Population



In 2019, the life expectancy of Chinese citizens rose to **77.3** years, compared with **35** years in 1949

Source: The Communist Party of China and Human Rights Protection – A 100-Year Quest

China's Improving Living Conditions and Healthcare



At the start of reform and opening up the per capita floor space of urban residents was only **6.7** square meters and rural residents **8.1** square meters. In 2019, the corresponding figures were **39.8** square meters and **48.9** square meters.



In 2020, the basic medical insurance scheme covered **1.36 billion** people.



In 2018, the number of health service institutions in China increased to **997,000**, a **271.78-fold** increase from 1949.



All poor populations have access to **basic medical insurance, serious illness insurance, and medical assistance**. Basic medical insurance coverage of the poor remains almost 100 percent.

Sources: Seeking Happiness for People: The Communist Party of China and Human Rights Protection– A 100-Year Quest, 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China, Moderate Prosperity in All Respects: Another Milestone Achieved in China's Human Rights

Chinese People's Enrollment Rate , Illiteracy and Higher Education Rate

In the early days of the People's Republic of China, China's education system was poor and the general level of education was low.

The net primary education enrollment rate was **20** percent and the gross junior secondary education enrollment rate was only **3** percent.

There were only **117,000** college students and **80** percent of the population was illiterate.

The gross enrollment rate in senior secondary education increased from **42.8** percent in 2000 to **91.2** percent in 2020



The gross enrollment rate in higher education rose from **12.5** percent in 2000 to **54.4** percent in 2020. China has built the world's largest higher education system, with over 40 million students on campus.



Sources: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China, Moderate Prosperity in All Respects: Another Milestone Achieved in China's Human Rights

--"Governance Quotient"

In China, the fundamental criterion for judging the success or failure of any work is whether the people support it or not. If such criterion was applied to judge the efficiency of governance, it can be seen that Chinese society is characterized by a high degree of "governance quotient." In short, these characteristics refer to people's sense of security, gain and happiness. Corresponding to the "three senses," it is the government's abilities to secure stable, prosperous and happy lives for the people. The continuous progress of China's practices of democracy, freedom and human rights, an irrefutable fact, shows that the value of people-centered governance philosophy is by no means a political slogan.

Feature 3: Development-focused Worldview

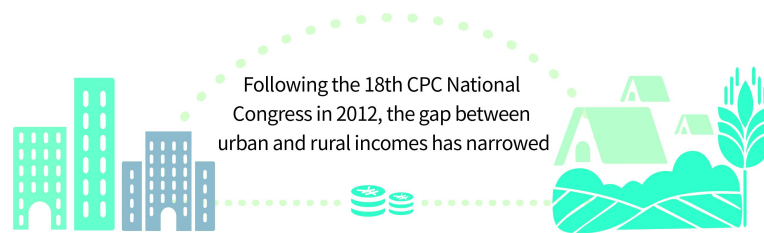
China's outlook on the world focuses on development, noted a March 2020 report by RAND Corporation. Such a worldview will probably give China a unique advantage when competing with other countries in the 21st century.

For more than 70 years, the Party and the government have focused on development, enabling the Chinese people to gain more and more freedom and democratic rights. In turn, more freedom and democratic rights have further promoted the development of the whole country. The outcomes of development continue to help improve democratic governance so that the rights of the people are better protected. The dialectics of development and freedom, and the interaction between democracy and human rights, are vividly reflected in China's practices. Such ideas of development in China, through globalization, have been transmitted to the rest of the world, enhancing global well-being.

By firmly upholding multilateralism, fairness and justice, and upholding the goals and principles of the UN Charter, China has played an important stabilizing role and brought certainty, confidence and hope to the world, according to UN

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. He maintains that history will prove that China's development is not only an irresistible historical trend but also a major contribution to the progress of human civilization.

