

# A Preliminary Exploration of People's Democracy in the Whole Process: the CPC's Practice of Building Democratic Power in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas

Jingyao Wang

North China University of Technology, Beijing 100000, China

13931225636@163.com

**Abstract.** In the Central Revolutionary Base Areas, influenced by the Soviets of the USSR and absorbing its own experience of revolutionary construction, the CPC applied the democratic system for the first time to the process of constructing a new type of regime, creating a preliminary form of people's democracy throughout the entire process under the leadership of the Party. The various aspects of democracy are interlinked, forming a closed loop of rational and relatively complete procedures for people's participation in the practice of democracy. The democratic political system established by the Party in the central revolutionary base areas provides a deep historical foundation for the development of people's democracy in the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, leaving behind valuable experience.

**Keywords:** Whole-course People's Democracy; Communist Party of China; Central Revolutionary Base Area; Democratic Regime.

## 1. Introduction

In his report to the 20th National Congress, Xi Jinping proposed that people's democracy in the whole process is an essential attribute of socialist democratic politics, and is the broadest, truest and most functional democracy. During the period of the Central Revolutionary Base Areas, the CPC focused on integrating armed struggle with party building, grasping power and military authority, valuing the support of the people, and establishing an initial revolutionary regime in the countryside, initially exploring governance and democratic political construction. In the process of mobilizing the masses of workers and peasants to participate effectively in the revolution, the previous structure of rule and social organization was dismantled, the organizational system of grass-roots society was reconstructed, and democratic politics with broad participation became the main feature of the social operation mechanism, initially putting into practice "people's democracy throughout the entire process". A review of this historical experience will not only help us to understand the core institutional basis of the Party's significant achievements in democratic construction over the past century, but will also help us to deepen our understanding of the operating logic of the contemporary Chinese governance system.

## 2. The Historical Logic of People's Democracy in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas

### 2.1. The Victory of the Soviet Revolution in the USSR Introduced to China

With the victory of the October Revolution in Russia, human civilization ushered in a completely new era, and the soviets, as a brand-new form of democratic power, were introduced into China, paving the way for the advance of the Chinese revolution. The construction of the Chinese soviets under the leadership of the CPC was a brand-new democratic practice, which was very rich in connotation, encompassing a state power organ representing the will of the people, but also conferring corresponding political rights on the people, maintaining a full content of people's democracy, mobilizing and organizing the people's wider participation in the practice of administering the affairs

of the state, and, for the first time in the history of China, the emergence of a democratic regime that truly belonged to the peasants and the workers.

The victory of the October Revolution brought power back to the oppressed working and peasant classes, established the soviet system and implemented a series of policies and measures beneficial to the people, liberating the working people and promoting the development of the productive forces and the progress of society as a whole. In order to realize the fundamental goal of the proletarian revolutionary cause, i.e. the liberation of all mankind, it is necessary to have the close unity and strong support of the proletariats of all countries, as well as to widely unite the colonial peoples and build a broad alliance with international influence. The high degree of convergence between the international proletarian revolutionary movement and the deep-seated needs of the Chinese revolution inevitably led to the close intertwining of the two to form an inseparable whole. At that time, the heartland of the global proletarian revolution, precisely for the purpose of advancing the original aims of the international proletarian revolutionary movement, actively promoted and assisted in the widespread dissemination of Marxism in China, and intentionally pushed for the formation of the leading political party of the Chinese proletarian revolutionary movement; in the process of contacting and disseminating Marxism, the advanced elements of China developed recognition of and belief in it, and chose to be guided by Marxist guided proletarian democracy in order to realize national independence, national liberation and the happiness of the people. In the concrete revolutionary practice in their own country, the CPC, with its strong proletarian power and strong mass base, found a correct way to open the road to revolution. Secondly, the role of the Comintern in providing crucial guidance to the CPC in the process of building democracy during the period of the Chinese Soviet cannot be underestimated. when the CPC held its Second National Congress in 1922, the CPC formally became a branch of the International Communist Party and joined the organization of the Third International as a proletarian party of China, and in accordance with the principles of the organization at that time, it had the obligation to carry out all the resolutions of the congresses of the Comintern and of the Executive Committee of the Comintern all the resolutions. The CPC has full confidence in the achievements of the Soviet system in the USSR, for these achievements have infused it with new hopes. In learning from the experience of the Soviet Union in building a democratic regime, the CPC emphasized that the Chinese Party should learn from the successful experience of Soviet construction in the Soviet Union and apply it widely among its party members and the general public, so as to prepare cadres and talents in advance and to construct the regime structure in an agile manner. The CPC's practical experience in the construction of Soviet power in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas was an initial exploration of regime building, with its main measures imitating the Soviet model of democracy in the USSR, but at the same time incorporating the unique elements of the Chinese Revolution and embedding the innovative spirit of the CPC. At the spiritual level of democracy building, the CPC actively promoted the theory of soviets, elaborated in depth its connotation and concrete practice, spread the consciousness of soviet democracy, and consciously strengthened the construction of democratic ideology among workers, peasants, and soldiers; at the organizational level, it chose the meeting of the people's deputies and sent representatives to interface with the grassroots masses before seizing power, to ensure that the organization of the regime was tightly organized in terms of democracy and that the CPC had an influential role to play ; at the institutional level, the At the institutional level, the system of the Congress of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers, as stipulated in the Outline of the Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic, was the first law in which the democratic features of the political system of the Soviet Union were fully realized with the participation of the people at large. The establishment of the Central Government of the Chinese Soviet Republic in accordance with the Constitution provided the CPC with a model from which it could draw lessons for the construction of a democratic regime, and was the CPC's first practical exploration of regime construction. The exploratory construction of the Soviet regime had a far-reaching impact on the construction of state power and laid the cornerstone for the evolution of China's political system .

