

# US-PRC National Development Scenario: Promoting Democracy as Alternative to Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Martin Lasater (2020)

## Background

In this scenario, a statesman has been asked by the U.S. President to compare the American democratic model of national development with that of the socialist model of the People's Republic of China. The statesman's presentation is intended for general public consumption and also as talking points for U.S. diplomats worldwide. The presentation must be fair, balanced, and take into account the whole of man and society.

## Main Features of the Two Models

There are important similarities and differences between the American and Chinese models. In terms of similarities, both models of national development have as their objective the security, prosperity, stability, and territorial integrity of the state. Both models have strengths and weaknesses based on their country's social and governance structures, geographical features, cultural traditions, history, economic infrastructure, and expectations of the people. Both models have wide appeal domestically and supporters within the global community, as well as critics at home and abroad. The two countries are large, powerful, rich, innovative, and creative; and both possess advanced military, technological, economic, communications, educational, and diplomatic capabilities. Both countries are strongly independent, believe in their exceptionalism, and are convinced they naturally ought to be leaders within the international community. Both states are passionate about the overall superiority of their political and economic systems and desire to share their lessons of development with the rest of the world, especially the less developed nations.

In terms of differences between the two models, several stand out. Democracy has a long philosophical tradition, mostly Western in origin; whereas socialism with Chinese characteristics is a recent ideology developed over the past few decades by political leaders within the communist party-led People's Republic of China. Socialism itself is also a fairly new approach to politics and economics, stemming mostly from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, but with conceptual roots dating far back in history. In terms of culture, China has over 3,000 years of civilization and cultural continuity; the United States was founded about 250 years ago and its culture, primarily of European origin, is far less cohesive and well defined than that of China. Although both countries are expansionist, the United States, being a relatively new nation, has been more aggressive in expanding its borders and projecting its influence. China in recent centuries has focused more on regaining control of lost territories. It is only over the last few decades that China has begun to work hard on projecting its influence on a global rather than a regional scale. At the highest level of analysis, the American model is based on democratic political principles, capitalistic economic principles, and Western liberal values. The Chinese model is based on communist political principles, socialist economic principles, and traditional Chinese cultural values.

One other important difference that ought to be noted between the United States and China is mostly psychological and based on history. The United States, a younger country, is still trying to establish itself as a global leader politically, militarily, economically, culturally, and ideologically. Confident of its moral superiority, the United States tends to project its model of development as one that is good for all of humanity. China, being an ancient and great power, is trying to revive and build upon the prestige and influence it enjoyed centuries ago, a greatness resulting from cultural excellence, huge population, powerful military, and rich economy.

Traditionally, China has not necessarily wanted other countries to adopt its model as much as wanting regional neighbors to acknowledge and pay tribute to its cultural superiority. Timewise, the United States began to emerge as a true global leader following its victories in World Wars I and II, especially the latter when it became a predominant super power. By contrast, China began to lose its greatest influence in the 1500s and only over the last few decades has it begun to regain its national honor and prestige.

These differences seem to have influenced two distinct psychological orientations in the conduct of foreign policy: the United States is largely satisfied with the status quo and China is determined to regain what once was lost. Both countries strongly believe in their exceptionalism, natural leadership, superiority of their country and its institutions, and have a strong sense of nationalism that makes their citizens proud to be American and Chinese. Both countries believe they have a moral obligation to help others in the global community to develop their own potential, and offer their own success stories as examples of a favorable path forward. Each nation perceives the other as an existential strategic competitor, with much of the competition and flashpoints centered in regions around the shores of China.

These and other differences between the two nations will become more apparent in the next section as their respective development models are explained in greater detail.

## Comparison of Democratic Model of National Development and Model of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

### *Different Types of National Audiences*

Both models of national development are designed to help developing countries improve their economies, political institutions, infrastructure, and society. However, each of the two models would appear to be especially appealing to certain kinds of society. Although not an absolute determination of which model would be approved and accepted by a developing nation, certain assumptions might help to identify the respective appeal of the two models.

From a political perspective, the democratic model would most likely appeal to those governments and societies believing in the fundamental rights of human beings to be respected as valued individuals. This respect usually translates into a wide range of policies, including protection of human rights, guarantees of certain personal freedoms, government that is not too intrusive into the private affairs of citizens, opportunities for individual self-development and self-improvement, encouragement of citizen involvement in public policy such as through voting, just and fair systems of law and order, and government of, by, and for the people.

