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Democracy is a realistic topic with long history. It is the achievements of mankind’s political civilization and also the desire of the people in every country. Democracy is both a political and social issue which is decided by every country’s own history, tradition, culture, and economy. Because of different situations in different countries, there are different ways to find and develop democracy. Chinese people choose their own way of developing peoples’ democracy and have already being the master of the country under the leading of Communist Party of China (CPC). This is a right way for gradually making China a modern country in the future.

1. DIFFERENT CONCEPTS ON DEMOCRACY

Even until today, there are still different opinions on democracy. When people talk about democracy and citizenship, they often set the Occidental democracy and citizenship as the standard one and to judge, compare the Oriental democracy and citizenship on this standard. This is not a scientific judge and comparison. It doesn’t consider history, tradition, and realistic situation in different countries. In my opinion, democracy is generated inside with the needs of the people in their country, not imposed externally. Different countries have different paths to develop democracy because of their different situations in different history periods.
There should be objective standards for democracy. Firstly, whether the people can express their opinions freely. Secondly, whether the power and rights of the people which are authorized by the Constitution can be protected and realized properly. Thirdly, whether the fundamental interests of the people can be realized. If these several standards could be met, we can say this is democracy. On the other side, with different historic conditions in different country, if a democratic system can solve the most urgent problems for the people and the nation, this system is a good and democratic system. Otherwise, if one system can't help solve the realistic, urgent problems in one country, it is not a good democratic system no matter what beautiful language it uses.

The birth and development of the Occidental democratic systems is closely connected with their own unique social situation, economy, and tradition. They are the outcome of the need of social interests and struggles. The earliest document which reflected Modern Occidental democratic spirit is Magna Carta which was signed in 1215 between the king and aristocracy. This document managed to protect the feudal aristocracy's economic and political interests, and try to limit the king's power. Even though this is a feudal document reflecting the upper class' economic and political interests at that time, it had already included the major principles of the coming bourgeois society. That is "the taxpayer should have the power to interfere in the politics". That means the economic elites would share the social and country's power with the political elites. This starts the early beginning of Occidental democracy.

Starting from the 13th century, the Occidental democracy experienced eight hundred years development. This kind of democracy underwent drastic changes and many times turbulence. It has not gotten a stable structure and position only after the Second World War. It is the Occidental unique tradition, economic and social conditions making this system come into being, and not this system brings prosperity and power for the Occidental world. This kind democratic system reflects interests from different groups of the bourgeois. The formation and development of the Occidental democracy can not be separated from its history and tradition. Thus, it would be unrealistic simply to copy the occidental democratic system to other countries.

2. DEMOCRACY IS GENERATED INSIDE

Democracy is a history process which is decided by problem it should solve and the target it would reach. It is not abstract. "Any democracy, as same as any political superstructure, serves for production and is decided by the productive relations in that society."

That means democracy is based on different social economic foundation. As the country’s political system, democracy is the form of the governing class to organize government. It is a method for the governing class to administrate society and develop economy. There is no only one absolute democratic formation which applies for all country. Even in the same country, the exact formation of democracy is different at different history period.

If one country introduce the unsuitable democratic formation at the wrong time that will almost definitely bring turbulence, chaos to that country. Because the cultures differ from the Oriental and Occidental world, and the Occidental world has been much powerful than the Oriental world in past centuries, so some experts often take the Occidental democratic formation as the standard one when they analyze the Oriental democratic systems in spite of the totally different history, culture, tradition and situation. No matter how much achievements and progress that country acquire in politics, economy and social life, it would not be taken as a democratic one just because its system is not as same as that of the Occidental world, especially that of the U.S.A. This is an abstract analyse on democracy. Where does the problem come from? Democratic formation is not democracy itself. Somebody take general election, parliamentarism, and multi-party system as democratic. Are they democratic? Absolutely they are. But they are only one of democratic systems. There should be different democratic systems. Democratic systems are not absolute. One country should and might choose different democratic system according to its national, history, tradition and needs. The most important is that the exact democratic system should be suitable to the development period, to that country’s situation, to its development needs. If one democratic system can not meet these requirements, it is not a good, suitable democracy in spite of its so-called wonderful democratic surface.

No matter what formation the democracy takes, the final goal is important. This final goal is to realize the people’s interests. The exact details of the people’s interests include: economy keeping developed, country remaining unified, domestic society maintaining stable, and international status improved. If a democratic system brings turbulence and chaos to that country’s economy, politics and culture, we can not say that is a good democracy. Only when the

peoples' living standards are improved continuously, when their economic, political, and social statuses become equal and harmonious, would the true democracy come.

