

What does China believe in?

Description

Marxism is the initial ideological foundation of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Over time it has incorporated Leninism, Maoism, Denguism and other more recent theoretical additions, from Jiang Zemin's Three Represents to Hu Jintao's Scientific Development. This forms a heterogeneous map that also contrasts with a reality in which economic liberalism and political authoritarianism are combined, bewildering those who try to guess whether China is one thing or the other, or both at the same time. This China believes in sovereignty and development, but what else does it believe in? Without a clear ideology we will not be able to say that China –or any other nation– is a strong country, even when its magnitude in other fields, be it economy or military force, improve noticeably over the years.

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The quoted evolution points nowadays to an eclectic juxtaposition of three main elements. First of all, the traditional thinking associated to classical culture which is integrated by all those elements that could contribute to the strengthening of stability in an evolutionary process giving growing importance to morality and to the restoration of certain behaviour standards which could help preserve social cohesion. In this regard, there is also room to highlight a new attitude towards religion, originated from the power in order to help restore the moral tissue of society, leaving behind the intolerances from a not so distant past.

The second main element is the party's thinking, that is to say, the ideological compendium encapsulating the CPC's basic identity, which abounds in the quoted theories, product of the historical circumstances and characterized by a permanent effort to adapt the great currents of thought to China's while suggesting its own formulations at once.

Finally, the third element is Western thinking. Undoubtedly, Marxism falls under this category. However, the expression is used as a synonym for the political and ideological currents of thought predominant today in the West. In that sense, it is possible to reflect the importance given by China to the adjustment and development of a political culture based on the Rule of Law and the empire of the law, principles increasingly presumed. Yet identical emphasis is not, at least for the time being, put in other values usually associated to the above, such as the separation of powers or the corollary of individual rights and freedoms inherent to constitutionalism.

Along with the affirmation of the value of the law and the normative regulations of processes regardless of their nature –not only the economic–, which constitutes a sweeping historical change in a China in which traditionally “men rule, not laws”, the greatest challenge is to develop democracy within that frame. Today, this phenomenon is carried through a completely experimental, ambiguous and sometimes contradictory channel which aims, at most, for the reinforcement of the consultative keys in an incremental perspective, without allowing this to put the ultimate attributes of power at risk.

The transformations experienced by the Chinese society in the past decades, the affirmation of an urban social tissue increasingly plural and diverse, with a thriving middle class, and the natural democratization facilitated by the technological advancements configure a scenario which encourages a greater participation of society in public matters, both in a sense of proposal and control, exerting an active citizenship far from the subject-mass that agrees blindly to official slogans, as well-meaning as they might be. This calls for the need to orchestrate dialogue formulas that bring those in power and the citizens together and provide mechanisms of reciprocal influence and acknowledgment.

The juxtaposition of traditional thinking, the ideals of the party and the new Western contributions would be the ideological correspondence to the systemic hybridism found in the economy and the society of today's China, with a settled plurality of

properties and social groups related to reforms that tend to be stronger in the socioeconomic areas.

Ideology plays a key role to preserve social consensus, persevere in the established path and guarantee the political power's legitimacy, essential for stability. As with the economical model, it cannot be stated that the CPC's ideological foundations have been object of an absolute and immutable exaltation. However, in recent years, it has gained certainties and clarity, even though in our eyes, accustomed to completely anti ethical formulas of expression, it is more similar to a totum revolutum full of contradictions which could disintegrate when we least expect it. The more China brings its economic system into alignment with the prevailing trends in the West, the more likely the internal and external pressures to culminate this process in the political arena are to arise. Or, perhaps, considering the de-democratization process that the western political systems are experiencing, the possibilities of an intrinsically Chinese democracy are higher, not only in relation to its vindicated civilizing singularities, but also in view of the successive ruptures which, in our part of the world, are progressively emptying democracy of content.

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China e o mundo chinés

ETIQUETAS

China CPC Ideology Democracy Marxism Traditional Thinking

IDIOMA

Inglés

Date Created

Maio 29, 2014

Meta Fields

Autoria : 3717

Datapublicacion : 2014-05-29 00:00:00