The Chinese Dream

Xi Jinping, March 2013:

“ In order to build a moderately prosperous society, a prosperous, democratic, civilized and harmonious modern socialist country to achieve the China Dream of great rejuvenation of the nation, we need to achieve national prosperity and revitalization of the happiness of the people, which deeply reflects the Chinese people’s dream today and is in consistence with our glorious tradition.”

(Source: China Story Yearbook 2013.)
China’s Political System and Democracy.

Party
- Party Constitution
- Party Leadership
- Members: 6-7% of Population

State
- Constitution
  - Legislative power: The National People’s Congress
  - Executive power: President and State Council
  - Judiciary power: Courts

Party Constitution
Party Leadership
Members: 6-7% of Population
Constitution
Legislative power: The National People’s Congress
Executive power: President and State Council
Judiciary power: Courts
Analytical fields.

- Official and semi-official plans and policies
- Intellectual discourse on democracy
- Public attitudes to democracy
Intellectual discourse about democracy.

Political Confucianism
meritocracy.

Neoconservatives
skepticism about political reforms because a hasty democratization might lead to a new weakening of state power. Many neoconservatives also believe that China is not yet ready for democracy.

Liberalists, Neoliberals, Social Liberals and Social Democrats
all advocate the establishment of a constitutional democracy. The different shades of liberalists furthermore oppose direct democracy, believing that it could lead to destabilizing mass demonstrations and unrest.

The New Left
emphasizes the connection between political and economic democracy, and laud some of the experiences with political institutions from the Maoist past, the so-called “mass democracy” of the Cultural Revolution. Direct democracy.

The Old left
may be divided into two groups: Maoists and Orthodox Marxists. The Maoists oppose a bourgeois multi-party system and, like the New Left, support “mass democracy.” Orthodox Marxists advocate a combination of economic and political democracy, and respect for the principles of the Paris Commune.
Wang Shaoguang, Chinese University of Hong Kong:

Of course, I think that democracy is a good thing in itself. To a very high degree it is a belief which is very hard to verify. I think that to let ordinary people participate in political life and make decisions concerning their own living conditions is important. In my opinion ordinary people have sufficient competence to know what is good for themselves, they do not need others to make decisions for them.

Not everyone agree with me in this. Some people call me a democratic fundamentalist, they argue that the original kind of democracy cannot be realized, but has to be replaced by some kind of representative system.

(Interview with Wang Shaoguang: “Why is democracy a good thing?”, Nan fang Renwu Zhoukan, 23.3.2012.)

“Without financial transparency, there is no democracy”

“USA and China are both ruled by elites…
Now, an alliance between the political, economic and intellectual elites is ruling China.”
Nation State and Civilizational State.
“Exceptionalism.”

Zhang Weiwei

Eight characteristics of the civilizational state of China:
1. a super-large population
2. a super-vast territory
3. super-long traditions
4. a super-rich culture
5. a unique language
6. unique politics (efficient, meritocratic system of government)
7. a unique society (family- and group oriented)
8. a unique economy.

China is already a civilizational state, which amalgamates the nation state and the civilizational state, and combines the strength of both.
What Democracy do the Chinese Want?
Survey on Political Attitudes in China.

Wang Mingshu :
中国人想要什么样民主
（Zhongguo Ren Xiangyao Shenmeyang Minzhu）

The survey was performed in 2011 among 1750 respondents from four cities:
Beijing, Shenzhen, Xiaogan and Yucun
Public attitudes to Democracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is democracy good or bad?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>54,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on whether it is a democracy in accordance with China’s conditions.</td>
<td>40,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not clear</td>
<td>2,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100,0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public attitudes to Democracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Necessary to take into consideration if it is in accordance with China’s conditions</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Not clear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High income</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium income</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public attitudes to Democracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding of democracy</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy is a state where regular elections are held, and the leaders are elected in competition between several political parties.</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy is a state where the government and leaders correctly represent the interest of the people, serve the people and are supervised by the people.</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zhang Mingshu, 2013 p. 57
Public attitudes to Democracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not good enough, must be further developed.</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparatively good and in accordance with China’s present conditions</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zhang Mingshu, 2013 p. 42
Public attitudes to Democracy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What should be improved in democracy-building in China?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No regular competitive elections</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient public control with government</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption severe</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders are not wholeheartedly serving the people</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy severe</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions by Zhang Mingshu about public political attitudes in China.

