

Sessions show that system works

Chinese democracy proves a viable alternative to Western political models, delivering stability and vitality

By XINHUA

As China embraces the 40th anniversary of its reform and opening-up, the country is also building unprecedented confidence in its own definition and application of democracy, a word introduced to China a century ago.

China's success story is largely attributed to political stability and vitality under Chinese democracy, which has been highlighted during this year's two sessions.

Today's exercise of power by the National People's Congress (NPC) contrasts sharply with a century ago when the nation began to learn about democracy. It soon found that Western political models did not work here. Decades of turmoil and civil war followed.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country developed its own style of democracy. The first NPC was convened in 1954, marking the establishment of the people's congress system, the platform for democracy through which the people exercise State power.

The system, led by the Communist Party of China (CPC), is fundamental.

Once the right to run the country is ensured, the people's creativity can be sparked. Blessed with more than 1.3 billion people, the nation will play a key role on the world stage, said Xin Ming, a professor at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee.

The top legislature, the NPC and its Standing Committee, have played the leading role in lawmaking.

Over the past five years, the NPC has enacted 25 laws, revised more than 100 laws, and passed 46 decisions or resolutions on legal issues. All these legislative moves focused on key areas of China's development and stability.

NPC deputy Sun Xianzhong, a law researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, was proud to participate in compiling China's first civil code — a "must-do" to promote the country's rule of law and modernize State governance.

Unlike the checks and balances on power that frequently result in political stagnation in some

Western countries, China's central government, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate answer to the NPC and are supervised by it. This vertical design has the advantages of uniting different forces in governance and avoiding internal friction.

Chinese democracy goes far beyond elections by including consultation as a virtue. It occurs in every corner of the country.

There are more than 2,100 political advisers to the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top political advisory body, which includes representation of all of China's 56 ethnic groups. About 60 percent of these political advisers are not members of the CPC. The list also includes entrepreneurs, artists and scholars.

Before Premier Li Keqiang delivered the Government Work Report to the NPC this month, several rounds of seminars were held to consult representatives from all walks of life on the draft report. Leaders also listened to lawmakers and political advisers' opinions

face-to-face before the report was submitted for approval.

Over the past five years, non-Communist parties have launched a series of supervisory investigations on issues such as healthcare, education, regional economic integration and poverty reduction.

The investigative reports often go directly to the CPC Central Committee or the State Council, and many have helped in formulating policies and laws, according to Wan Xiang, chair of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang.

Consultative democracy also includes self-governance at the grassroots level through village committees. Self-governance in rural areas is ensured through elections and other democratic means.

As the rule of law is promoted in rural areas, the country has seen the rise of a new generation of farmers who have a deeper understanding of democracy, said Xu Yong, a professor at the China Institute of Rural Studies at Central China Normal University.

Democracy is not a decoration, but a means of solving problems.

China has a long political tradition of selecting and appointing talent, establishing a merit-based "selection plus election" system with a special focus on public opinion. Criteria for assessment include, but are not limited to, economic development, job creation, social security and environmental protection.

The system works. The Chinese government scored highest in a poll of 27 countries on public trust, with about 84 percent of Chinese having trust in the government, the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer survey found.

The true meaning of people's democracy is finding the best way to coordinate the aspirations and demands of the whole of society and making decisions that serve the long-term interests of the people, said Xu Yaotong, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Governance.

For Li Shimo, an entrepreneur from Shanghai, China's success has shown there is more than one model of democracy in the world that can produce good governance. "China's example shows that alternatives exist," Li said.

Trump's act hurts Sino-US ties

By tacitly encouraging 'Taiwan independence', Washington has dealt a serious blow to relations with Beijing

By LI ZHENGUANG

Not a single inch of Chinese territory can be separated from China, and any attempt to divide the nation would be crushed, President Xi Jinping said at the closing of the first session of the 13th National People's Congress on March 20.

We should continue to stick to the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, promote the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations, and expand the economic and cultural exchanges between the two sides so that both sides can avail of the opportunities created by the Chinese mainland's economic development, improve their well-being and advance the "peaceful reunification of the motherland", Xi said.

The message is clear: The mainland seeks peaceful and prosperous cross-Straits ties but only under the one-China principle, and it will not tolerate any secessionist moves.

However, ignoring Beijing's

resolve and warning, US President Donald Trump signed the so-called Taiwan Travel Act on March 16, which encourages Washington to send officials "of all levels" to meet their "counterparts" in Taiwan, and vice versa.

The US act is a serious violation of the one-China principle and the three Sino-US joint communiqués, which form the basic political foundation for China-US ties. Washington's provocative act will not only worsen Sino-US relations further but also create many uncertainties across the Straits. In fact, by tacitly encouraging "Taiwan independence", the US has dealt a very serious blow to Beijing-Washington ties.

Since the Beijing-Washington relationship is one of the most important in the world today, any change in it may affect the situation not only in the Asia-Pacific region but also in the rest of the world. The Trump administration, by not respecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, has taken a dangerous path which could greatly

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damage the strategic and political trust between the two sides.

Trump's endorsement of the "Taiwan Travel Act" follows his attempts to take new trade measures against China, and either of his actions could become a major turning point in Sino-US relations.

That Taiwan is the primary

determinant of national unity and of core national interest can never be overemphasized. The Trump administration is sure to find, sooner rather than later, that using the island as a political bargaining chip to settle trade disputes is a great mistake. China has zero tolerance for any attempt to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Furthermore, if the "Taiwan Travel Act" prompts the Taiwan leader to visit the US in the future, bilateral ties would suffer a great setback. That Beijing-Washington ties went into deep freeze when former island leader Lee Teng-hui "officially visited" the US in 1995 is an apt example of what the US act could lead to.

The US move has also sent the wrong signals to "secessionists" in Taiwan, who could cause political turmoil by calling for "Taiwan independence". This will not only damage the roots of Beijing-Washington ties but also raise a geopolitical storm in the Asia-Pacific, as Beijing has not ruled out taking military action to reunify the island with

the motherland once the island authorities cross the redline.

The Tsai Ing-wen administration on the island wants greater say in the international community, and the Trump administration is fishing in troubled waters by passing an act that is designed to grant the island an even bigger say.

However, China will crush any efforts to separate any part of the country, and any secessionist attempt by Tsai with the US' support is doomed to failure. The Trump administration should appreciate the importance of the one-China principle in Sino-US relations, and not neutralize the progress the two sides have made in the last few decades. And Taiwan, as Xi said on March 20, will face the "punishment of history" for any attempt at separatism.

Therefore, the only choice for the US is to push the act aside, in practice.

The author is a professor at the Institute of Taiwan Studies, Beijing Union University.