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Biden's 'democracy summit' - how Marx showed the fake character of capitalism's concept of 'human rights'

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The absurdly misnamed "Democracy Summit", hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden on 9-10 December, the real "non-democratic" character of which is analyzed below, is widely and rightly understood in China as part of the fact that the U.S. simultaneously launched not only an international geopolitical attack on China but also an ideological one.

China has nothing whatever to fear, and on the contrary a great deal to gain, from such an international discussion - due to the overwhelming achievements of China in improving the lives of its own people. The more the people of the world understand China's extraordinary achievements in this the more they will want the same scale of improvement in the conditions of their people to be enjoyed by their own countries and therefore the more favorable they will be to China.

But in some sections of the media mistakes are made in replying to U.S. attacks on

“democracy” and “human rights.” These mistakes consist of falsely accepting the U.S. framework of discussion on these issues. Therefore, it is important to clearly understand the entirely wrong basis of the U.S. claims on “human rights” and “democracy”. This, in turn, leads to analysis of the core of the most fundamental issues of the difference between socialism and “liberal” capitalism. Marx precisely became a socialist (founding Marxism!) through his criticism of the errors of liberal capitalism and his analysis of the real practical situation of life of human beings. This analysis provides the comprehensive framework for critique of all the errors of liberal capitalism and demonstration of the superiority for humanity of socialism – including China’s. Therefore, understanding of these issues is of very great practical importance, as well as theoretical clarity, in replying to false U.S. attacks on China.

The following article therefore deals both with key practical examples of the real bases of human rights and democracy and relates them to Marx’s epoch-making analysis – which provides the foundation for all real examination of the issues of human rights and democracy. It is an expanded version of a speech made on these issues to a conference on 2 December.

This article therefore deals with:

- What are the real differences regarding human rights and democracy between the U.S. and China?
- Why China’s position on human rights and democracy, in the real life of real human beings, is far superior to the U.S.?
- How Marx analysed the fundamental issues on these questions – and why his framework could be expanded from his own first analysis to all the most important issues of humanity’s life?
- What is the real character of the U.S. pseudo “summit on democracy”?

“Democracy” means the people rule - what are the practical implications of this?

The word democracy in European languages, derives from two Greek words “demos (people)” and “kratos (rule)”. So, “democracy” means literally “rule by the people”.

Democracy is presented as integrally linked to human rights, that is “people’s rights”. This is correct and will be used here. This reality shows that China’s framework and delivery on human rights is far superior to the “West’s”. But, contrary to this fundamental concept of “rule by the people” an attempt is made in the West, more accurately by capitalist countries, to claim that democracy is instead defined purely in terms of certain formal and official structures which they possess – for example Parliament, so called “division of powers” etc. This is false. The issue is about how much in reality “human rights” exist.



Fighting for women’s rights in India. Photo: Visual China

The position of women in China and India shows the fake U.S. definition of human rights

To illustrate the real issues involved in the issue of human rights and democracy let us start with an enormous practical example affecting almost one fifth of humanity – women's position in China and India.

An Indian woman's life expectancy is 71, in China it is 79.2 – a Chinese woman lives 8 years longer than an Indian woman.

In China female literacy is 95%, in India it is 65%.

The risk of a woman dying in childbirth is 8 times higher in India than in China.

In the real world, for the thinking of any normal human being, the real human rights of a Chinese woman are therefore far superior to those of an Indian woman (I say this with no pleasure at all, I would like the human rights of an Indian woman to improve to become the equal of those of a Chinese woman).

Yet according to the U.S. concept of “democracy” and “human rights” the ridiculous claim is made that the rights of an Indian woman are superior to those of a Chinese woman – because an Indian woman lives in a “Parliamentary Republic.” What concept leads to such an obviously ridiculous conclusion regarding the life of real human beings?

Or take COVID. Less than 5,000 people in Mainland China have died from COVID. In the U.S. 778,000 people have died from COVID. But China's population is more than four times that of the U.S.. If the same number of people per capita had died in China as in the U.S. there would be 3,390,000 Chinese people dead instead of less than 5,000. But the U.S. claims human rights and democracy are better in the U.S. than China! What type of absurd reasoning can try to justify such a conclusion which

in violation of all the facts on the most fundamental issues of life and death?

Marx became a socialist through analysis of the errors of liberalism

The issues involved in this, go right back to the origins of socialism – which was developed precisely as a critique of the theory and limits of liberal/parliamentary democracy.