The Chinese socialist model would likely appeal to those governments and societies preferring a top-down approach to governance and developmental planning. Such centralized decision making would generally have policies seeking to control society through measures which place restrictions on personal conduct, limit participation in public policy, monitor and restrict expressions of alternative opinions on public policy issues, implement strong law and order enforcement, emphasize social order rather than personal freedom, centralize planning on major projects, and maintain a single source of decision making within a ruling party or in the hands of an autocratic leader.

Overall, when considering development models from the perspective of appealing to certain audiences, the most distinguishing factor would be whether power is shared in a decentralized system of government or monopolized by a privileged elite in a centralized system of government. Each of these power-sharing alternatives has a major strength and major weakness. The democratic model has the strength of cooperative support from the people, as long as they can be convinced that it is in their best interests. The weakness of this model is that social divisions within a free society can make effective planning difficult at times. The socialist model has the strength of centralized planning with its potential efficiencies; it has the weakness

of possible public opposition to the state plans if those plans seem weighted in favor of a privileged class and not sufficiently beneficial to society as a whole.

History has shown that neither democracy nor autocracy works in all countries at all times. Therefore, the determination of which model of development to use – the democratic model or the Chinese socialist model – ought to be based on various considerations. These considerations would include: the style, vision, and capabilities of the country's leadership; the cultural preferences of the people as reflected in their history and existing political system; the critical infrastructure on which the model must build; the amount of domestic and external resources required to implement the model; the predominant geographic features of the country, such as the nature of its climate, terrain, and access to land and sea trade routes; the amount and type of support the country is likely to receive from other developed countries and international organizations; and the regional political environment, such as whether the country is in an active warzone or exists in a peaceful neighborhood of nations.

#### *Desired End-State*

Also important in the selection of a development model is the end-state desired to be achieved by the developing country's government. The democratic vision of an end-state is often a country at peace with itself and the world; a content citizenry which supports the government, its leaders, and policies; overall satisfaction with the political-economic-social orientation of the country; and a well-established culture which encourages individual freedom and creative expression. The socialist end-state is often a country at peace within a strict law-and-order social environment; an efficiently run economic system that encourages entrepreneurial efforts with a strong sense of social responsibility; strict obedience to the laws of a mostly top-down, centralized form of government; and strong security forces in place to protect the interests of the nation and its leadership. Each of these end-states have their appeal in national development,

with the democratic model moving toward greater individual freedom and a more relaxed social order, and the socialist model moving toward greater social discipline and higher efficiency within society as a whole.

#### *Spiritual Factors*

Spirituality is an important element of a nation's culture, as it often forms the basis of laws and moral standards. From a spiritual perspective, the democratic model allows greater freedom for the growth of the soul, whereas the socialist model aims towards a society perfected by human beings, with little thought given to the spiritual side of man.

One of the main differences between the degree of spirituality of the two models is that the democratic model explicitly acknowledges the importance of the individual (based on the existence of the soul and hence a Supreme Being), whereas the socialist model (based on the atheism of communism) stresses the importance of materialism and largely ignores the existence of the soul. There is a deep and respected spirituality among the American people, their government, and policy that is reflected in their development model, such as respecting the religious views of all nations. The Communist Party of China tries to control and repress the spirituality of its citizens and tends to view the religions of other countries as superstitions. The difference between the spirituality of the American democratic model and the atheism of the Chinese socialist model can influence how each of the models are viewed by other countries.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The roles of religion and spirituality in national development are complicated and often controversial. The United Nations seeks to understand and use partnerships with faith-based organizations around the world to strengthen the social and cultural foundations of countries that are seeking to develop their national institutions as part of a holistic approach to nation-building. See, for example, The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development/UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development, *Annual Report 2019* (New York: United Nations, 2019), <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32295/UNITFRD.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. The United States seeks to work with faith-based organizations, because their "networks, insights, and resources give them an often underutilized ability to help address global development challenges." See, USAID, "Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives," <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/independent-offices/cfoi>. Of note in this regard is the widespread recognition that spirituality contributes significantly to a people's resiliency when faced with serious challenges.

The next section presents an overview of the two development models based on official government explanations.

