



USC-CCS China Studies Webinar Series

Ideological Differences between Chinese Communist Party Members and the Mass Public



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

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ABSTRACT

A popular view of nondemocratic regimes is that they draw followers mainly from those with an illiberal, authoritarian mind-set. We challenge this view by arguing that there exist a different class of autocracies that rule with a relatively enlightened base. Leveraging multiple nationally representative surveys from China over the past decade, we substantiate this claim by estimating and comparing the ideological preferences of Chinese Communist Party members and ordinary citizens. We find that party members on average hold substantially more modern and progressive views than the public on issues such as gender equality, political pluralism, and openness to international exchange. We also explore two mechanisms that may account for this party–public value gap—selection and socialization. We find that while education-based selection is the most dominant mechanism overall, socialization also plays a role, especially among older and less educated party members. Our findings caution against the simple, dichotomous characterization of political regimes and underscore an important tension between modernization and democratization in developing societies.

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Online via Zoom

Conducted in English

All welcome
Free admission
Registration required
(by 21 Oct 3 pm)