This is also China's experience in developing democracy. Democracy should make the country prosperous and promote the people's material life and spiritual life. These are the urgent desires of the Oriental people, including Chinese people and Lebanon people. The fundamental goal of Chinese democratic system is to liberate productivity, making the people get rich together. Under Chinese socialist system, most Chinese people can live and work in peace and contentment. And two historical leaps have been accomplished in people's life, which are from being poverty to having enough food and clothing, and then to reaching the moderately well-off stage. This democratic system brings economic and social status equality for the people. We pursue for the people to get rich together instead of only the minority or only the elites getting rich. In China, only with the socialist system, the people can have equal status in economy. Therefore, Chinese government's policy has obtained the support of the people. During the present period, the major goal of democracy is to realize social rights, especially rights on economic equality.

At present, China will gradually realize peoples' democracy, expanding and enhancing people's participation in national economic, political, cultural, and social affairs. The people directly participate in democratic election, democratic decision-making, democratic administration, and democratic supervision. The further development of democracy in the second period would not be obtained only after the Chinese people's subsistence rights were totally solved in the first democratic period. Before China's reform and opening-up in 1978, CPC (Communist Party of China) already successfully solved the problem of subsistence for the people. Only with these achievements, is it possible to gradually expand people's participation in politics. In our opinion, the democracy with Chinese characteristics should be developed gradually instead of being accomplished in one night. After more than five decades development since the founding of New China in 1949, China has cast off its former state of abject poverty. Productivity has grown rapidly, overall national strength has increased greatly and people's life has improved markedly, economic foundation has been more solid than before, the society is undergoing prosperity and will maintain it in the future. But somebody can not explain correctly the true reasons which make China prosperous. Why can China avoid the development trap other developing countries ever experienced in the process of globalization? The answer is China's peoples' democracy. The peoples' democracy guaranteed China's success in developing. That is why comrade Deng Xiaoping ever
warned, keeping stability is most important. Without stability, any development would be impossible. Overall development needs a suitable democratic political system as its guarantee. Whether a system is democratic or not, it should not be only judged by its formation (surface).

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINA'S DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP BUILDING

To build a high-degree peoples’ democracy is one of China’s fundamental tasks and goals as well as the common desire of the Chinese people. Why do the Chinese people choose peoples’ democracy? China has undergone several times transition since one hundred years ago. In the course of Chinese modern history, the Chinese people have endeavored to win their democratic rights. But only after 1949 when the communist party began leading this country, did the Chinese people really become the master of their own. It is not occasional that the Chinese people choose peoples’ democracy. It is the result of general factors, such as national situation, history, reality, and international and domestic surroundings. As a value which is pursued by all the people around the world, democracy has some common interests in some level. On the general meaning, democracy should be the rule by the majority. But who are the majority? What is the meaning of rule? It should be analyzed and answered according to the exact history surrounding. At different history periods, there are different requirements of democracy, and even at same history period, there are different levels of democracy.

3.1 The history of Chinese people pursuing democracy

The experience of political civilization of mankind proved that the political system a country adopts and the road to democracy it takes must be suitable to the conditions of that country. China ever tried to copy Occidental democratic systems since 1911. In that year, Dr. Sun Yat-sen led the bourgeois revolution and brought an end to the autocratic monarchical system that had been lasted for more than 2,000 years and established a bourgeois republic. Multi-party systems, parliamentarism, general elections in imitation of Occidental democracy, were all introduced into China at that time. But these so called democratic systems did not fulfill the fervent desire of the Chinese people for independence and democracy. China was still oppressed by Western powers. Chinese sovereignty was still invaded and even controlled by Western powers. Independence and democracy are still far from China and its people. Through these experiences, the Chinese people finally came to realize that mechanically copying the Western bourgeois political system would lead them nowhere.
What is the goal of democracy? Democracy should solve the most urgent problems. At different period, democracy has different contents and levels. At that time, what is most urgent problem which needs to be solved? That is to realize national independence; this is the first step, and then prosperity. No matter what method and system the country will take, the most important is to meet these goals. In 1949, the establishment of People’s Republic of China brings sovereignty independence back to the country and the people. This is the urgent requirement and first step of democracy. In 1949, Chinese people realized their 100-year dream, putting an end to all the unequal treaties which had been forcedly signed with Western powers since 1840. Under the leadership of Communist Party of China, fundamental changes have taken place to the political status of the Chinese people. From then on, the Chinese people became the real masters of their country, society and their own fate. This is the most important and largest requirement for democracy at that period. Only after this requirement was brought into reality, would the successive goal of prosperity be further implemented. The success of the first step also proved bourgeois republic and its democratic systems are not absolute, not universal everywhere.