#### Official Description of Democratic Model of Development

In official documents of the United Nations and the United States, the major features of the democratic model for national development are identified.<sup>2</sup> The first list below discusses the benefits of democracy in national development as described by the UN; the second list looks more specifically at the American development model. Benefits of the democratic model from the point of view of the United Nations include:

- Each country is unique; however, over time democracy and development are mutually reinforcing.
- Democracy is essential to development, including key institutions and processes as well as fundamental concepts of citizens' voice, participation, and inclusion – thereby nurturing a democratic culture.
- Democratic attributes such as participation, inclusivity, responsiveness to citizen demands, and accountability, contribute directly and indirectly to development, especially when paired with policies and capacities such as safety and security, rule of law and access to justice, a professional public administration, and basic service delivery in areas such as education and health care.
- Economic stagnation, persistent inequalities, and deep poverty can undermine people's faith in formal democratic systems of government. Also, democracies do not always

---

<sup>2</sup> The primary sources for this section are the United Nation's document produced by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Democracy and Development: The Role of the UN* (New York: United Nations, 2013), <http://ideadev.insomniation.com/sites/default/files/publications/democracy-and-development-the-role-of-the-united-nations.pdf>; U.S. National Archives, America's Founding Documents, "The Bill of Rights: What Does It Say," <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights/what-does-it-say>; and the website of the United States Agency for International Development, <https://www.usaid.gov/>.

deliver development at the level and pace expected by citizens. Furthermore, essential democratic processes such as the organizing and holding of regular, competitive elections, on their own, often are not enough to improve the lives of the poor.

- Individual democratic governments do not always deliver in accordance with people's needs and expectations. However, the democracy's role in guaranteeing citizens' voice to express and demand those needs as well as citizens' rights to remove those who do not govern in accordance with those expectations is indispensable for accountability and for the sustainability of development over time.
- Key to ensuring better development outcomes, which democracy can provide, is an enabling environment in which even the poorest and most marginalized can have a voice and help to shape the development agenda. While the democratic model is not the only variable to consider, development is less likely to succeed over the long-term unless it is based on an inclusive, democratic political consensus.
- Democracy and development objectives need to be developed simultaneously. Key to this is ensuring that national development plans and economic reforms are broadly inclusive and participatory, that institutions of the state are made more accountable, and that electoral processes and constitution making processes are designed in such a way as to be broadly inclusive. Accountability and transparency, grounded in checks and balances on executive power, are critical challenges.
- Demonstrations of how democratic principles and practices such as respect for human rights, rule of law, accountability, credible and transparent electoral processes, political pluralism, and civil society engagement can directly and indirectly contribute to gains in development.



From the UN perspective, democracy and development work best when implemented in harmony and coordination with each other. Democracy helps ensure that all citizens of a country become stakeholders in public policy and in democratic institutions. Development helps to lift the country out of its doldrums and free its people to enjoy the best life possible. A country that is both democratic and developed is a country most likely to realize its full potential as a society and as a contributing member of the global community.

From the perspective of the United States, American-style democracy can contribute greatly to national development. At its core, democracy gives the general public a stake in the success of their country both in its internal affairs and foreign policy. In terms of the institutions and values embedded in the roots of the democratic model as seen in the American tradition, the following are most noteworthy:

- The American governance model is characterized by separation between the branches of government, a robust system of checks and balances on power, divided sovereignties, and leaders and representatives chosen by citizens in scheduled, fair and free elections.
- The American model includes a constitutionally defined purpose to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty.
- The American Constitution guarantees certain basic individual rights, including freedom to express ideas through speech and the press, to assemble or gather with a group to protest or for other reasons, to ask the government to fix problems, the right to religious beliefs and practices, prevention of the government from creating or favoring a religion, the right to keep and bear arms, the prevention of government from forcing people to let the military use their homes, the prevention of government from unreasonable search and

seizure of an individual or their private property, protections for people accused of crimes, and stating that the central government only has those powers delegated to it in the Constitution.

The United States has a long tradition of assisting developing countries in areas such as agriculture, health, education, infrastructure, economic institutions, and governance. Foreign assistance of this kind is separate from military assistance. Non-military foreign assistance is usually managed through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The mission areas of USAID illustrate the broad and diverse means by which the American development model promotes and demonstrates democratic values abroad, and seeks to advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world in general.

USAID leads the U.S. Government's international development and disaster assistance through partnerships and investments intended to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people emerge from humanitarian crises and progress beyond assistance. Its overarching objective is to support partners to become self-reliant and capable of leading their own development by reducing conflict, preventing the spread of pandemic disease, and counteracting the drivers of violence, instability, transnational crime, and other security threats. USAID promotes American prosperity through investments that expand markets for U.S. exports; create a level playing field for U.S. businesses; and support more stable, resilient, and democratic societies. USAID also is a world leader in humanitarian assistance. Major programs within USAID include agriculture and food security; democracy, human rights and governance; economic growth and trade; education; environment and global climate change; gender equality and women's empowerment; global health; humanitarian assistance; water and sanitation;

working in crises and conflict; and a developmental lab to explore and promote innovative solutions to global and country-specific development issues.