The work in which Marx became a socialist, making his transition from a liberal democrat, is his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* of 1843. Marx showed that the real role of the state was to defend the existing property relations – at that time in Germany these were approaching capitalist relations. This analysis has been fully factually confirmed by innumerable practical examples since that time. Every time that an attempt has been made on a peaceful basis to make the transition from capitalism to socialism, or even to come close to this, the capitalist state has intervened not in order to allow this transition to take place on democratic principles but, on the contrary, to overthrow democracy in order to preserve capitalism. The most infamous example of this internationally was the coup d'état against Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 but numerous other examples could be given – for example the Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), Honduras (2009), Bolivia (2019).

Having analysed the material role of the capitalist state then, the next year, Marx in his work *On the Jewish Question*, gave his classic analysis of the false ideology of the “liberal democratic” capitalist state. Marx demonstrated, via analysis of the position of Jews in Germany, the difference between the “official” and “formal” claims of liberal/parliamentary democracy and reality. He demonstrated that removal of formal and legal restrictions on Jews in Germany did not lead to their real equality. It is this analysis which directly relates to the difference between the real human rights of Chinese women and Indian women already considered – although Marx, dealing with an urgent political issue of his period, analysed it regarding the position

of Jews in Germany.

Marx designated the difference between what he termed “political emancipation” and “human emancipation” – between purely formal equality and rights in politics and the fundamental inequality and lack of rights in the real world. This so classically sets out the reality of Western parliamentary democracy that it is worth quoting in detail – any other words would simply summarise an analysis that could not be put more clearly.

Marx put it regarding the difference between formal and real human freedom that in parliamentary/liberal democracy: “man liberates himself from a restriction... in an abstract and restricted manner”. This is while liberal/parliamentary democracy proclaimed “equality” this was a fiction in the real world in which human beings lived.

Marx put it regarding the purely formal statements of capitalist/parliamentary democracy: “The state abolishes, in its own way, distinctions of birth, social rank, education, occupation, when it declares that birth, social rank, education, occupation, are non-political distinctions, when it proclaims, without regard to these distinction, that every member of the nation is an equal participant in national sovereignty.” But in reality, none of these real distinctions was removed: “Nevertheless, the state allows private property, education, occupation, to act in their way – i.e., as private property, as education, as occupation, and to exert the influence of their special nature. Far from abolishing these real distinctions, the state only exists on the presupposition of their existence.”

Marx’s analysis of the difference between the real position of Jews in Germany and the false claims of liberal democracy

Therefore, Marx showed there was a complete distinction between the myths of liberal democracy and the reality of human beings life: In a classic passage, going to

the core of the myths of liberal democracy: “Where the political state has attained its true development, man – not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life – leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the political community, in which he considers himself a communal being, and life in civil society”.

He went on: “The relation of the political state to civil society is just as spiritual as the relations of heaven to earth. The political state stands in the same opposition to civil society... in the same way as religion prevails over... the secular world... In his most immediate reality, in civil society, man is a secular being.... In the state, on the other hand... he is the imaginary member of an illusory sovereignty, is deprived of his real individual life and endowed with an unreal universality.”

Marx showed that there was a move towards a purely formal equality of Jews in German society, but this concealed the real existing inequality. Liberal/parliamentary democracy obscured this reality by defining “equality” and “democracy” in only a narrow artificial and formal way while ignoring the real inequalities, and the discriminations, that existed.

This situation, and Marx’s analysis of it, later, of course, culminated in one of the greatest crimes in human history – the development of German antisemitism into the Nazi holocaust.

This analysis of the position of the Jews in Germany provided a model for the analysis of the real situation in capitalism. It is exactly this which is shown by the difference of the position of women in China and India, or the difference in deaths from COVID.

The claim by Western capitalist theory is that women in India enjoy better human rights than women in China because of the existence of Parliamentary democracy. This precisely shows the difference between what Marx termed the “heavenly”

rights, that is non-existent ones, and “earthly life” – the real one.

Obviously, the real human rights of a Chinese woman are far superior to those of an Indian woman – that is her real “earthly life”. But the theory of liberal democracy ridiculously claims that the human rights of an Indian woman are superior to those of a Chinese woman because of her “heavenly life” in a purely formal equality in Parliamentary Democracy – an equality which in reality does not exist.

