

More Legitimacy for One-Party Rule? The CCP's Ideological Adjustments and Intra-Party Reforms¹

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Summary

For the last two years, Chinese President Hu Jintao has appealed for the proper study of Marxism, and in the years to come Premier Wen Jiabao wants to build "a new socialist landscape." The language used in the new ideological guidelines bears a strong resemblance to the rhetoric of the 1980s and may therefore seem rather outdated to some China observers. The same is true when studying the widely propagated "Three Represents" party reform concept initiated by Jiang Zemin or the subsequent ideological parole of "building a harmonious society" used by Hu Jintao. Nevertheless, these new "approaches" and "theories" are the outcome of lengthy discussions on ideological and intra-party reform conducted over the last ten years in order to secure one-party rule. This article discusses the far-reaching implications of ideological reform, reconstructs the process of intra-party reform and illuminates the political background connected with the endeavour of establishing new legitimacy for the CCP.

I. Introduction

If political parties wish to stay in power for a long period, they have to adjust to changing realities and a changing "clientele" to keep up with the times. In Chinese this is called "*yu shi ju jin*." Whenever the legitimacy of the CCP has been challenged, the Party-state has always been one step ahead of potential power seizures. The Hundred-Flower Movement of 1956 and the following Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 are two prominent examples of this. With the help of draconic control measures and censorship, the Party-state managed to persuade the Chinese people for decades to sacrifice their own needs for the sake of improvement and modernisation of the country as a whole. It also postponed political reform in favour of functional aims.

¹ For a more detailed discussion of party reform and political reform discourses in general, see Claudia Derichs, Thomas Heberer, Nora Sausmikat (eds.), *Why Ideas Matter: Ideen und Diskurse in der Politik Chinas, Japans und Malaysias (Why Ideas Matter: Ideas and Discourses in the Politics of China, Japan and Malaysia)*, Hamburg: Institute of Asian Affairs, 2004, pp. 109-189.

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