Both the UN approach to democratic models of national development and that of the United States illustrate the strength and depth of the Western approach to integrating the economic, political, social, and cultural aspects of nation-building. The People's Republic of China's approach to national development is different in many respects, but it, too, has great strengths and appeals to many developing countries, especially in Asia and Africa. The next section examines PRC President Xi Jinping's "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" and his "Belt and Road Initiatives" for insights into China's national development model.

#### Official Description of Socialism with Chinese Characteristic Model of Development

PRC President Xi Jinping's "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" was written into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in October 2017. Based on this document, some of the major features of the Chinese socialist model for development are:<sup>3</sup>

- CPC leadership is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics; the Party is the highest force for political leadership.
- Key principles are: upholding core socialist values, ensuring and improving living standards through development, ensuring harmony between humans and nature, pursuing

---

<sup>3</sup> Sources used include: "Backgrounder: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," *Xinhua*, March 17, 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/17/c\\_137046261.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/17/c_137046261.htm); Can Liu, "Examining the shared development of socialist political economics with Chinese characteristics," *China Political Economy*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July 24, 2019), pp. 28-39, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/CPE-04-2019-0008/full/html>; and H.E. Wang Yi, "Study and Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Conscientiously and Break New Ground in Major-Country Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics," speech delivered at the inauguration ceremony of the Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Studies Centre at Beijing, China, July 20, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1799305.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1799305.shtml).

a holistic approach to national security, and promoting the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

- The overarching goal of developing socialism with Chinese characteristics is to realize socialist modernization and national rejuvenation. It stresses a people-centered philosophy of development, with well-rounded human development and common prosperity for everyone. Diplomacy with Chinese characteristics aims to foster a new type of international relations and build a community with a shared future for mankind.
- The ultimate objective of the socialism with Chinese characteristics development strategy is to promote all-round development of people to gradually realize prosperity for all. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is a process of constantly pursuing equity and justice and achieving common prosperity.
- The strategy is based on the concept of shared development, whereby everyone participates, everyone contributes, and everyone enjoys. The focus is on building a long-term mechanism for development shared by all. Shared development ensures development for the people, by the people, and shared by all to ensure equity and justice in the field of income distribution and steadily improving common prosperity.
- To achieve a higher and sustainable economic growth rate, a country must raise the opportunities for poor people to participate in the economic growth process to empower and enable them to become drivers of economic growth.

The Chinese economic development model has been applied to China's international relations through "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialist Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" (Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, or Xi Jinping Thought). Some of its main features are:

- A focus on actively building a global network of partnerships, with special emphasis on advancing Belt and Road cooperation to build the world's biggest platform for international cooperation, shared benefits, and promotion of mutual benefit and common development.<sup>4</sup> China is seeking to lead the reform of the global governance system, making globalization more inclusive and beneficial for all and the international order fairer and more equitable.
- China's diplomatic work is an integral part of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy applies the Marxist viewpoint and method in a scientific manner, and seeks to combine theory with practice.
- Xi Jinping Thought embodies a transformation and development of traditional Chinese values by drawing extensively from the Chinese culture and enriching it with a new spirit of the times and a commitment to human progress. China's proposal of building a community with a shared future for mankind reflects a long-cherished Chinese vision of promoting common good and universal peace. In developing China's neighborhood diplomacy, traditional values of good neighborliness, benevolence, empathy, and non-aggression have been incorporated.
- Xi Jinping Thought aims to create a new concept of community with a shared future for mankind, a new type of international relations, and reform of the global governance system, with a focus on the neighboring region and Africa. China's diplomacy pursues its traditional policies of opposing colonialism, hegemonism, and power politics, lays out

---

<sup>4</sup> The Belt and Road (Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road) initiatives are a major component of China's development strategy and will be discussed later in this section.

red lines on major issues involving sovereignty and territorial integrity, and safeguards China's legitimate rights, core interests, and national dignity.

