**A consultative democracy**

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October 08, 2022

Against the backdrop of the epic CPC’s 20th National Congress taking place on October 16, China continues to march towards becoming a “great modern socialist country” exercising consultative democracy under the command of the 100-year-old Communist Party of China (CPC) under the leadership of President Xi Jinping. China’s 2022 government work report, was approved at the closing meeting of the fifth session of the 13th National People’s Congress (NPC), and revised 92 items including revisions on stabilising the economy, promoting innovation, and benefiting livelihood. In November 2022, the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) met to study the regulations on the Communist Party of China’s (CPC’s) work regarding political consultation. The regulations were developed from the rich practices and successful experiences of the Party’s work on political consultation since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, and they serve as fundamental guidelines for improving political consultation.

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CPPCC conducted 25 consultation sessions, organised 82 inspection surveys and research tours, filed 5039 proposals, and collected and distributed 867 conference speeches. In the face of criticism bedeviling Chinese Communism and consultative democracy as a rubber stamp, the way NPC and CPPCC work promoting consultations at all tiers of the political system is a manifestation of the fact that under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, China realised its dream to become a modern socialist country in a new era.

During the last few years, President Xi Jinping has repeatedly discussed the significance of Consultative Democracy and its people-centered approach. President Xi has always advocated participatory democracy through his speeches, lectures, written instructions, and letters on various occasions. While speaking to a Central Conference on the Work of People’s Congresses on 13th October 2021 as mentioned on page 286 of the recently published book, “Xi Jinping: The Governance of China IV”, he stressed the essence and importance of participatory democracy. Xi Jinping said that we must remain committed to a people-centered approach, uphold the principle that all power of the state belongs to the people, and support and ensure the people’s exercise of state power through people’s congresses. President Xi also urged on improving democracy by creating more forms of democracy, expanding channels for democracy, and ensuring people’s equal right to participation in governance and development, to promote a whole-process people’s democracy that is broader, fuller, and more robust.

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During his speech at the Central Conference on the work of People’s Congresses, mentioned in his book, he said that democracy is not an ornament to be put on display, but an instrument for addressing the issues that concern the people. President Xi’s remarks have exposed the western democratic system which has failed to deliver and live up to the expectations of most of today’s developing nations. President Xi has also insisted that whether a country is democratic or not should be judged by a community consensus, not by a self-appointed judge. Having mentioned on pages 298 and 299 in the book “Xi Jinping: The Governance of China IV”, he put forth on the same occasion five basic ideas behind upholding people’s democracy. First, people’s democracy is the lifeblood of socialism; without democracy, there would be no socialism, socialist modernisation, or national rejuvenation. Second, the running of the country by the people is the essence and heart of socialist democracy. The very purpose of developing socialist democracy is to give full expression to the will of the people, protect their rights and interests, spark their creativity, and provide an institutional framework to ensure that the people are the masters of the country.

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Third, China’s socialist democracy takes two important forms: One, the people exercise rights using elections and voting, and two, people from all sectors of society are consulted extensively to reach the widest possible consensus on matters of common concern before major decisions are made. These are the institutional features and strengths of China’s socialist democracy. Fourth, the key to developing China’s socialist democracy is to fully leverage its features and strengths. Chinese revolutionary leader Deng Xiaoping once said, “The democracy in capitalist societies is bourgeois democracy; it is the democracy of monopoly capitalists. It is no more than a system of multiparty elections, separation of judicial, executive, and legislative powers, and a bicameral legislature…The greatest advantage of the socialist system is that when the central leadership makes a decision, it is promptly implemented without interference from any other quarters.