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## **CHINA'S VERTICAL DEMOCRACY AS AN ALTERNATIVE TRAJECTORY OF DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT**

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*The article analyses the specific model of democracy that is currently realized in Chinese political system. The reasons of impossibility to implement democracy of Western-type are uncovered. The principles of vertical democracy that assumes a top-down and bottom-up democratic process of discussion and consultation before the formulation of policy decision are specified. The perspectives for elaboration of democratic procedures are outlined. It is shown that prevalence of traditional Confucian values in Chinese society necessitates the search for alternative path of democratic development. Social groups that are not interested in development of Western-type democratic procedures are specified. The reasons of negative perceptions of Western-type democratic procedures are analyzed. Alternative approach to building democracy in China is investigated.*

**Keywords:** vertical democracy, consultative democracy, Confucian values, social order, stability.

*У статті аналізується специфічна форма демократії, що реалізується в китайській політичній системі; розкриваються причини, за якими в китайській політичній системі наразі не може бути побудована демократія західного зразку. Розглядаються принципи вертикальної демократії, що передбачає демократичний процес обговорення та консультацій «зверху вниз» та «знизу догори» перед запровадженням політичних рішень. Визначаються перспективи розвитку демократичних процедур; доводиться, що вкоріненість у китайському суспільстві конфуціанських цінностей зумовлює пошук альтернативних шляхів демократичного розвитку. Виокремлюються соціальні групи, що не мають зацікавленості в розвитку демократичних процедур західного типу; здійснюється аналіз причин негативного сприйняття цих процедур у суспільній свідомості. Розглядаються альтернативні підходи до розбудови демократії в Китаї.*

**Ключові слова:** вертикальна демократія, консультативна демократія, конфуціанські цінності, соціальний порядок, стабільність.

*В статье анализируется специфическая форма демократии, которая реализуется в китайской политической системе; раскрываются причины, по которым в настоящий момент в Китае не может быть построена демократия западного типа. Рассматриваются принципы вертикальной демократии, которая предусматривает демократический процесс обсуждения и консультаций «сверху вниз» и «снизу вверх» перед принятием политических решений. Определяются перспективы развития демократических процедур; доказывається, что укорененность в китайском обществе конфуцианских ценностей обуславливает поиск альтернативных путей демократического развития. Выявляются как социальные группы, которые не заинтересованы в развитии демократических процедур западного типа; осуществляется анализ причин негативного восприятия этих процедур в общественном сознании. Рассматриваются альтернативные подходы к построению демократии в Китае.*

**Ключевые слова:** вертикальная демократия, консультативная демократия, конфуцианские ценности, социальный порядок, стабильность.

Political system of China could hardly be called the democratic one. Still, democracy is the necessary precondition to states wishing to enter into the world politics not as a challenger of the world order but as an equal partner. Democracy is the demand, democracy is an admission ticket, it is a password that verifies the right of the country to proceed further. The essence of China's foreign policy is friendship with as many countries as possible, especially with the nearest neighbors. What are we doing when visiting friends? Partly or fully we assume the values of friends we are visiting. Later we could give up these values or still continue to live with them. But the main role of this adjustment to other's principal values is the demonstration of intent to not provoke conflict, of readiness to give up on these essential to others matters. The same with China: while reading literature on attitudes toward democracy among Chinese, it seems that both political elite and majority of ordinary citizens are not

interested in democracy and developing democratic procedures. Still, at official level Chinese political elite welcomes democracy, not in its pure forms the shortcomings of which are thoroughly criticized, but in some modifications that suit Chinese way of life grounded on other principles than European culture that promotes the principles of democracy all over the world.

The aim of given article is to present the compromise model of democracy the China pretends to implement. There are numerous assumptions which kind of model of democracy is now realized in China. Consultative, vertical, democracy «with Chinese characteristics», socialist democracy, and etc. are among them. China expert Sidney Rittenberg thinks that China is capable of producing a kind of democracy that blends Confucian values and modern consumerism and is uniquely Chinese [1]. Other scholars argue that democracy in general contradicts Confucian values. Democracy is translated into Chinese as «*minzhu*,» or «people-as-masters» and «is not a concept inherent in Chinese culture or political philosophy. In fact, it is in complete opposition to Confucian ideology, which stresses harmony and obedience» [2]. Some scholars insist on mixture-type of Chinese democracy. In general Chinese approach to building political system is based on mixtures. Thus, the political system of China is claimed as being the people's democratic dictatorship with the democratic centralism as the main organizational principle of state authorities and socialism as a political regime [3]. Kwok-wah Yip insists that Chinese model of Democracy is the hybrid one and includes elite democracy, popular democracy and vertical democracy. Popular democracy is practiced at village, town and county levels, elite democracy is practiced at the local and national levels and comparable to the upper chamber or senate in a bicameral legislature, and vertical democracy «is a top-down and bottom-up democratic process of discussion and consultation before the formulation of policy decision» [4, p.139].

