

The Five Fundamental Characteristics of China's Modernization Process

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Abstract: Chinese-style modernization is a distinct and independent path based on its unique history, culture, population and natural resources. It is a modernization process with a huge population, promoting shared prosperity among all its people while ensuring the harmonious balance of material and spiritual civilization. Additionally, it emphasizes the coexistence of humanity and nature, and prioritizes peaceful development. Chinese-style modernization holds a crucial position within the historical developments of global modernization, presenting a wholly new and feasible model for other countries to examine and learn from. It represents not only a breakthrough from the traditional modernization model, but also a new direction of human civilization development. China's approach showcases Chinese wisdom and strategy, offering a means to push for the development of all humankind.

1. Introduction

The ever-changing winds of the global landscape have led China towards the pursuit of shared prosperity for its entire population and the realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, necessitating the establishment of a path that truly belongs to itself [1]. Chinese-style modernization provides a systematic response to the era's calls for the comprehensive construction of a socialist modernized country [2]. The quest for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, with the goal of building a socialist modernized strong country, has entered an irreversible historic process. Chinese-style modernization bears the enormous weight of accomplishing the modernization of Chinese society and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The comprehensive explanation of the five fundamental characteristics of Chinese-style modernization holds significant theoretical and practical importance for further construction and implementation of this unique model.

2. Chinese-style Modernization: A Modernization with a Vast Population Size

The objective reality of China's massive population presents a monumental task for Chinese-style modernization [3]. As a developing country with a vast population, China's path towards modernization is inevitably complex and arduous. Chinese-style modernization seeks to

bring over 1.4 billion people from 56 ethnic groups into the gate of modern society on a landmass of 9.6 million square kilometers, far exceeding the scale of all present developed countries. This illustrates the high level of difficulty and complexity in achieving this task. Therefore, it is impossible for China to replicate Western models of development. Instead, China must seek its own path, one that is characterized by its unique Chinese characteristics.

The modernization of a population of such massive magnitude is an endeavor plagued with significant developmental challenges from the outset. Developing countries first and foremost face challenges in the development of their productive forces and accumulation of material wealth. This requires constructing a comprehensive national system, social mobilization, collective action, as well as the assurance of human, financial, and technological resources. By representing the demands for advanced productive forces, the development of advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the broadest masses of the people, China's ongoing reforms have continuously deepened its commitment to innovation. These reforms have established and improved a socialist market economy system with Chinese characteristics, expanded and enhanced the overall economic and social scale of its "cake", and utilized China's enormous population as a most prominent competitive advantage. As a result, China, becoming more open, has emerged as a resource-rich country and the world's largest market, providing favorable conditions for China's rapid and sustained economic growth.

The modernization of a population of such massive magnitude has also led Chinese-style modernization to focus primarily on human development. Chinese-style modernization is rooted in the people, with a steadfast commitment to placing people at the center of development, and has always focused on democratic development, improving people's livelihoods, and safeguarding their rights. The construction of a socialist core value system and the practice of socialist core values have galvanized the Chinese people's colossal strength in constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics, promoting comprehensive human development, and facilitating overall social progress. This is the driving force behind China's continuous and sustainable growth. With a population of over 1.4 billion, China has become the world's most dynamically developing market, brimming with different consumption needs and levels of demand. This has provided strong support for accelerating the construction of a domestic circulation system and the new development pattern of dual circulation, both domestically and internationally.

3. Chinese-style Modernization: A Modernization Drive for Common Prosperity of All People

As early as in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1857-1858, Marx explicitly stated: "In the ideal society of the future, all social production is for the wealth of all people." [4] Engels, with a strong sense of mission, emphasized the importance of relying on the proletariat, standing with them, defending their interests at all times, and maximizing the interests of democratic forces when interpreting the relationship between Communists and Democrats [5]. Although Marx and Engels did not use the term "common prosperity", their theories indicate the development laws of common prosperity and provide scientific theoretical guidance for realizing the goal of common prosperity.

The Western approach to modernization is a polarized modernization because it is carried out according to the logic of capital. It is a modernization driven by capital and profits, where modernization inevitably seeks to maximize profits and benefit a small group of people. Under the private ownership of the means of production, capital is inevitably concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists, and the gap between exploiters and the exploited within a country continues to widen. At the same time, as major capitalist countries around the world enter the imperialist phase, Western modernization relies on colonialism and plundering other nations for resources. Monopoly

capital exploits the surplus value of the working class in the global South, resulting in capital flowing around the world, while profits flow to the West. The consequences of Western modernization are the exacerbation of global economic and political inequalities and the division of rich and poor between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. The resulting unfair world economic order seriously hinders global governance and development.

In the pursuit of modernization, not a single person, nor a single nation, can be left behind. This is determined by the socialist nature of our country. The “Chinese-style modernization”, characterized by “common prosperity”, is not only the central theme of China’s modernization but also a promotion of peace, development, justice, and democracy, reflecting universal values for all humankind. It has set an unprecedented “new model of human civilization development”. This new form of human civilization development represents a significant change in Marxist theory in the new era and a new stage.