- Xi Jinping Thought aligns the interests of the Chinese people with the common, fundamental interests of people across the world. It envisions a community with a shared future for mankind, and an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world with lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity. It also calls for a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation. It rises above national and regional parochialism, transcends the traditional realist theory of international relations, and focuses on the progress of humanity.
- Chinese statesmen must be heavily committed to follow the authority and centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core. Chinese statesmen are communists and are dedicated to the principles of communism.

China's Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiatives (Belt and Road Initiatives, or BRI) are prime examples of the PRC's approach to national development, especially in neighboring Asian countries and in Africa.<sup>5</sup> Because of its large size and complexity, the BRI offers considerable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of China's foreign developmental policies.

---

<sup>5</sup> References here include: NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Economics and Security Committee, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Strategic and Economic Assessment," Christian Tybring-Gjedde (Rapporteur), March 19, 2020, <https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=sites/default/files/2020-06/033%20ESC%2020%20E%20-%20ASSESSMENT%20CHINA%20BRI.pdf>; Council on Foreign Relations, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative," January 28, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>; and the State Council of the People's Republic of China website, "The Belt and Road Initiative," <http://english.www.gov.cn/beltAndRoad/>.

President Xi Jinping initiated the BRI in 2013 as one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects ever conceived. It is comprised of a vast collection of development and investment initiatives stretching from East Asia to Europe. There are three inter-linked initiatives: the Silk Road Economic Belt, the Maritime Silk Road, and more recently the Digital Silk Road. The former two consist of six economic corridors through which China aspires to connect to East Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Africa, and Europe. China has funded about one trillion dollars into BRI through a combination of low interest loans, investments, and infrastructure grants. The BRI is comprised of a large network of railways, energy pipelines, highways, and streamlined border crossings, along with plans for creating 50 special economic zones and port development projects. More than sixty countries – accounting for two-thirds of the world’s population – have signed on to projects or indicated an interest in doing so.

China has both geopolitical and economic motivations behind the initiative. Geopolitically, the BRI is an important part of President Xi’s vision of a more assertive China, enabling it to break out from the perceived U.S. strategy of containment while greatly expanding China’s regional and global influence. Economically, the BRI opens vast new markets and trading opportunities for China, frees China from the Western-dominated global economic system, and secures energy and other critical resources from easy disruption by the West of China’s supply chains.

Because of the scope of the initiative and the huge sums of financial resources China is willing to contribute to its success, there have been both enthusiasm to join the BRI and criticism of its implementation and motives. On the positive side, many developing nations have turned to the BRI as a way to jump-start or expand their economies through inexpensive loans, technical assistance, and the few-strings-attached Chinese approach to aiding these countries. More

developed countries have seen significant opportunities to expand their trade with China and other participating members of the BRI.<sup>6</sup> On the negative side, there have been concerns raised about risks from the erosion of national sovereignty, lack of transparency, unsustainable financial burdens, disengagement from local economic needs, geopolitical risks, negative environmental impact, and significant potential for corruption. China has attempted to address many of these concerns, but the size of the projects and the large number of participating countries and companies involved in building out the infrastructure of these projects have made management of the BRI exceptionally challenging.

### Sample Argument Promoting the Democratic Model over the Chinese Socialist Model

This section presents a sample argument that an American statesman might use in promoting the U.S. model of national development over that of the Chinese model. The argument, whether presented to an audience or through a publication, might be as follows:

*[Begin presentation]*

While each nation is unique in its circumstances and needs, there are certain advantages in adopting the democratic model of national development, particularly in those situations where the nation's decision makers and citizens wish to select a model based on a public-private partnership and consensus on the direction in which they wish their country to go. In general, the democratic model fits well with cultures which highly value the contributions individual citizens

---

<sup>6</sup> Although not necessarily part of the BRI framework, it is significant that in November 2020 China, along with South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Brunei) signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's largest trade agreement accounting for about 30% of the global economy. See, Amy Mackinnon, "The World's Largest Trade Agreement Doesn't Include the United States," *Foreign Policy*, November 16, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/16/largest-trade-agreement-rcep-asia-pacific-united-states-china/>. Some journalists describe the BRI and RCEP as being "complementary in design." See Ji Xianba, "RCEP & BRI are Essentially Complementary in Design," *Belt & Road News*, November 18, 2020. (to see the article, Google the title; the hyperlink is too long to record here)



can make to society and also hold in high esteem their society's unique cultural and religious traditions.