The term «vertical democracy» was proposed by John and Doris Naisbitt specially for the characteristic of Chinese democratic model and certainly differs from the Sartori's notion of vertical democracy. John Naisbitt stresses that different models of democracy could appear in the world since the «diversity of democratic experience is not only possible within this Western model». That kind of model will keep the keystones of democracy while using different means of realization of its principles. «A model that follows the principle and meaning of democracy, the role of the people, the rule of the people, the reign of the people; but using different structures through which the people rule» [5].

The appearance of alternative versions of democracy are necessitated not only by the demand to adjust the principles of democracy to the specific conditions of local political culture in different countries but by the drawbacks of Western-type of democracy as well. Among that drawbacks John Naisbitt mentions the following: strong election term thinking, constant struggle for power, negativism in relation to the opponent, and etc. «Party A wants to prove party B is wrong and party B wants to prove party A is wrong and that's the game... Parliaments in the West are in many regards paralyzed. They are paralyzed by putting more effort in improving each other's role than in solving challenges. Different slogans and strategies are dividing people. Governments are becoming dysfunctional, the European Union is floundering, brilliantly floundering. Preoccupied by its own problems, the West has not yet realized that hand-in-hand with the economic rise of China a counter-model to Western democracy is being created» [5]. Some other drawbacks are elicited by Kwok-wah Yip: democracy is affected by interest groups; it is possible to turn black into white by controlling the media, and etc. [4, p.137]. Jeffrey Hays stresses the connection between competitive democracy and instability in perception of Chinese leaders: «Chinese President Hu Jintao has called Western-style democracy a «blind alley». In 2008 one Communist official said, «There aren't that many countries with a multi-party system that are socially stable. Look at Thailand and Pakistan. These countries tend to be very unstable and troubled every time they hold elections. Foreigners respect China as we have maintained political stability for several decades» [1].

The main principle of vertical democracy is a top-down/bottom-up consultative processes that allow to discuss, «negotiate», initiate, and etc. policies in all spheres of social life. So, the initiative could appear both on the high and bottom level of this hierarchy and pass through the all chains of consultative procedure. In other words, «withing China's vertical democracy, talent comes from the masses and returns to the masses» [4, p.134]. But the role of leadership in this structure is essential since leaders determine the structure of this process of consultancy and the implementation of policies afterwards, not allowing to move chaotically. «China's model of leadership is constancy; the structure is a vertical process, a top-down/bottom-up interplay between the bottom and the top, a very dynamic interplay of setting general goals, of framing basic conditions by the leadership and the response and initiatives by the people» [5]. Kwok-wah Yip defines vertical democracy as a system «for interaction between the central government, local governments and the people to collect opinions and explanations on government policies» [4, p.141]. The process of discussion and consultation in the frameworks of vertical democracy assumes gathering opinions on policies from different levels of this hierarchical structure. The author distinguishes six levels in this structure: village, town, county, city, province and the central government. «Vertical democracy can ensure that all levels have the opportunity to participate in giving opinions on

government policies. The mechanism is functioning, but there are problems which include: how to quantify the opinions collected; how to make use of the professional knowledge of the people; and how to make use of the opinions collected to improve the quality of governance, instead of using the mechanism to award honors and to launch a united front for the ruling party» [4, p.140]. At the same time, the ruling elite follows the procedure of discussing the legislative initiatives quite scrupulously. Kwok-wah Yip notes that every government report must be discussed for tens if not hundreds of times. For example, the Property Law was passed by the National People's Congress only after being submitted thirteen times [4, p.141].

