

Harmony and dream

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David Brooks essays his role as the NY Times premiere conservative columnist in a very unique way: he disregards conservatism. Now, regardless of where one's opinions may rest when it comes to political ideologies, neither a liberal, moderate, or conservative would recognize Brooks' writings as being conservative in any form. Actually, most of his writing is often self-centered and incoherent. This is most evident in the extremely obtuse article "Harmony and the Dream" which supposedly promotes the qualities of modern China and urges the United States to follow in its footsteps.

The reason the word "supposedly" is used here is because Brooks' writings display a complete lack of understanding of both modern China and its history. Actually, it also displays a fundamental understanding of what makes America's infrastructure work. Consider the following excerpt, "If you ask a Chinese person to describe a fish tank, the Chinese will usually describe the context in which the fish swim." What type of silliness is this assessment? Ask a Chinese person? Does this mean every single person who lives in China will share the same opinion?

Such an assessment infers that "China" consists of a homogenous entity of like minded people. This is an absurd notion and indicative of a fundamental lack of understanding of Chinese history and culture. The notion of collective thought may be "line" of the rulers of the Chinese Communist Party, but it is not the philosophy that the totality of China's population prescribes. Also, Brooks infers that the collectivism of communist China somehow has a noble trait to it. It would seem Brooks points out that collectivism leads to some eternal group salvation.

He even faults the common American tradition of liberty. This is evidenced in his statement “ The individualistic countries tend to put rights and privacy first. People in these societies tend to overvalue their own skills and overestimate their own importance to any group effort. ” Such a statement ignores the fact that Chinese communist rule is little more than totalitarianism by committee. Really, China embodies many of the qualities of a police state. Even by collectivist standards, China is extreme.

In fact, if you were to examine other nations that promote strong centralized government control you will not see the repression found in China. Venezuela, for example, prescribes to Marxist ideologies but it does not use the state to sponsor murdering prisoners to sell their organs on the world market. China’s government has engaged in this type of activity – and other insane human rights violations - for years. To hint that the United States (or any nation) should look to China as an example of how to model their society is absurd.

Yes, China possesses an exploding economy many nation envy. But, how did China arrive at such an expanded economy? Largely though paying laborers extremely low wages with no worker protections. This is certainly not the type of society to emulate even though Brooks suggests as much. The main problem with Brooks is assertion is that he does not examine the flaws present in China’s infrastructure. For example, he praises China’s economy but fails to mention the extreme pollution caused by China’s industry.

The pollution poured in the air by many factories is so voluminous that it surely will have a serious, negative effect on the population’s health. This brings about an important question: what is the value of a booming economy

if it ultimately reduces the quality of people's lives. This is one of the many questions Brooks does not address. This (among other reasons) is why "Harmony and the Dream" remains an incredibly flawed article. Bibliography Brooks, D. (2008, August 11) "Harmony and the Dream." NY TIMES. 11 August 2008. Retrieved September 23, 2008 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/12/opinion/12brooks.html>