

## China Must Not Copy the Western-Style Two-Party or Multi-Party System

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### Abstract

The reason why China must not copy the Western party system is that the party system is just a tool to achieve a democratic mechanism and the Western party system and the realization of democracy are not necessarily linked; Western party system does not meet the needs of developing countries; The implementation of two-party or multi-party system could provide breakthroughs for powers to interfere in the internal affairs of socialist countries. Multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China is a basic political system suitable for China's national conditions and has great advantages.

**Key words:** The West; Party system; Multi-party cooperation and political consultation system; Superiority

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### INTRODUCTION

Hu Jintao's report at 18th Party Congress reiterates that “we should.....give full play to the strength of the socialist political system” and “will never copy a Western political system”. The level of development of a country's political culture is mainly reflected in party politics and

the party system is the core of a country's political system. Misreading, misunderstandings and distortions about China's party system of multi-party cooperation both at home and abroad have always been continuing. The Westerners believe that China is inevitably “authoritarian” because it is a one-party leadership state. There are also some people at home who have some misunderstandings about China's political system, thinking that such a system is short of democracy and prone to corruption, and so China should implement the two-party or multi-party competition like western countries. How to understand and appraise China's political system has always been a major theoretical and practical issue. To this end, the following points need to be clear.

### 1. TAKING THE PARTY SYSTEM AS THE ONLY EVALUATION STANDARD OF THE LEVEL OF DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IS UNSCIENTIFIC

In modern democratic politics, the political participation of the people, the people's control and supervision on the government and their requirements to change the political status quo, should be achieved through political parties. In this sense, one can say that the party system is one of the basic forms of modern democracy, and plays a key role in the democratic development of a country. However, once a party system is produced, not only could the democratic and revolutionary forces use it, but also some reactionary, anti-democratic forces might use it as a means of political struggle. Therefore, the party system is only a mechanism for democracy, and couldn't be taken as the sole criterion for assessing the level of democratic development.

The core values of democracy lie in expanding people's political rights, making them widely and equally participate in politics. Whether or not a party system is to promote the development of democracy depends on

the actual nature of the activities of political parties and whether the rights of the people could be fully guaranteed. It cannot be considered for granted that the two-party or multi-party system is certainly more democratic than any other political systems. In a country with two-party or multi-party system, if all parties couldn't represent the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people and reflect their demands, but only represent the interests of certain interest groups or a small group of people, we cannot say such a system is democratic. In the United States, for example, "kidnappings" of national and public interests by the political parties and individuals often occur. The U.S. "debt ceiling" issue is a typical example. The U.S. Treasury bonds hit the so-called "legal limit" in the second half of 2011, so an increase in the debt ceiling required the approval of both houses of Congress. To address this issue, the two parties continued struggling for months, just to make finally the United States into the worst party struggle since the World War II. In fact, what the two parties advocated-the U.S. Democratic Party focused on "broadening sources of income" and the Republican on "reducing expenditure"-were two sides of the same coin. The real responsible approach conforming to national interests should have been to put aside their differences and take into account both. But the two parties did everything they could to block each other's proposals to suppress political opponents and win votes, thus making national and the general public's interests a victim of political struggle. This kind of game and controversy between the parties looks "democratic", but actually shows the major drawbacks of the Western-style democracy.

As we all know, democracy needs to have some common principles, such as the principle of popular sovereignty, the principle of consultation and discussion and the procedural principle. To determine whether a system can help achieve democracy, the main reasoning is to see if it follows these principles. In a country with one ruling party, if the party could keep abreast of public opinion and take certain means to absorb legitimate aspirations and demands of the people into the principles and policies of the party and the government, and to facilitate the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the people through practical action, it is actually in line with the needs of the democratic political system. To determine whether a country's political party system is of democracy without considering the fundamental principles of democracy is unscientific.

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## **2. THE WESTERN POLITICAL SYSTEM DOES NOT MEET THE NEEDS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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The key to determine whether a party system could be to promote democracy or hinder democracy depends on whether such a system is conducive to social stability and