3.2 Three main characteristics

During the process of building Chinese political democracy, China introduced the useful achievements of the political civilization of mankind, including the Occidental democracy, and assimilated the democratic elements of China’s traditional culture and institutional civilization. Thus, China’s political democracy shows distinctive Chinese characteristics.

Under the leadership of the CPC. This people’s democracy is under the leadership of the CPC. The democratic political system in China was established by the Chinese people led by the CPC. The development and improvement of this system are also carried out under the CPC’s leadership. The leadership of CPC is a fundamental guarantee for the Chinese people to be masters in managing the affairs of their own country.

People being the Masters of the country. The overwhelming majority of the people act as masters of state affairs. People being the masters are the quintessence of China’s democracy. In China, the publicly owned sector of the economy is the economic foundation of China’s political system. In the primary stage of socialism, the state persists in the basic economic system with public ownership playing a dominant role and diverse forms of ownership developing side by side and the distribution system in which to each according to his work is predominant while other forms of distribution exist side by side. This ensures, from the perspective of economic foundation, that China’s democracy will not
be manipulated by capital; it is not a democracy for a small number of people, but one for the overwhelming majority of the people.

Democratic centralism. Democratic centralism is the fundamental principle of organization and leadership of state power in China. When democratic centralism is practiced, it requires that we give full play to democracy and discuss matters of concern collectively, so that people’s wishes and demands are fully expressed and reflected. Then, all the correct opinions are pooled, and decisions are made collectively so that the people’s wishes and demands are realized and met. The practice of democratic centralism also requires that "the majority be respected while the minority is protected." We are against the anarchic call for "democracy for all," and against anybody placing his own will above that of the collective.

4. SYSTEMS GUARANTEE

Except the above characteristics, it is necessary that system as a guarantee to build and develop citizenship and democracy. There are three important systems in China to protect the civil rights of all the people under democracy. These are the People’s Congress system, the system of Multi-Party Cooperation and Political Consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and Ethnic Regional Autonomy system.

4.1 National People’s Congress System

Not long after the founding of New China, the first general election in Chinese history was held all over the country in 1953. The people exercised the power of being masters of the state by electing their own representatives, and people’s congresses were held first at local levels and then at national levels. In 1954, the first session of the first National People’s Congress (NPC) was held, which marks the formal establishment of the system of people’s congress all over China.

The people’s congress system is the fundamental political system of China. The Constitution, which was adopted by NPC, also clearly stipulated that “All power in the People’s Republic of China belongs to the people. The National People’s Congress and the local people’s congresses at various levels are the organs through which the people exercise state power. Democratic centralism
shall be practiced in the National People’s Congress and the local people’s congresses at various levels as well as in all other state organs”¹.

China has adopted a unicameral parliamentary system based on its national conditions, rather than the bicameral system instituted in Occidental countries. The Chinese Constitution stipulates: the NPC is the highest organ of state power. In China, all administrative, judicial and procuratorial organs of the state are created by the people’s congresses to which they are responsible and by which they are supervised. All major issues of the state are decided by the people’s congresses. The administrative organs are responsible for implementing the laws, resolutions and decisions adopted by the people’s congresses. The courts and procuratorates exercise their respective powers of jurisdiction and prosecution independently, in line with the stipulations of the law, free from interference by any administrative authority, social organization or individual.

The Chinese Constitution and law stipulate that the term of office of each NPC and each of local people’s congresses at various levels is five years, and the NPC meets in session once a year and local people’s congresses at various levels meet at least once a year. Since the number of deputies to the NPC is fairly large and makes it inconvenient to hold frequent meetings, the NPC Standing Committee is established in accordance with the stipulation of the Constitution to exercise the functions and powers of the highest organ of state power when the NPC is not in session. The members of the Standing Committee of the NPC and standing committees of the local people’s congresses at and above the county level are elected from among the deputies to the people’s congresses in competitive elections, and for the same term as the NPC and local people’s congresses at the corresponding levels.

The NPC and the local people’s congresses at various levels are established through democratic elections. They are responsible to the people and subject to their supervision. The Chinese Constitution states that all citizens who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and stand for election, regardless of ethnic status, race, sex, occupation, family background, religious belief, education, property status or length of residence, except for persons deprived of political rights in accordance with the law. At present, there are 2.8 million deputies to the people’s congresses at all levels nationwide, and they are from various ethnic groups, trades, social strata and political parties and are therefore highly representative. The deputies from workers and farmers account for a considerable proportion of deputies to people’s congresses at different levels.