## **2.2. The Chinese Communist Party's Quest for Independent Leadership of a Democratic Regime**

The CPC's correct understanding of the democratic regime was gradually clarified and established in the practice of leading the revolution independently. The First Program of the CPC, adopted at the early stage of the founding of the CPC in 1921, states that it "recognizes that the fundamental political aim of the Party is to carry out a social revolution", and that "the revolutionary army should support and help the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist class regime until the social class distinction is eliminated". At this time, the bourgeoisie was not in control of the state power. Although the goal of the revolution was clearly stated, the CPC did not clearly recognize that the target of the revolution should be the warlords.

With the failure of the Revolution, the armed forces of the Chinese Communists resisted the massacre by the new warlords of the Kuomintang, continued to carry out the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution, and gradually and deeply explored the soviet regime in the struggle. The cruel reality of the failure of the Revolutionary Movement made the CPC realize the necessity of solving the problem of the peasants, and the necessity of establishing a revolutionary regime of workers and peasants in China that truly represented the fundamental interests of the workers and peasants. "At the August 7 Conference, Mao Zedong made the famous assertion that the acquisition of power must be based on the barrel of a gun. The CPC began to think about the feasibility of independently leading the construction of a democratic regime, and planned to organize armed insurrections in the provinces centered on the peasant movement to start a revolutionary war with the workers' movement. The CPC vigorously propagated the idea of democratic revolution and put forward the idea that "it is necessary to maintain the guiding power of the Communist Party in the revolutionary committees", "so that when the time comes, the organization of soviets can be started at once". In the course of the revolution, the Chinese Communists never gave up their search for a democratic regime and their aspiration for a soviet system, and eventually led the revolution independently.

In the course of promoting the construction of base areas, the CPC has carried out continuous practice and exploration with regard to the construction of democratic regimes. First of all, in-depth studies were conducted on how to effectively solve the problem of peasants' survival on the land. The low level of agricultural production and the poverty of peasants at that time seriously affected the Party's ruling base and mass foundation. The CPC attached great importance to the issue of peasants and land, and promulgated a series of central documents and laws to clarify the connotation of land policy. the 1931 Land Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic stipulated that "the confiscation of the land of landlords and the land of other large private owners is authorized," and that it "stands in the interests of the basic peasantry and the future development of the revolution. "on the basis of the basic interests of the masses and the future development of the revolution", the land decree was adopted "as the best guarantee for the solution of the land problem". The distribution of land benefits based on the material basis of the people's livelihood and the interest of the people as one of the fundamental goals of the process of democracy building, thus completely destroyed the economic basis of rural feudalism and at the same time stimulated the political awakening of the peasant masses. The distribution of land to the masses of peasants greatly liberated the productive forces and touched upon the material issues that were of greatest concern to the peasants, which also led to a high degree of enthusiasm for participation in the democratic revolution, and they responded positively to the call of the Revolutionary War by enthusiastically enlisting in the army and the war, pushing forward the development of production, and taking an active part in the governance of the soviet state and in the building of the Soviet regime.