economic prosperity and conforms to the conditions of the nation. Since the Second World War, there have appeared a large number of emerging countries gaining independence in Africa and Latin America, and most of them follow the multi-party system of the Western countries. In recent years, the Western powers have been taking advantage of globalization to promote the Western-style democracy more strongly in developing countries, and taking it as an indicator of legitimacy for developing countries to adopt the two-party or multi-party system. In fact, not only do the Western countries belittle the values of democracy, but also they deny the diversity of democratic models, overstating the Western political system as the only model for realization of democracy. Over time, people are increasingly clear that the Western political system is not suited to the national conditions of developing countries. Facts have proved that the outcomes for the non-Western countries to adopt the Western political system (one vote+ multi-party system) are basically two: one is from hope to despair, such as the case in the Philippines, Thailand, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan; the other is from hope to despair, such as in Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the West, the political party system is the outcome of the cumulative adjustments of conflicts and cooperation of different groups in the development of market economy, thus having a certain historical inevitability. While in developing countries, the Western political system doesn't fit for growth. For developing countries, the primary task is to achieve the country's development and prosperity, and that this historical mission is being promoted in the world order established by the Western developed countries greatly exacerbates the difficulty the latecomer countries achieve modernization. To accomplish modernization successfully, the developing countries must get together all the limited resources and wisdoms effectively to achieve leapfrog development. David Held once said that the strong state power is a prerequisite for the well-running of democracy. To run a democratic system, the modern state has to have the impersonal power structure in addition to the territory, legitimacy and organs of violence. Without such a structure, it is difficult for the state to form a power restriction system, and democracy in which the public authority is required to be responsible for the people would be a castle in the air. And this structure couldn't be formed without cohesion and guidance by a strong political party. The strong impulse to development and the urgent desire to avoid further marginalization in the globalization process make most of the disadvantaged developing countries more eager to establish a stable, orderly party system which even has a powerful political party as the core, to support the government to respond effectively to the challenges of globalization and prevent the country from a new round of crisis of "colonization". Without a powerful leadership, a country could be disrupted like

Iraq. In addition, lots of money and other resources are wasteful, and most of the election manifesto of the parties, generally speaking, would not be achieved when elected. Taking Japan politics as an example, the prime minister of Japan have changed merry-go-round in recent years and in the limited time, the elected leader would not be able to conduct policies, which had been propagated during the election. The Japanese had been terribly dissatisfied with the unstable politics in Japan and the economy in Japan has already remained in the doldrums for decades. In order to maintain political stability, some countries, such as Malaysia, have formed a system with one dominant political party supported by parties of different ethnic groups. This, in the practical sense, helps shatter illusions of the western party system, which is based on "freedom", "democracy" and diversification.

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### **3. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TWO-PARTY OR MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM COULD PROVIDE BREAKTHROUGHS FOR POWERS TO INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES**

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Among the causes of the fall of the Soviet Union, one of the most important was the implementation of the Western-style multi-party politics. In contrast to previous Soviet rulers, Gorbachev had permitted the formation of unofficial organizations. In October 1987, the newspaper of the CPSU youth, *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, reported that informal groups, so-called *neformaly*, were "growing as fast as mushrooms in the rain". The concerns of these groups included the environment, sports, history, computers, philosophy, art, literature, and the preservation of historical landmarks. In August 1987, forty-seven *neformaly* held a conference in Moscow without interference from the authorities. In early 1988, some 30,000 *neformaly* existed in the Soviet Union. One year later, their number had more than doubled. These informal groups begot popular fronts, which in turn spawned political parties. By the time of the Twenty-Eighth Party Congress in July 1990, the CPSU was regarded by liberals, intellectuals, and the general public as anachronistic and unable to lead the country. The CPSU branches in many of the fifteen Soviet republics began to split into large pro-sovereignty and pro-union factions, further weakening central party control. In a series of humiliations, the CPSU was separated from the government and stripped of its leading role in society and its function in overseeing the national economy. For seventy years, it had been the cohesive force that kept the union together; without the authority of the party in the Soviet center, the nationalities of the constituent republics pulled harder than ever to break away from the union.

Gorbachev's decision to allow elections with a multi-party system and create a presidency for the Soviet Union began a process of democratization that eventually destabilized Communist control and contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The multi-party system made the whole reform of the Soviet Union out of the leadership of the Communist Party and the guidance of Marxism. In such a case, anti-socialist forces supported overtly or covertly by Western powers appeared and had the Soviet Union reformed according to their ideas. The Soviet Union had to change the direction of its development, leading to the destruction of the Party and the nation, and the rapid decline in economy and social turmoil. So was Yugoslavia.

After political changes in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia became the only European socialist country. Some Western countries took advantage of Yugoslavia's economic difficulties to exchange "economic aid" for Yugoslavia's "multi-party system", forcing the Communist Party of Yugoslavia to accept the "democracy" of the West. In less than a year's time, there appeared in Yugoslavia more than 1000 parties. The opposition parties, supported in a full range from political to economic aspects by the West, continued inciting nationalism and attacked and abused mistakes under the Communist Party, eventually forcing the Communist Party to hand over power and dividing Yugoslavia into seven. As James Graham said, "The multi-party political system that resulted from the 1990 elections was seriously flawed. Political parties of which there were a large number lacked time and resources to develop a wide range of policies. Voters were thus denied the information they needed to make informed decisions. Additionally there was no chance to vote to maintain Yugoslavia even though 62 percent of Yugoslavs claimed Yugoslavian affiliation was very, or quite, important to them in a 1990 survey of 4,232 people. Nationalists' claims that other groups would block vote successfully turned it into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Every town experienced the founding of political parties and the divisive nationalist discourse that went with them. Peer pressure to support one's ethnic group in these towns was intense..."

