

IS THERE A CIVIL SOCIETY IN CHINA? THE DIALECTICS OF DEMOCRACY IN A COMMUNIST STATE

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Abstract: *Despite the revitalization of the Chinese civil society, the Chinese reality imposes different interpretations when defining the concept, the civil society phenomenon in China growing under the auspices of a culture and perception area far different than the occidental ones; starting from the premise that any process or principal applicable within the Chinese territory is being undoubtedly affected by the on-going political regime, this paper tries to give an overview upon the post-Mao China's NGOs by capitalizing on the cultural Chinese referential rather than the occidental one. By developing a national project claimed from the dynastic tradition, strongly affected in its internal logic by the universalistic manifestations from the Maoist period, China has handled the associational revolution (generated, according to sinologists, by the so-called open door policy promoted by Xiaoping) in a way in which the control of masses to be continued as a key-element of state politics; by implementing institutional networks of audit and sponsorship, the state intended precisely to limit the association movement of individuals likely to nurture subversive tendencies. The implementation of a legal framework in order to regulate the activities of NGOs doesn't necessarily prove (or at least not sufficiently) the authorities' interest in promoting and facilitating their endeavours; the society itself became instrumental in bringing about new legislation although the measures applied by the Chinese government often help in de-mobilizing more than unifying the masses.*

Keywords: *Chinese society, NGOs, legislation, political reforms, social capital*