The main consultative body in China's political system is CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference), it co-exists from the grassroots level up to the national level with the National People's Congress, «one responsible for giving power to the government and the other providing consultations on government policies» [4, p.140]. However, the members of CPPCC are not elected but appointed and that does not allow functioning one of the major instruments of democracy, namely, free elections. Moreover, elections to the National People's Congress are not direct but are based on hierarchical electoral system that limits applying the principle of free elections as well. However, the will among elites to implement the principles of representative democracy of Western type is currently absent. They justify the existent system by the need to keep China stable and to avoid the threat of disintegration as it was the case with the Soviet Union. In the booklet issued by leading ideologists of ruling party on 5 June 2009, the reasons of not welcoming western-style democratic parliamentary model are mentioned. «Their argument is that elections as they are conducted in the west would create instability; impede China's development at a critical juncture; and, in a complex society already stretched to the limits in terms of regional and class inequalities, risk the release of divisive political forces» [1]. Pan Wei does not exclude that the premature introduction of democracy actually could undermine the rule of law and modernization as it was in Rwanda and Angola [6].

Chinese leaders have said that they welcome more democracy in China but they want «to proceed slowly and cautiously so as not to destabilize the country or cause other problems. Beijing has said repeatedly it wants to avoid the situation that occurred during and after the break up of the Soviet Union» [1]. China has experienced the problem of disintegration in its recent history since the first half of XX century in China's history was marked by constant attempts to hold the country together and to unite territories that were disjunct by long civil war. That is why consideration of unity of the country has the highest priority in comparison to other tasks such as development of democratic procedures, protection of basic freedoms, and etc. In relation to understanding the concept of freedom in Western and Chinese cultures, John and Doris Naisbitt note distinct interpretation of value of freedom in Chinese culture: «Freedom means something different for Chinese people: social order and harmony. The focus of democracy thus shifts from individual choice to group harmony. The main task of vertical democracy is not to represent the people's will, but to harmoniously balance top-down and bottom-up forces» [7].

That demand for stability is not only elite's priority, this is an obstacle for pushing democratic reforms from below as well. Francis Fukuyama wrote in the Japanese newspaper the Daily Yomiuri: «Upwardly mobile Chinese, buying their first car or condominium, are above all interested in stability. What would threaten the new middle class' property today is precisely the emergence of a broader democracy. The reason is that China remains a hugely unequal society in which hundreds of millions of people have been left behind...Were China to democratize today, the political consequences would likely threaten middle class prosperity, if not political stability in general...Democracy will be potentially destabilizing until the large mass of rural poor in China come to share in the prosperity enjoyed by the elites and middle class» [1]. James Fallows argues that the «middle class, especially young professionals, have been the prime beneficiaries of China's prosperity and are thankful to the present government for providing it. And, they have the most to lose if reformers appear on the scene and change government is policy to, say, helping the rural poor at the expense of the urban rich» [1]. That is why Jeffrey Hays supposes that China «defied the conventional wisdom that economic growth, a growing middle class and trade with the outside world will somehow produce democracy and political reforms. There is no evidence that a growing middle class is demanding more democracy or political reforms or have become organized in any kind of meaningful way» [1].

Thus, since democracy leads to chaos as it widely perceived both by elites and general public in China, elite democracy and indirect consultation democracy are considered as more suitable for it. The universal suffrage is an unreal dream for the current political system of China. However, some authors suggest that China is moving along the special democratic trajectory and by 2037 year China will hold national elections as it was promised by Deng Xiaoping in 1987 year [1]. Beijing's elites have to implement some democratic reforms not only as a response to outer pressure but as a mean to stabilize the inner situation as well. Jeffrey Hays insists that behind the push for democratic reforms lies the threat of wider social unrest, spurred by corruption and income inequalities created by China's rapid economic boom: «there seems to be a certain understanding among today's leaders that, without democratic reform, the country risks widespread social unrest that could ultimately bring down the party» [1].

Nowadays different alternative versions of democratic development are proposed for China both by

national and foreign authors. Domestic reformers are trying to ground their models of democracy on Confucian values, foreign ones base them mostly on principles of Western democracy. For example, Jiang Qing proposes to implement tricameral legislature «with legislators in one chamber selected based on merit and in the others based on elections of some kind. One of these elected chambers may be reserved only for Communist Party members, the other for representatives elected by everyday Chinese» [6]. But whatever this model would be, it is evident that China would produce some unique form of democracy. Moreover, since the China has the authority among many countries of developing world that try to follow its economical policies and principles of Beijing consensus in general, we could assume that it will not only realize this specific form of democracy but spread it on other countries of developing world. And in such case the theories of democracy would be enriched by the some hybrid form of democracy unknown in XIX and XX century.

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