Secondly, in the process of establishing Soviet power, the principle of democracy must always be upheld in order to ensure the fairness and transparency of political decision-making. The Soviet-style proletarian state practises a people-oriented democratic system, with the voice of the broadest possible range of people, who occupy the majority of the country, as a scientific and effective organizational arrangement. The birth of the Chinese Soviet Republic provided the working people of China with the opportunity to emancipate themselves as masters of their own house, and was

committed to including the toiling masses of workers and peasants in the process of democratic revolution in order to help them take control of their own destiny and establish their own democratic regime. This move completely broke the feudal system of exploitation that had existed in China for thousands of years, and it was the first democratic regime of the workers and peasants in the form of a state in China, a new regime unprecedented in Chinese history . It is no coincidence that the origin of the construction of the democratic regime in the Central Revolutionary Roots originated from the gradual deduction of historical logic, while in the social reality, the accumulation of various constraints shaped this historical result.

### **3. Embodiment of People's Democracy in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas**

#### **3.1. The "Whole Process" of Democracy Building in the Central Revolutionary Roots**

In the Central Revolutionary Base Areas, under the system of "soviets", the Party led the establishment of democratic power for workers and peasants at all levels. Democracy in the Chinese soviets was characterized by a broad range of participating subjects, a full range of coverage, with the soviets striving to respond truthfully to the views of the people in every aspect, from the political and economic to the social life of society and from the central to the grass-roots levels; and a full range of processes, with the soviets emphasizing not only mass participation during the period of the democratic elections, but also post-democratic governance, in order to safeguard the nature of a regime where the people are the masters of their own affairs.

On November 7, 1931, the Chinese Soviet Republic established a provisional central government at its national congress and adopted the Constitutional Outline of the Chinese Soviet Republic, which explicitly stipulated that workers, peasants, soldiers of the Red Army, and all toiling people and their families, regardless of their sex, race, or religious beliefs, were entitled to the right to vote and to stand for election in Soviet elections, and were over the age of 16 years. their families, regardless of their sex, race, or religious beliefs, had the right to vote and to be elected to the soviets and were above the age of sixteen . Mao Zedong emphasized that the most extensive democratic system of the Soviets was initially embodied in their elections, which provided all exploited and oppressed people with the full right to vote and to stand for election, realizing equal rights for women and men for the first time in history in the quest of the toiling masses of the workers and peasants for such rights . In the Central Revolutionary Roots, three large-scale elections were held between 1931 and 1933 and produced workers' and peasants' deputies at all levels, as well as Soviet government officials at all levels, including one in which the voter turnout rate was as high as 80 percent.

Secondly, the democratic decision-making process is "complete". The Party's exploration of democratic decision-making under the leadership of the people is mainly reflected in the process of building the rule of law in the Chinese Soviet Republic. In the process of legislative proposals, legislative research, the writing of draft legislation, the discussion and revision of legislative documents, and the implementation of legal documents, emphasis is placed on listening to the views of the masses and strengthening the people's participation in the entire chain of legislative work. When drafting laws, the opinions and needs of all strata of the population are fully heeded and legal provisions are formulated. In the early days of the Soviet movement, the soviet governments of various regions enacted legal documents such as the Marriage Law of western Fujian and the Regulations on the Protection of Young Women in western Fujian. After the founding of the Chinese Soviet Republic, the Marriage Regulations of the Chinese Soviet Republic, the Labor Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic, and the Land Law of the Chinese Soviet Republic were enacted . After the promulgation of the laws, the public was actively consulted on any provisions that were not in line with the actual situation, and the laws were revised and adjusted. In November 1932, as the anniversary of the establishment of the Provisional Central Government was approaching, a report was made to all voters on the implementation of the laws and regulations of the past year, and it was hoped that the voters would examine them in detail and help the Soviet government to overcome the problems quickly. overcome" .