Both the Soviet history and Yugoslavia history show that the implementation of a multi-party system in socialist countries means legalization of illegal requirements and views. In the name of multi-party system, those people who hate society can easily come together and appear openly on the social arena under the banner of politics. They might ask foreign forces for help and seek opportunities to come into power for the benefit of small groups. In this case, the Western powers may intervene in a country's internal affairs at any time, and the implementation of multi-party system actually provides a breakthrough for the Western powers to interfere in the internal affairs of socialist countries.

Moreover, the implementation of a two-party or multi-party system also means an introduction of parliamentary

politics because parliament is the main place and battleground where parties play their roles. It is inevitable that a set of bourgeois political systems will follow. For a socialist country, this is tantamount to self-destruct and self-denial.

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#### 4. CHINA'S PARTY SYSTEM HAS GREAT ADVANTAGES

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The multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China is a party system with Chinese characteristics, which is different from both the two-party or multi-party system in Western countries and the Soviet-style one-party system. Having developed for many years in the course of the Chinese revolution, construction and reform, this system has become the basic political system suitable for China's national conditions and has great advantages.

The salient 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. These democratic parties are close friends of the CPC. 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. In short, party cooperation is a vivid manifestation of the relationship between China's parties.

The CPC-led multi-party cooperation and political consultation system well combines together the wisdom of all other democratic parties, associations and people from all walks of life. The combined wisdom of the system can not only help promote a more scientific and democratic decision-making of the ruling party and governments at all levels, but can also help balance the interests and needs of various communities. The system can work to avoid the disadvantage of a lack of supervision in a single-party system, and at the same time also help prevent party wrangling, political chaos and social instability caused by multi-party disputes.

Some people think that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" on the grounds of one-party leadership in China. In fact, corruption is often associated with unsound market economy and trading system, financial system and the democratic system of supervision; while it's not necessarily linked with the party system. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2013 released by the global anti-corruption organization Transparency International, the index scores 177 countries and territories on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). No country has a perfect score, and two-thirds of countries score

below 50. This indicates a serious, worldwide corruption problem. More than half of the countries have a lower score than China, indicating that in many countries adopting the Western-style political system, corruption is also very serious. The class attribute determines the nature of the activities of a party. For a party aiming at serving the people, the power given by the people is not the capital of "acting as overlords", but is synonymous with responsibilities and obligations. Recognizing this, the "absolute power" will be converted into "absolute liability". In recent years, China's accountability system has been increasingly improved, and officials would be ready to be held responsible for their incompetence or negligence at any time. The purpose of this is to warn the party leaders to seriously take responsibilities to prevent corruption from occurring.

Of course, no system isn't performed by the people, and people always have shortages or commit errors, which creates a gap between the "ideal" state and the real state of the system function. There also exist some aspects in the party system of China which are incompatible with the requirements of the development of socialist democracy and need to be much improved. For example, the awareness and capacity of the ruling party to lead and support the people to be masters of their own need to be strengthened; supervision and control on the ruling party needs to be further implemented; the ability of the participating parties to participate in politics is still incompatible with their status; etc. These are the real problems we face. In this regard, we should correct shortcomings and mistakes and constantly improve the system, and strive to make the system function to its "ideal" state. If we denied the fundamental superiority and vitality of our party system because of some specific problems, we would commit the mistake of "taking a part for the whole".

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#### CONCLUSION

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Democracy has now become a common goal of all humankind and it is also the orientation of Chinese political institutional reform. Whatever specific system of democracy a country chooses to practice, however, it must be compatible with the conditions of that country. Because different countries have different conditions, the paths they take in developing democracy and the style of democracy they develop also vary. This is also a concrete reflection of the diversity in the development of human civilization. The Western-style two-party or multi-party system is unsuitable for China and even quite dangerous because of China's specific national conditions.

The system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC is a party system with Chinese characteristics and has provided a reliable political guarantee for us to achieve a series of historic leaps and breakthroughs, so we must adhere

to it and cannot shake it or give it up. We need to improve various forms of consultation, enlarge the scope of democracy, develop more forms of democracy, and increase the level of democracy, so as to promote the extensive and institutionalized development of consultative democracy at multiple levels.

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