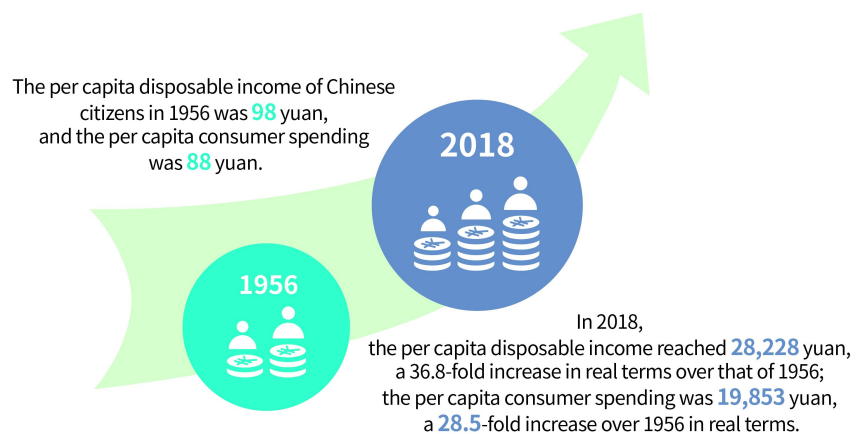
Changes in Urban and Rural Incomes in China



with the ratio of disposable income falling to **2.69** in 2018.

Source: Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China

Changes in Ratio of Urban and Rural income



Source: Seeking Happiness for People: 70 Years of Progress on Human Rights in China

4.2. Realizing the Common Values of Humanity: "Four Principles"

Through adhering to the common values and ideals of humanity and seeking to achieve them in a down-to-earth manner, the People's Republic of China has achieved the miraculous feat in development and stability, which shows that the country is a faithful and innovative practitioner of democracy, freedom and human rights, providing inspiration for realizing the common values of humanity.

Result-oriented

"Theory, dear friend, is gray, but the golden tree of life springs evergreen." Abundant practice is the theoretical source of innovation of democracy, freedom and human rights. The validity of the theory and system design must be tested and perfected through practice.

Whether a country is a democracy or not depends on whether its people are really the masters of the country, and whether the people have the right to participate in the democracy extensively; It depends on what promises are made during the election process, and even more on how many of these promises are

fulfilled after the election; It depends on what political procedures and rules are stipulated by the system and laws, and whether such systems and laws are really implemented; It depends on whether the rules and procedures for the exercise of power are democratic, and more importantly, whether power is truly supervised and restricted by the people.¹

China's democratic practice is characterized by "the people are the masters of the country," a "whole-process people's democracy," the eight "whether or nots," and "going one's own way," creating a new form of political culture.

Self-determination

Democracy is the right of all peoples, not an exclusive right of a few people or countries. Whether a country is democratic, whether its people are free and whether their human rights are guaranteed should be judged by the people of the country or the international community, not by a few outsiders nor a small group of self-righteous countries. People of all countries have the right to choose their own development path and system. This is essential for people's happiness and conforms to the spirit of

¹ Xi Jinping's remarks at a central conference on work related to people's congresses held in Beijing, Oct. 14, 2021.

democracy. To impose one's own view of democracy, freedom and human rights on others is a violation of the true spirit of democracy, freedom and human rights. The development of the current international situation has proved China's view that external military intervention and so-called "democratic transformation" only cause endless harm.

To develop democracy, all countries must walk out of the mist of dogmatism and discourse hegemony and explore their own way independently. Successful democratic constructions have their own characteristics. The diversity of democratic formation, organization and operation is the root of the vitality and creativity of modern political civilization. China's democracy must be deeply rooted in Chinese society, rather than copied from foreign countries. It could ruin a country's future if it merely copies the political systems of other countries.