In the theory of liberal democracy the world is “standing on its head”

In summary, in the theory of liberal democracy everything is “standing on its head”. The least important, a formal and in reality non-existent equality, is declared to be the most important while the “earthly life” is declared to be less important – precisely as the difference in real life conditions between a Chinese woman and an Indian woman. Or, in Marx’s analysis, the difference between the formal equality of Jews in Germany and their real life.

Socialism, and China, puts everything the right way up. It says that it is the most fundamental that a Chinese woman should live 8 years longer, that she should be literate, that she should have a hugely lower risk of dying in childbirth. And then China and socialism starts from what system actually delivers this improvement in the real life of human beings. That is its conception of “rule by the people” and “human rights” is strictly practical.

China extends the same principle as applies to Chinese women to all aspects of society.

China has lifted 850 million people out of internationally defined poverty – that is more than 70% of all those who have been lifted out of poverty in the world.

China has raised itself from almost the world's poorest country in 1949 to "moderate prosperity" by its national standards and to within two to three years of being a "high income" economy by World Bank standards.

China has produced in the "earthly life" of real human beings, the greatest improvement in the conditions of life of the greatest number of people in human history.

That is, China has a political system which is determined by real results, that is improvement in the real lives of people, not by formal processes.

Because it is a socialist country, China's economy can be brought under "rule by the people" – which is excluded by the capitalist system of rule of the economy by private property.

Naturally the specific political form, which is secondary in the framework above, is determined by China's history. As Xi Jinping put it, the person wearing the shoe knows whether it fits or not. China's present political system based on the leading role of the CPC, with other political parties in alliance with the overall lead of the CPC, is specific to China. It does not propose it for any other country.

But what China has defined is the real improvement of the real conditions of humanity. That is what has been demonstrated by China's history and real social and political development.

The farce of the so called "democracy summit"

Finally, so far, the analysis has been made of the false analysis of liberal democracy within the framework of the nation state. But, of course, the same analysis applies to international issues – showing even more clearly the farce of the claim that Biden has called on 9-10 December a ludicrously misnamed 'Summit for Democracy'. On

the contrary this is a meeting led by the most anti-democratic countries in the world in the international sphere.

Numerous facts show that U.S. administrations have a record of systematic violations of democracy in the international sphere. No other country approaches the U.S. in a record of invasion of other states, support of anti-democratic coups, and other forms of aggression against countries etc. It is sufficient to mention only the invasion of Iraq, the bombing of Libya, the coup against Allende, the decades long economic embargo against Cuba in defiance of almost unanimous votes in the UN, to see that the claim by the U.S. that its policies are motivated by “democracy” is quite false.

In reality these facts show that the only basis on which U.S. administrations act is support for countries which subordinate themselves to the U.S., including those that have no form of democracy whatever such as Saudi Arabia. U.S. aggression is carried out against countries which stand up for their national interests against the U.S. whatever their form of government. Thus, even countries which fully confirm to the (false) Western liberal concepts of democracy are excluded from the summit – such as Bolivia and Nicaragua.

The facts show that key countries joining this meeting have long histories of colonialism and were participants in anti-democratic actions outside international law and the framework of the United Nations such as the invasion of Iraq. As with the analysis of the real situation of women in China and India, or Marx’s analysis of the position of Jews in Germany, the ideological claims of the U.S. on “human rights” and “democracy” are to conceal the reality that the U.S., and its key allies, are the greatest practical international violators of the real rights of countries and peoples.

In short, no credibility can be given the claim that the purpose of this meeting is about “democracy”. It is instead about attempts by the U.S. administration to draw

false lines of divide to attempt to conceal its real policies.

Conclusion

China's gigantic achievements since 1949 in improving the real lives of its people, the greatest in human history in such a time frame, exactly correspond to the improvement in the "earthly life", that is the real life, of human beings, as opposed to their non-existent "heavenly life" - that is the false ideological claims of liberal capitalist democracy. That is why China will win in a real international discussion on human rights and democracy. But to do so its media, both international and domestic, must not allow itself to be confused by and make concessions to fake Western liberal democratic concepts. It can be guided by one of the greatest examples of genius in human history - Marx's demolition of the myths of liberal democracy and why, therefore, he became a socialist. This is not merely an historical tribute, it is the best way to deal with the current ideological offensives of the U.S. against the Chinese people and against the real interests of humanity.

Source: [*Learning from China*](#)

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