Basic difference between the Chinese and the Western political culture.

West: Scientific political culture.

China: Moralist political culture. (With roots in traditional Chinese culture and Confucianism)

“Rule by Virtue” more important than “Rule by Law”

Content more important than form and processes.

More important to solve problems with corruption and lacking public control with the government than to secure civic rights and freedom.

Consultation better than voting.

Rather a Chinese Democracy than a democracy formed after a foreign model.

Tendency towards the center:

Left: 38.1%
Right: 8.0%
Center: 52.5%

Is China or USA better (in a political sense)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is China or USA better (in a political sense)?</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China better than USA</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA better than China</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conditions of China and USA are different, therefore it is not possible to make a simple comparison.</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zhang Mingshu, 2013 p. 42
Official and semi-official plans and policies.

White Book on Democracy 2005

China's democracy is:

- a democracy guaranteed by the **people's democratic dictatorship**.
- a people's democracy under the leadership of the CPC.
- a democracy in which the overwhelming majority of the people act as masters of state affairs.

Not yet perfect; the people's right to manage state and social affairs, economic and cultural undertakings as masters of the country are not yet fully realized; … the mechanism of restraint and supervision over the use of power needs further improvement;

China's building of political democracy will abide by the following principles:

Upholding the unity of the leadership of the CPC,

the people being the masters of the country

ruling the country by law.
“Storm the Fortress.”


A 30-year plan for democratization of China developed by a group of researchers affiliated with the Central Party School in Beijing.

Contents:

**Democratization** of the political system should aim at **limiting the political power of the Communist Party.**

**Gradual democratization** over **three phases**, all together covering 60 years:

First phase, **1979 to 2001**, primarily **economic reforms**.

Second phase, **2002 to 2020**, establishing of a **political system with ”modern democracy and rule of law”**.

Third phase, **2021 to 2040**, further development of the democratic and legal system.
Examples of the contents of the report:

Chapter 3: How to establish an efficient system of checks and balances between the powers of the political system.

The National People’s Congress should have authority to draft the state budget and control government spending.

Chapter 6: How to let popular and religious organizations, the development of civil society and a genuine freedom of press and speech, contribute to the building of a harmonious society.
“Chinese people’s dream of a spiritual life in the 21st century is to live and work in a free, democratic, fair, just, harmonious society of mutual aid, where they can freely explore their talents, under the leadership of the CPC.”

(Zhou Tianyong: The China Dream and the China Path, Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2011)

“China not only needs a free, democratic and dynamic society, but also an orderly society. It needs a strong party and a government that follow scientific and democratic policymaking procedures and are able to implement these policies and solve various problems for the people, in order to create a free, democratic, orderly and stable environment for the people to live in and for the country to develop.”

(Zhou Tianyong: “Chasing the Chinese Dream”, Beijing Review No 10 March 10, 2011)

“All State Owned Enterprises in China should be supervised by the People’s Congress at the proper level.”

(Zhou Tianyong: 中国梦 (Zhongguo Meng) Guojia Xingzheng Xueyuan Chubanshe 2013)
Anti-corruption campaign started immediately after the Party Congress

Xi Jinping hails consultative democracy.

At a ceremony marking the 65th anniversary of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing, China, Sept. 21, 2014

“Democracy is defined not only by people's right to vote in an election but also the right to participate in political affairs on daily basis, .. Through the system of consultative democracy, such as political advisory bodies, the public are consulted when important state affairs are decided “

The 4th Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party between 20 and 23 October 2014.

Decision on “Rule of Law”.
- Respect for the Constitution
- Respect for laws.

New Budget Law demanding transparent budgets announced.
Conclusion = Concluding Questions.

On one hand:

Is the “Chinese Dream” a digression from the democratization of China?
Is Chinese tradition and culture - including Confucianism - used as a legitimization of the existence of elite rule in China?
Does the ordinary Chinese have another dream of a democratic China?

or

On the other hand:

Is China so different from the rest of the world that the political system could be fundamentally different from the Western - and still be called democracy?