4. Chinese-style Modernization: A Modernization that Achieves Harmony Between Material and Spiritual Civilization

In the process of the development of modern civilization in the world, some developed Western countries have increasingly exposed their stubborn illness of capital-centeredness and materialism. Meanwhile, many developing countries with slow comprehensive development have been plunged into political turmoil and economic crises. The fundamental reason for this lies in the “imbalance and disharmony between material and spiritual civilization in various scenarios of industrialization, technological change, capitalization, and cultural transformation in these countries” [6]. Since the 21st century, due to the rapid development of science and technology and productivity, people’s ability to transform nature and industrial production efficiency has been greatly improved, creating rich material conditions for social consumption. However, with the development of the economy and the combination of consumption and borrowing, people’s desire for materialism and hedonism has further accelerated the dissolution of human values, exacerbating social differentiation and contradictions, and leading some people from value negation to spiritual negation. As the largest developing country, if China fails to prevent the abnormal phenomenon of the decline of spiritual culture caused by the development of material civilization in its development process, it will not be able to truly achieve human freedom and comprehensive development as well as the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Chinese-style modernization is a modernization that achieves harmony between material and spiritual civilization. As early as the beginning of the reform and opening-up, the country made it clear that we are now carrying out two civilization construction projects: one is the material civilization, and the other is the spiritual civilization. In the new era, people’s needs for life are no longer just about material civilization, and their needs for spiritual civilization are stronger than ever before. The desire for democratic, fair, just, safe, and beautiful living has become even more prominent.

5. Chinese-style Modernization: A Modernization that Promotes the Harmonious Coexistence of Man and Nature

In the development path of Western modernization, the endless pursuit of capital for interests has led to unbridled exploitation of nature, resulting in unimaginable trauma to the global ecological environment despite the creation of abundant material wealth. For example, the London Smog event alone led to more than 4,000 deaths. Such a development model has brought painful lessons to humanity. The “survival of the fittest” rule has enabled some capitalist countries to create prosperous material civilization while also bringing severe natural disasters to the entire human

civilization.

The modernization that achieves harmony between man and nature transcends the development mode, innovates development strategies, and embodies people-oriented development values, which has creatively transcended traditional capitalist modernization [7]. Chinese-style modernization is the result of the organic combination of the ecological community concept of historical materialism and the “unity of man and nature” concept in Chinese traditional culture. Fundamentally, without the care of nature, mankind cannot grow to where it is today. The survival and development of human society must be rooted in nature and abide by the ecological laws of ecological development. From sustainable development in the 1990s to the scientific development concept in the new century, and then to the new development philosophy of the new era, promoting the harmonious coexistence of man and nature has become increasingly prominent in the process of Chinese-style modernization [8]. The modernization that achieves harmony between man and nature requires abandoning outdated development models and short-sighted behaviors that trade the environment for short-term economic and social development in the path of national rejuvenation [9]. China should vigorously promote social and industrial structural transformation and innovation and truly make the construction of a sound ecological system the pillar of Chinese-style modernization for stable development.

6. Chinese-style Modernization: A Modernization that Pursues a Path of Peaceful Development

The modernization path of Western capitalist countries was built on colonization, exploitation of labor, and plunder of resources. Throughout history, they gathered resources by selling slaves, opium, plundering colonial wealth, gold, etc., to establish the means of industrial development. In terms of international relations, they adopted expansionism and pirate behavior under the ideology of chauvinism, leading to a logic of the supremacy of power politics, frequent regional military conflicts, and resulting international confrontations, destroying the peace and stability of the world and regions. Chinese-style modernization pursues a path of peaceful development that practically responds to the many challenges and problems encountered in the modernization process worldwide, expanding the new path for developing countries to achieve modernization.

The Chinese nation has a long-standing cultural tradition of cherishing and respecting peace. Over the past five thousand years, through their diligence and intelligence, diverse peoples on this expansive terrain have constructed a brilliantly thriving Chinese culture, and have also forged a multilateral and cohesive state. In the course of extended historical interactions and assimilation, the Chinese people, uniquely characterized by their broad-mindedness and openness, have consistently integrated virtuous elements from other cultures, persevered in their efforts to improve, and made remarkable contributions to the advancement of human civilization. Chinese-style modernization, rooted in the soul and foundation of Chinese civilization, is one that upholds a concept of inclusive diversity, and embraces a course of peaceful development, fully manifesting the genuine characteristic of the Chinese nation’s compatibility and openness. As a responsible major power, China conscientiously assumes its international duties, and actively engages in managing international affairs with a constructive disposition. Furthermore, through providing developmental aid to underdeveloped regions and fostering world peace and stability, China exercises a progressive and ethical influence upon the international community.

The eternal pursuit of China’s peaceful development is characterized by seeking internal development and harmony while seeking external cooperation and peace. China holds a hopeful outlook for the future of humanity and consistently adheres to a framework of international relations and policy guidelines that are in line with peaceful development [10]. Guided by the Five Principles

of Peaceful Coexistence, China has established a friendly cooperative relationship with other nations. After achieving modernization, China is poised to become a leading force in safeguarding global peace and prosperity.

7. Conclusions

The Chinese-style modernization is a modernization path marked by a large population, common prosperity for all, coordinated development of material and spiritual civilization, harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and a course of peaceful development. This modernization path places the people at its center and has achieved national prosperity and independence. It transcends the Western modernization path characterized by materialism, partiality, conflict, and hegemony, and has given birth to a new form of human civilization. The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the Chinese direction of value understanding of this Chinese-style modernization, which possesses both Chinese characteristics and international commonalities, and has significant guiding implications for China's interaction with the international community. The Chinese-style modernization provides a novel choice for human modernization, and the Chinese people have brought forth more and better Chinese wisdom, solutions, and power to address the common problems faced by humankind. In the new era and on the new journey, a profound comprehension of the essential requirements of the Chinese-style modernization is necessary, which should be integrated into all aspects and stages of socialist modernization construction, to serve as guidance for thinking and action towards achieving the grand objectives of strong country construction.

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