¹. Constitution of P.R.C., page 1.
The people's congresses and their standing committees pursue a democratic style of work, draw on the wisdom of all deputies, and represent and convey the will and basic interests of the people.

4.2 The System of Multi-Party Cooperation and Political Consultation under the Leadership of the CPC

There are nine political parties in China at present. Besides the CPC, there are other eight democratic parties. Another important force in China's political life is the personages without party affiliation, or people who have not joined any political party but have certain public influence coupled with positive contributions. These democratic parties are close friends of the CPC. In China, the CPC and the democratic parties share the same goal for society.

The political party system in China is multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, which is different from both the two-party or multi-party competition system of western countries and the one-party system practiced in some other countries.

The main characteristics of China's political party system are: multi-party cooperation under the leadership of the CPC, with the CPC holding power and the democratic parties participating fully in state affairs. They unite and cooperate with the latter in their participation in state affairs, instead of being opposition parties or out-of-power parties. They participate in the exercise of state power, the consultation in fundamental state policies and the choice of state leaders, the administration of state affairs, and the formulation and implementation of state policies, laws and regulations.

The leadership of CPC is not one of simple monopoly, but one of political leadership, that is, leadership in terms of political principle, political orientation, and major policies and programs. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is an important organ of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and an important instrument of democracy in the country's political life. The CPC Central Committee routinely invites leaders of the democratic parties and representative personages without party affiliation to consultative conferences, small-scale meetings and forums at which CPC leaders inform the participants of major events, hear their opinions and suggestions, and discuss state affairs with them. In addition to these consultation meetings, the central committees of the democratic parties may submit suggestions in writing to the CPC Central Committee.
The CPPCC conducts its work centering on the two themes of unity and democracy, and exercises the functions of political consultation, democratic supervision, and participating in the administration and discussion of state affairs. The CPPCC plays an important role in the state’s political life, social life and overseas friendship activities, as well as the country’s modernization drive and the struggle to safeguard national reunification and unity. The CPC and the governments at all levels consult the CPPCC on fundamental policies and important issues in political, economic, cultural and social affairs before a decision is adopted and during the implementation of such decisions, so as to heed and canvass a wide range of opinions. This is a key link for the CPC and the governments at all levels to ensure that decision-making is scientific and democratic.

Members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation hold leading positions in government and judicial organs at various levels. At present, over 32,000 members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation are holding main positions in government and law-enforcement departments in central and local governments. They play a significant role in the organs of state power. Another important function of democratic parties is to exercise democratic supervision over the work of the CPC and the state organs through diversified channels and ways.

The system has two main merits at least. First, it can avoid both the problem of insufficient supervision common under one party rule, and political chaos and a lack of stability and unity that may be caused by the disputes and strife of several parties. Second, it can both achieve wide democratic participation, pool the wisdom of the democratic parties, mass organizations and people of all walks of life and promote the scientific and democratic decision-making of the party in power and the governments at all levels, and realize centralization and unity and draw up unified plans with due consideration given to the interests of different sections of the people.

4.3 The System of Ethnic Regional Autonomy

In almost every country, there are different races and ethnicities. To deal with race’s and ethnics’ problems has already become an important factor to keep the country’s stability and development. How to protect the rights and power of different races and ethnic? A suitable system is very important.

China is a unitary multi-ethnic country. There are 56 ethnic groups in today’s China. The population of the Han ethnic group accounts for the majority. The other 55 ethnic groups are customarily referred to as "ethnic minorities." The
population of all ethnic minority groups totaled 106.43 million, accounting for 8.41 percent of the national total. Different multi-ethnic countries adopt different systems to solve the problems of ethnic groups. What China has adopted is ethnic regional autonomy system. China’s adoption of ethnic regional autonomy to solve the ethnic problems is an institutional arrangement based on its own historical development, cultural characteristics, ethnic relations and distribution of the ethnic groups, as well as other specific conditions, which is in accord with the common interests of all ethnic groups and their demands for development.

Ethnic autonomous areas are divided into three levels, autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties. At present, there are more than 2.9 million ethnic minority officials in the country. The people’s congresses and people’s governments of autonomous areas are self-governing organs. They exercise the power of autonomy. Firstly, independently managing the internal affairs of their ethnic groups in their autonomous areas. Secondly, they have the power to formulate regulations on the exercise of autonomy and separate regulations. Thirdly, they can use and develop their own spoken and written languages. At present, 22 ethnic minorities in China use 28 written languages of their own.