Steady-paced

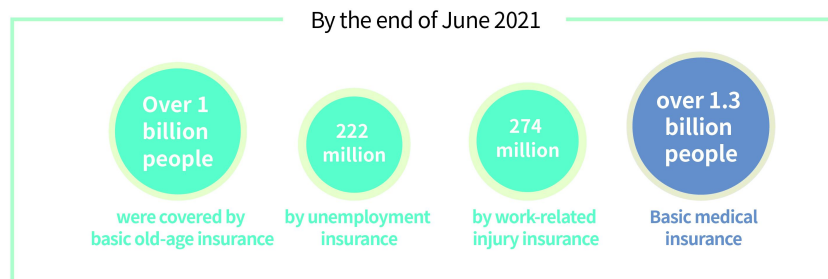
The realization of democracy and freedom and the development of human rights have prerequisites, sequences and foundations. Based on their national conditions, different countries need to make gradual progress, neither losing any opportunity nor

skipping any stage of development. A country should formulate a roadmap and timetable for action by taking into account various factors including the intensity of reform, the speed of development and the tolerable level of society. For those countries that imported foreign democratic models and failed in their development, an important reason for their failure is that they did not coordinate the relationship between development and timing and sequence according to their own reality, which has led to a series of problems such as social disorder, political turmoil and repeated setbacks in economic and social development.

Chinese People's Employment



At the end of 2020, almost **751 million** people in China were in employment.
China has built the world's **largest social security network**.



Source: The CPC: Its Mission and Contributions

Column: China's View of Human Rights in the New Era

"People's happy lives are the greatest human right" is China's view of human rights in the new era. The fourth national human rights action plan (2021-2025) sets out a new agenda, which requires the country to take a people-centered development thought and take promoting well-rounded human development and common prosperity as the purpose of human rights; to develop a whole-process people's democracy, safeguard social fairness and justice, focus on solving people's urgent problems and worries, ensure that all people's human rights are guaranteed at a higher level, and to continuously enhance people's sense of acquisition, happiness and security for human rights protection.

China's human rights development, prioritizing the basic rights of subsistence and development, keeps gaining momentum in its content and standards, moving towards the goal that living a life of contentment is the ultimate human right.

Ever-progressing

The pursuit of democracy and freedom as well as respect for and protection of human rights is an endless process of improvement. The democratic practice of the West started the process of modern democracy, but it does not mean that the development of democracy will end in the Western model. The realization of democracy, freedom and human rights must follow the development of practice and must be localized to take root. The exploration of people of different countries will enrich and improve the practice of democracy, freedom and human rights of humanity, and make the common values of humanity more

vivid, instead of being gradually hollowed out.

Column: China's View of Freedom

In practice, China has continuously liberated and developed productive forces, forming a Chinese concept of freedom with "all-around development of humans" as its connotation. The Chinese concept of freedom endows people with great material and spiritual freedom, promotes the free and all-round development of people, coordinates the relations between fairness and efficiency, order and vitality, power and rights in practice, and realizes the dialectical unity of common ideals and individual pursuit, collectivism and individual development, collective will and individual freedom.

4.3 "Questions of the Times": China's Solution

"What has happened to the world and how should we respond?" Chinese President Xi Jinping asked the fundamental questions of the times at the United Nations Office in Geneva on Jan. 18, 2017.

Under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and at a juncture of great historical changes, how can civilization develop and how can human beings coexist? Xi threw new light on these questions while addressing a commemorative meeting marking the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the People's Republic of China's lawful seat at the United Nations on Oct. 25, 2021.

"We should vigorously advocate peace, development, equity,

justice, democracy and freedom, which are the common values of humanity, and work together to provide the right guiding philosophy for building a better world," Xi said. "Peace and development are our common cause, equity and justice our common aspiration, and democracy and freedom our common pursuit."

-- Return to Common Sense

The world today is witnessing the deterioration of democracy and a distorted perspective of freedom and human rights. Governance in some countries is quite concerning. "The poverty of democracy" is an indisputable fact featuring various crises such as polarized politics, polarization between the rich and the poor, failure of governance and bullying by other countries. It is also manifested by the fact that the theory of "liberal democracy" cannot explain reality, let alone solve problems. This perfectly describes a "paradigm crisis" outlined by scholars -- human beings need a new framework and new knowledge to break through the current predicament to realize the common values of humanity in an era of globalization.

