

Can the Chinese Dream Develop out of a Clearly Defined Set of Chinese Values?



By LIONEL VAIRON

MOST debates on the concept of the “Chinese Dream” raise the issue of what Chinese people dream of, and how their dreams could be fulfilled through a new era of reforms decided at the latest plenum of the CPC Central Committee. Yet thought should be given as well to the “Dream of China,” meaning the way the world perceives China and its rise today, and how the country could evoke a Dream of China similar to that so many people around the world have dreamed about the United States, despite all its mistakes and shortcomings.

Over past centuries all major powers have projected their images through sets of values presented at various times as “universal” and which constituted an inherent component of the respect and admiration they received from other peoples.

The Confucian ethos is still very apparent in China, where half of the population lives in rural areas, and favor collectivity over individualism. In his *Clash of Civilizations* Samuel Huntington held that this Confucian tradition is a main obstacle to democratization and should be replaced with Western social and political values. But the West’s present complex social challenges can only make one wonder whether or not the “modernization” of these societies, wherein the collective element is totally absent, has brought them to a point of total dysfunction.

China consequently attracts the interest of citizens of both developing and industrialized countries who seek greater solidarity and more humanistic consideration rather than technological and bureaucratic social management. Of course, China still has a long way to go before it can evolve into a recognized “model” with an identifiable system of values that meet these almost metaphysical concerns of millions of Western citizens.

The history of various societies shows that in the process of development the population’s expectations tend to move gradually from the satisfaction of basic requirements to more sophisticated needs. But above all, these evolving dreams embody a belief in values that are more spiritual, sometimes to the extent of being utopian.

The greatest challenges a country faces are those of building a set of “national” values that can progressively be considered as “universal” and of standing by them, rather than systematically trampling them to serve selfish interests.

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