Thirdly, there is a "full chain" of democratic management methods. This is one of the basic guidelines for democratic elections and leadership of the people in political life in the revolutionary bases of our country. In accordance with the provisions of the Outline of the Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic, all laborers, workers, peasants and soldiers under the Soviet regime enjoy the right to elect their representatives and manage the regime. It also clearly stipulated the principle of democratic election of leaders in administrative organs and enterprises at all levels, and made detailed provisions on the system of selecting cadres. In December 1933, Mao Zedong signed the "Provisional Organizational Law of the Local Soviets of the Chinese Soviet Republic (Draft)," which stipulated that a number of committees should be set up under the township and municipal soviet governments, and that a wide range of activists from all walks of life should participate in the management of the grass-roots regime. In the Soviet areas, a variety of self-management organizations were set up in accordance with the needs of the actual work. In the military organs, political training offices and political departments were generally established. Within the Red Army, mass organizations such as soldiers' committees and economic committees constituted the basic structure of democratic management, while democratically elected soldiers' committees were set up in every company, battalion and regiment in the Red Army. The Red Army formed an economic committee, composed of soldiers' representatives, responsible for managing the meals. Every day, a soldier was sent by his squad in turn to purchase ingredients, and every 10 days, an inventory of the food accounts was conducted and posted as a public notice in order to realize economic openness.

Fourthly, the system of democratic supervision is "three-dimensional". The introduction of democratic elections and administrative leadership at the grass-roots level not only makes it possible for the people to be masters of their own affairs, but also ensures that the organs of power effectively exercise the rights necessary for the building of State power. In the Central Revolutionary Bases, everyone enjoyed the right to supervise soviet bodies and public officials, which meant that the population could exercise democratic oversight by reporting to organizations and public opinion. The most important of these self-governing bodies were the People's Armed Committees at all levels and the Basic Armed Departments. In the Soviet Union, organizations and personnel such as commando units, light cavalry units, and worker-peasant correspondents have been set up to carry out unannounced inspections and work supervision of all kinds of government workers at all levels, so as to ensure that all the people who have the right to vote are able to participate in them. Wide-ranging public opinion campaigns, such as holding symposiums or rallies, speeches and marches, were also carried out to disseminate information. Government and Party Central Committee newspapers such as Red China and Struggle became the main tools of public opinion monitoring, used to expose and monitor negative figures and events, as well as to typically report on positive and advanced deeds. In addition, the Central Revolutionary Roots also set up monitoring channels such as "worker and peasant correspondents" and "mass courts," which together constructed a tight network of mass supervision, utilizing the powerful tools of people's democratic supervision to create a clean and honest political ecology and culture in the Soviet Union. The political ecology and culture of the Soviet Union were created by utilizing the powerful tools of people's democratic supervision.

### **3.2. The "People's Nature" of Democracy Building in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas**

First, it adheres to the fundamental position of being people-centered. The nature of the soviets is the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants, which "can be said to be the highest democracies in the world, and the strongest government most supported and loved by the masses". According to Mao Zedong, "The soviets of the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants are the people's own power, they depend directly on the people, and their relations with the people must be kept at the highest level of closeness before they can play their role". Therefore the Chinese Soviet government was particularly concerned with the life of the masses. Economically, it carried out the agrarian revolution to liberate the productive forces; politically, the democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants made the people the masters of the country; and in life, it paid close attention to the immediate interests of the masses. Mao Zedong pointed out: "All the problems of the practical life of the masses are important issues to which the soviets should pay attention. If the soviets pay

attention to these problems, discuss them, solve them, and satisfy the needs of the masses, the soviets will really become the organizers of the masses' life, and the masses will really surround the soviets and enthusiastically support them." .

Secondly, the fundamental principle that all rights belong to the people is upheld. The nature of the power of the Chinese soviets was stipulated in the outline of the Constitution, that is, the soviets were to build a democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants. The whole Soviet power belongs to the workers, peasants, soldiers of the Red Army and all the toiling masses. Under the soviet regime, all workers, peasants, soldiers of the Red Army and all toiling people have the right to elect their own representatives to take charge of the administration. In terms of rights, the workers, peasants, soldiers of the Red Army and all the toiling masses enjoyed basic political rights and freedoms with corresponding safeguards. Economically, the aim was to improve the living conditions of the working class and the peasants. Politically, the soviet congresses are organized, democratic elections are held and democratic political construction is carried out.