The democratic model of national development seeks to strengthen the independence and freedom of individual countries so they can fully play their role in regional and global affairs, while also bringing peace, prosperity, and happiness to their citizens. To achieve this goal, the economic and other assistance offered through the democratic model is carefully calibrated in consultation with the recipient partners to achieve self-sufficiency as soon as possible. Training and education are highly important in this process, because building a modern infrastructure for national development requires a skilled workforce and trained managers to run the new systems effectively and efficiently for the benefit of society.

There is a wide scope of possible assistance available through the democratic development model, as illustrated by the many programs offered partner nations by the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID. Areas of assistance offered by USAID and its contributing partners include:

- Agriculture and food security
- Democracy, human rights, and governance
- Economic growth and trade
- Education
- Environment and global climate change
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Global health
- Humanitarian assistance
- Water and sanitation

- Working in crises and conflict
- Transformational programs utilizing new technologies, and
- Developmental labs to discover new and improved ways to address development issues

All of these programs are well-established with proven track records. They can be packaged in various combinations to ensure that the precise needs of the recipients are addressed. The democratic model also allows for more than one country to be involved in the various projects, so that they can be regional or global in scope, enabling both sponsoring nations and recipient nations to benefit from expanding international partnerships.

We should also note that there are alternative development models available. One of the best known is the national development model offered by China, referred to as socialism with Chinese characteristics. This approach has certain advantages for some countries. For example, it may offer a more direct and sometimes faster investment in major economic infrastructure projects. China also offers considerable financial and human resource assistance to countries which may wish to participate in President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI promises to expand trade among its various members, so that their economies can grow substantially within a relatively short period of time.

While the Chinese model may fit the development needs of certain countries, the model does have weaknesses. One of these is that it tends to lock the recipient nation into a socialist or top-down system of economics and governance, which may run counter to the culture of the country. As is well known, socialism with its Marxist roots works to centralize decision making power into the hands of a governing elite and largely excludes the public in policy deliberations.

Because of these and other weaknesses in the Chinese model of economic development, many countries may find that they prefer the democratic model which – although somewhat

slower and more deliberate in some cases – strives to involve a whole-of-society approach and thereby strengthens overall national cohesion and sense of unity in the country’s modernization efforts. Over the longer term, these advantages usually outweigh the more immediate benefits of the Chinese model.

The United States encourages all nations seeking development assistance to carefully evaluate and compare the alternative approaches available to them to achieve their goals. For more information on the benefits of the democratic development model, please feel free to contact your local American embassy or the Washington, DC headquarters of USAID.

Thank you.

*[End presentation]*

## Conclusion

As can be seen from the above comparison, the development model of socialism with Chinese characteristics is very competitive with the development model of Western, and especially American, democracy. This ought to be of great concern to Western nations, as it signifies that the People’s Republic of China is rapidly expanding its influence in ever-increasing areas of the world. The fact that China is becoming stronger and more influential is not surprising nor especially worrisome. What is troubling, however, is that the communist and socialist ideology of the PRC is making significant inroads into countries and regions previously believed to be evolving towards greater democracy. In other words, the success of China is breathing new life into the communist/socialist model of governance, after it appeared to have lost its appeal following the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991.

In large measure, the resurgence of communism/socialism is due to the tremendous economic strength of China and the powerful leadership of PRC President Xi Jinping. This expansion of Chinese power and influence is occurring at the same time that Western

democracies are experiencing economic, political, and social tensions calling into question by some the ideological foundations of Western culture. A potential shift in the global balance of power is being felt by many nations around the world.

From the point of view of U.S. interests, it would appear essential – if it wishes to continue its preeminent role in global affairs – that Washington strengthen its model and do more to promote democracy's value for developing countries. As suggested by the scenario, among the greatest values of democracy when compared to socialism with Chinese characteristics, three stand out. First, there are the concepts of political freedom and individual responsibility. Second, there is the role of spirituality and freedom of religion. And third, there are the institutions of decentralized government and accountability of political leaders to the public through such means as periodic and fair elections.

The first of these values greatly strengthens national consensus, unity, and social stability. The second value helps to anchor the national culture on a bedrock of belief in a Supreme Being and thus moral accountability among both leaders and citizens. And the third value ensures that government is always of, by, and for the people, thus protecting the people from abuse of power by political leaders. Together, these three values form the backbone of democracy and help to make the democratic model of national development very attractive to peoples around the world. It is this attractiveness to the common man that makes democracy, with its characteristics of freedom, liberty, and personal opportunity, such a powerful force in societies worldwide. This is the theme that the United States and other democracies should use to show why the democratic model of national development is superior to that of socialism with Chinese characteristics.