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Socioracial Diversity, Ethnoterritoriality and Social Inequality: The Dilemma of Social Change in Contemporary China

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Introduction

the launching of the gaige kaifang (open and reform) policy in the late 1970s, China has experiencing a tumultuous process of social change in a short span of just three decades. Other aspects, socioeconomic, sociopolitical, sociobehavioural and sociopsychological motivations have grasped the nation in a frenzy. While the world looks upon China’s “rise” with much fascination and probably a certain level of trepidation, and the wide diaspora takes pride in the reborn greatness of the Middle Kingdom, what has often been neglected in the popular imagination is the equally amazing transformation in the mainland society—whether it be psychological, behavioural, political or economic.

Marxism, which provided the raison d’être of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in its historical political monopoly under the new conceptual politico-economic framework of socialism with Chinese characteristics, considered conflict, in particular class conflict, as a fundamental characteristic of society and that continued class struggles would result in more and more fundamental changes in society, and while it is not certain that all social changes actually flow from conflicts, both Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s philosophy of history and Karl Marx’s social theory as well as many of their derivative theoretical frameworks essentially assert that they do (Bottomore, 1975: 174-175). Intergroup and intragroup conflicts may lead to social changes or create a predisposition to change by disconcerting the functional and prevailing ways of life, and such conflicts include competition whose effects are beneficial or harmful for social relations, the former through its socializing and integrating function as Émile Durkheim and Georg Simmel saw as the creation of a network of obligations and dependencies, and the latter through the generation of social ills such as illness and crime (ibid.). What may be disconcerting especially for a culture or ideology that values great value on peace, harmony and stability is that social conflicts have also been seen as a necessary, as Ralf Dahrendorf, in his argument of the existence of crisscrossing conflict in place of Marx’s single fundamental cleavage in society, posited that conflict is an essential element in all imperatively coordinated associations in turn a universally feature of human society (Dahrendorf, 1959: 172, 268; Bottomore, 1975: 171), or as he said it:

| different coalitions of elites construct the boundaries of social systems, collectivities, and civilizations. Yet no such construction can be continuously stable. The crystallization and codification of any social order, of any collectivity, organization, political system, or

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