Thirdly, the work style of maintaining close contact with the people is an indispensable and important part of the work. In the central revolutionary bases, the Party remained highly alert to the danger of detachment from the masses and took seriously the problems of bureaucracy, formalism and corruption in order to ensure the smooth progress of the revolutionary cause. It also strengthens integrity building. Serious measures are taken to deal with the problems of bureaucratic style and formalistic style of work among public officials, and corrupt elements are severely punished. Strengthening integrity should adhere to the mass line. Instruction No. 26, issued in 1933, severely cracked down on corruption and wastefulness and effectively curbed corruption, while promoting the formation of a clean style among cadres in the Soviet Union. Through various forms of propaganda, such as red songs, newspapers and slogans, the masses were mobilized to participate in the revolutionary struggle, and the ideology of soviet democratic revolution was promoted to stimulate the general public's identification with the soviet system and their enthusiasm for joining the democratic revolution.

#### **4. Insights from the Construction of Democratic Power in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas**

From the initial formation of democracy in its entirety in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas, we can deeply feel that the people's democratic regime was gradually formed in the course of great revolutionary practice. The Communist Party of China creatively carried out the great practice of the people becoming the masters of their own house, and organized and operated a system of people's democracy for the first time in China's history.

##### **4.1. Determination of Party Leadership as the Fundamental Guarantee of People's Democracy in the Entire Process**

In the process of the formation of the democratic regime, we can see both the dramatic ups and downs of revolutionary practice and the deep sense that the people's democratic regime was gradually formed by the Party under the leadership of the people in the course of great revolutionary practice. The CPC creatively carried out the great practice of the people becoming the masters of their own house, and organized and operated a system of people's democracy for the first time in Chinese history. The Resolution on the Organization of Soviet Power clearly stipulates: "The correct organization of Soviet power is conditional upon the firm guidance of the Party." Adherence to the Party's leadership means centralized leadership within the Party, the implementation of the strategic plan of "individuals obeying the organization, subordinates obeying superiors, and the whole Party obeying the central government", and the formation of a good centralized mechanism; in the relationship between organizations at the same level, the Party coordinates the leadership of all other organizations. Therefore, the Party is the core of the construction of the Soviet regime and the leading force running

the whole country. The establishment of the CPC as the core of the leadership made it possible for the construction of the Chinese soviet democratic regime not to deviate from its direction.

#### **4.2. Determining the Status of the People's Main Body is the Key to People's Democracy in the Whole Process**

At the outset of the establishment of Soviet power in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas, the people were given the status of masters of their own house, and all powers of the State were vested in the people, which was legally recognized. At the same time, the peasants' possession and use of the land, the means of production on which they depended for their livelihood, was safeguarded through the enactment of a series of regulations, including the Land Law. The establishment of a system of fundamental rights and freedoms enjoyed by the people and the realization of democracy throughout the entire process and chain of democratic decision-making, elections, administration and supervision laid a solid foundation for the growth and development of the nascent democratic regime, and at the same time amassed broad popular support for the Party.

#### **4.3. The Realization of People's Democracy in the Whole Process is the Choice of History and the Choice of the People**

The CPC pioneered the first attempt at a people's democratic regime in the Central Revolutionary Base Areas, and the vast number of working people were liberated and actively responded to the call of the revolution, joined the revolutionary cause, and gave the revolution their strong support. During this period, the population of the 13 Soviet counties in Gannan was about 2.4 million people, with 500,000 young adults joining more than 330,000 in the Red Army and supporting more than 600,000 in the front . The masses supported the Party and the Party-led democratic revolution with practical actions, and the implementation of people's democracy in the whole process was the people's active choice, while providing an accumulation of a strong mass base for the workers' and peasants' armed secession. In the Central Revolutionary Base Areas, promoting the construction of democratic politics is an important way to realize "people's democracy in the whole process". In the new era and on the new journey, the whole process of developing people's democracy should "adhere to the people's main position, fully reflect the people's will, safeguard the people's rights and interests, and stimulate the people's creativity and vitality."

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