Under this system of ethnic autonomy, the ethnic minorities can successfully manage their own affairs in accordance with the law and participate in the democratic management of state and social affairs. It has also ensured that all ethnic groups in China, no matter their populations are big or small, enjoy equal economic, political, social and cultural rights and work together to safeguard national unity and national solidarity and fight against any attempt to split the country and destroy national solidarity, thus form among them harmonious relations characterized by mutual support, mutual help, striving in unison and common prosperity.

This system is a basic political system in China. If ethnic peoples’ rights could not be protected and realized, problems among different ethnics would break out which will damage the country’s stability as well as the peoples’ living conditions. Thus correct ethnic policies are also very important factor for democracy and citizenship building.

5. REASONS FOR DEMOCRACY WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

Firstly, history and experience have already proved this kind of democracy is necessary and correct. Before the establishment of P.R.C. in 1949, China’s society was almost totally disunited, which is like a heap of loose sand. That was a painful experience for the Chinese people. In a big country like China, with
such a large population and where things are extremely complicated (this is a bit like that of Middle East), if there was not a strong political core and a lofty goal that can unite the people of all ethnic groups in their common struggle, the country would have disintegrated easily, and it would have been impossible for China to develop and make progress. Experience has shown that, in China, it is the CPC that unites the Chinese people, gives full play to their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity, and has them engage, heart and soul, in the common struggle for their common interests, common cause, common ideal and a better future for China.

Secondly, it is needed for making the state power stable. China is a vast country with a large population. There are great disparities in terms of development between urban and rural areas, and between different regions. It is of unusual significance for China to have a stable state power. Only then can China concentrate on construction and development, and only then can the country’s development strategy and goal of modernization be pursued for a long time and through to the end. Only then can all kinds of unnecessary and unwanted internal political strife be minimized, all positive factors be exploited to the full, and all resources, strength and wisdom be pooled to tackle major problems that have a bearing on the nation’s economy and the people’s livelihood, and to ensure sustainable social and economic development.

Thirdly, it is needed for safeguarding China’s unification and keeping society harmonious and stable. History has proved that without the unification of the country and social stability, there will be no prosperity for the country, and the people will not be able to live and work in peace and contentment. Foreign invasions, warlord rampages and political turmoil brought disaster after disaster to contemporary China. That period of history left an indelible impression on the memory of the Chinese people. The unification and stability of China is a blessing for the Chinese people. It is also in keeping with the interests of the people of all other countries in the world. To safeguard the country’s unification and social stability has always been a matter of paramount importance at which the people of all ethnic groups in China are most concerned.

**CONCLUSION**

Over the past 20 years and more, great progress has been made in China’s practice of building a peoples’ democratic political system. The system of the people’s congress, the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and the system of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities -- all important components of China’s democratic system -- have been
continuously improved and developed. The democratic rights of people at the grassroots level in urban and rural areas have been constantly increased, and the citizens’ basic rights are respected and guaranteed. The CPC’s capability to rule the country in a democratic manner has been enhanced further, while the government’s capability to administer the country in a democratic manner has been strengthened noticeably. Continual progress has been made in building a democratic system within the legal framework. Marked achievements have been recorded in the reform of the state leadership system, legislative system, administrative management system, decision-making system, judicial system, personnel system, and supervision and checking system. Guided by the objective of ruling the country by law and building a socialist country under the rule of law, more efforts are being made to build peoples’ democracy so that it is institutionalized, standardized and in line with prescribed procedures. A socialist law regime with Chinese characteristics and with the Constitution at its core has been preliminarily formed. Major aspects of China’s politics, economics, culture and social life are now within the purview of the rule of law.

While there have already been tremendous achievements, many problems yet to be overcome. The peoples’ democracy system has been introduced and practiced in China for only a few decades, which is a short period compared with other social systems adopted in the history of mankind. A complete mode of democracy cannot be built overnight. There is still a long way to go in China’s building of political democracy, which will be a historical process of continuous improvement and development.

The explorations and struggles made by the Chinese people over the past 100 years and more in order to realize democracy, and especially China’s success in building a socialist political democracy, have made the CPC and the Chinese people realize that China must base the building of political democracy on its reality, review its own experience gained in practice, treasure its own achievements, and learn from the experience and achievements of the political civilization of other countries. But, it must not copy any modes of other countries. Different country should choose her own way that is most suitable to her history, tradition, and characteristics and thus set up a solid foundation for the realization of citizenship.
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