Democracy does not equal good governance, and may even

cause turmoil. The real crisis is thought-provoking. If we want to "strengthen" and "update" democracy, we must return to "common sense" and ask, what is democracy? As China's practice shows, the true meaning of democracy holds people as the masters of the country. True democracy also stands for equality and justice, good governance and people's well-being. In international relations, it means that "the internal affairs of a country should be handled by the country's own people, and international affairs should be managed by all countries through consultation."¹

The knowledge gained by more than 1.4 billion Chinese people down their arduous path to democracy, freedom and human rights deserves due recognition. China's approach to democracy, freedom, human rights has boosted confidence in, deepened understanding of and offered a solution for solving challenges to democracy, freedom and human rights and the governance deficit facing humankind.

-- Diversity: Rational and Desirable

¹ "Xi attends a joint summit of the leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member states on the Afghanistan issue," www.xinhuanet.com, Sept. 17, 2021.

http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2021-09/17/c_1127874704.htm

Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common values of humanity, but the paths to realization are personalized. We should respect the explorations of different peoples to turn their values into reality. By doing so, the common values of humanity will be translated into the practice of individual countries to serve the interests of their own people in a concrete and realistic way. The acts of those who believe their civilization is superior and insist on transforming or replacing other civilizations with a given model are just absurd and arbitrary and will result in catastrophe. There are enough lessons to be learned.

The diversity of human civilization makes the world vivid. Diversity brings communication, communication breeds integration, and integration produces progress. Diversity not only makes sense but also is desirable. One should value not only one's own culture but also contribute to the flourishing of all cultures. Countries should communicate with and learn from each other to jointly drive the progress of human civilizations amid the harmonious and diversified practices of democratic politics and human rights. The significance of being guided by the common values of humanity is rammed home in the motto of the 2022 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games --

"Together for a Shared Future."

-- A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

It was once believed that the country is the largest political unit and the world is just an empty geographical space. The truth today is that human beings are a whole, and the planet they live in is a "global village," where no country can isolate itself from the rest of the world. Global multipolarity and democratization of international relations are the general trends seen today. Only by seizing the historical opportunity and making correct choices can humankind create a brighter future. From the ancient Chinese philosophy of "a just cause should be pursued for common good" to "a community with a shared future for mankind," the Chinese concept of "the whole world is one family" chalks out the right direction for the world wandering at a crossroads.

Democracy and freedom are the core elements of the common values of humanity, and human rights are the ideals for which people of all countries strive unremittingly. In the socialist practice of defending democracy, freedom and human rights, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has put people's overall

interests on top of the agenda in its political endeavors, maintained the logic of giving democracy back to the people, and advocated the principles that freedom should enhance the all-round development of the people, and happiness is the ultimate standard of human rights. The CPC has pioneered a new path to China's modernization, and created a new model for human civilization, thus offering Chinese solutions of world significance as answers to the questions of our times.

Conclusion

Humanity's common values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom are the basis for building a community with a shared future for mankind. As the saying goes that "all roads lead to Rome," to achieve that end, it is necessary for all countries to constantly explore the best path that is most suitable for the interests of their people according to their own national conditions.

In exchanges with the world, China has found a path of modernization with Chinese characteristics, which has proved effective in practice. As Chinese leader Xi Jinping pointed out: "The great social transformation of contemporary China is not a master copy of China's history and culture, nor a copy of the template envisaged by classical Marxist writers. It is also not a copy of the socialist practice of other countries, nor a copy of the modernization of foreign countries."

China continues to make progress in promoting democracy, safeguarding freedom, and protecting human rights, but the road

ahead is still full of challenges. More than 1.4 billion people are moving towards common prosperity both materially and spiritually. China still needs to continuously promote the modernization of its political system and capacity for governance, constantly strengthen exchanges and mutual learning with other countries, and work together to advance the cause of human progress.

There is no end to exploration and pursuit.

New China Research (NCR)

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E-mail: zhiku@xinhua.org