

Living with the State-Led Order: Practical Acceptance and Unawareness of the Chinese Middle Class

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Abstract

China's expanding middle class is often found to support the regime and lack democratic aspirations. We find that one section of the middle class depends upon the state for jobs and other material benefits, and the other works for the private and foreign sectors of the country's economy. Once separated as such, we found that the non-state middle class clearly shows lower support for the regime. Furthermore, unlike the state middle class, which registers lower democratic support, the non-state middle class shows a similar level of democratic support as other social classes. In general, however, while only pragmatically accepting the current order, both middle class groups nonetheless appear lacking practical knowledge and understanding of liberal democratic institutions such as free media and multiparty elections. The unforthcoming attitudes toward democracy might also derive from a general sense of fearing the loss of order and the other related uncertainties.

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