

# *Xi Jinping' s Discussion of Civilization History and the Discourse Construction of China's Road*

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**Abstract:** The significance of discourse construction in the civilization discussion of Xi Jinping is explored in this paper: The 500-year history of world socialism and the 5000-year history of Chinese civilization, Xi Jinping' s studies of Socialism with Chinese characteristics in the long history of civilization development, highlighting Socialism with Chinese characteristics as a product in the development of human civilization, the great contribution to world civilization progress and the creative development of Marxism which has been the most distinctive feature in Chinese discourse structure since the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC. As the conscious construction of epistemology, it has given unprecedented historical and cultural implications to China' s road and opened the new theory space for the discourse construction of Socialism with Chinese characteristics or the academic expression of China' s road.

**Keywords:** Discourse Construction; Xi Jinping, Civilization history; China' s Road

**X**i Jinping addressed the opening ceremony of the 18th National Congress of the CPC on January 5, 2013. He pointed out that the spirit of the 18th National Congress of the CPC was to adhere and develop Socialism with Chinese characteristics, which was a great article and that the task of the Communists of this generation is to continue writing this article.

After the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC, there are two clear clues in the

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writing of the new chapter of adhering and developing Socialism with Chinese characteristics by the Central Committee led by the General Secretary Xi Jinping. The first is at the practical level. With the distinctive problem of consciousness and problem orientation, the "Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy" has gradually formed, based on coping with the prominent contradictions and problems facing our country. It is the "Theoretical and Practical Guide"<sup>[1]</sup> to achieving the "Two Centenary Goals" and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The second is at the theoretical level. A series of new discussions about Socialism with Chinese characteristics have been put forward. The interpretation of Socialism with Chinese characteristics from the perspective of human civilization development history is of the most epistemological significance.

Before the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC, the literature discourse about the progress of Socialism with Chinese characteristics is based on the practical achievements of over 30 years of reform and opening up, which provide power for the increasing confidence in Socialism with Chinese characteristics. After the Congress, Xi Jinping focuses on interpretation of Socialism with Chinese characteristics from two dimensions of the development histories of worldwide socialism and Chinese civilization in a broader historical horizon in a series of speeches. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is studied in the long history of civilization development of human thought to highlight that Socialism with Chinese characteristics is a product of the development of human civilization, and a great contribution to world civilization progress. It has been the most distinctive feature in Chinese discourse since the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC. The conscious construction of epistemology has given a more distinctive sense of theory and history to Socialism

with Chinese characteristics.

## Part I

Xi Jinping's speech at the 18th National Congress of the CPC, for the first time, in the discussion of CPC theories, interprets the historical origin and position of Socialism with Chinese characteristics from the perspective of the development of world socialism. He analyzes the 500-year history of world socialism in 6 time ranges; the generation and development of utopian socialism, the theoretical system of scientific socialism founded by Marx and Engels, the success of the October Revolution and practice of socialism led by Lenin, the gradual forming of the Soviet Union mode, exploration and practice of socialism by our Party after the founding of new China, our Party's historic decision of reform, and opening up and creating and developing Socialism with Chinese characteristics.<sup>[2]</sup>

Modern socialism was generated as the critical social factor of capitalism in the cultural atmosphere of humanism formed during the Renaissance in Europe. It is pointed out by Karl Kautsky that, "The theories of socialism are generated in the scope of humanitarianism (equal to humanism-quoted). St. Thomas More learned to think and summarize in an organized way since he is a humanitarian. His horizon is beyond his times and his country as he is a humanitarian."<sup>[3]</sup> In Utopia, with humanism as the theoretical weapon, More opened a broad vision of the Communist thought through his works. The main thoughts of Thomas Campanella after More are also humanistic. Morelly and Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, the outstanding representatives of French utopian socialists in the 18th century," are enlightening scholars."<sup>[4]</sup> The theoretical form of the three most famous utopian socialists in the early 19th century

is the further development of various theories proposed by the French enlightenment scholars of the 18th century. Their theories represent the most advanced ideas of human beings at that time.

The birth of Marxism, namely scientific socialism, in the 1940s is a vital milestone in the development of human civilization. Instead of moving apart from the road of world civilization development, it inherits the outstanding achievements of world ideological civilization and "answers the questions raised by the advanced thoughts of human beings."<sup>[5]</sup> The ideal society in the mind of Marx is "an economic form in which the social labor productivity develops at an extremely high speed while every producer is developing in a most comprehensive way".<sup>[6]</sup> It is a civilization form without the disadvantages and defects of capitalism. As an alternative solution to the inhumane development of capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scientific socialism thought and its practice promoted the civilization evolution of human society. In the first half of the 20th century, when capitalism was in a developmental crisis, the practice of socialism in the Soviet Union avoided the disaster of big crisis of capitalism and became an oasis in the desert. Eric Hobsbawm said, "From 1914 to around 1950, it seemed that capitalism was out of order in all aspects." "Sixty years ago, the non Communist politicians and intellectuals lined up to Moscow to explore the secret of the 'plan'. Such plan saved the Soviet Union from the big recession, which was really suffering to the western countries."<sup>[7]</sup> The socialist economic model of the Soviet Union opened a new path for the underdeveloped countries to realize industrialization, namely the socialist industrialization path, which became one of the factors promoting the western countries' general transition to macroeconomic regulated modern market economy.

Socialism with Chinese characteristics developed against the general background of the changes of the times' theme, "We must catch up with the times, as it is the purpose of the reform".<sup>[8]</sup> "What we are pursuing is Socialism with Chinese characteristics. It constantly develops productive forces of the society and favors peace."<sup>[9]</sup> Essentially, based on the principle of scientific socialism, it is an innovation with China's national conditions inclusive of generally applicable systematic civilization and development patterns in the human civilization. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is not "state capitalism," "capitalism with Chinese characteristics," social democracy or any other doctrines. It adheres to the basic principles of scientific socialism. All of the theories related to Socialism with Chinese characteristics are based on historical materialism and the essence of these theories is seeking truth from facts such as Deng Xiaoping's Theory, the "Important Thought of the Three Represents" and the "Scientific Outlook on Development", and the Core Values of Chinese Socialism of Xi Jinping. Socialism with Chinese characteristics, stresses the core values of socialist construction including achieving the common prosperity of the people, promoting the comprehensive development of people, people orientation, realizing social fairness and justice, reflecting the fundamental values of the broad masses of people and with distinctive affinity to the people. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is of inexhaustible vitality as it keeps abreast of human civilization development and is open to the excellent civilization achievements of human beings to enrich and develop itself. For example, modern market economy is one of the biggest civilization achievements in the aspect of economic system created in the human society of the 20th century. China boldly draws lessons from it and combines

it with the national conditions. Further it firmly embarks on the path of socialist market economy, and today it has achieved huge success. Besides, there are major civilization achievements and value pursuits in the long-term historical process jointly created by human beings like freedom, equality, democracy, the rule of law and justice. The core values of Socialism with Chinese characteristics "not only embody the essential requirements of socialism, inherit the excellent traditional Chinese culture, but also absorb the beneficial achievements of world civilization and reflect the spirit of the times".<sup>[10]</sup> Standing on the practice of contemporary China, it is a comprehensive innovation with the universal value of human beings, the excellent traditional Chinese cultures and value cultures of socialism (the latter two are also achievements of human ideological civilization development). Additionally, systematic civilization builds the skeleton of the development of modern civilization. During the 3rd Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the construction of the modern national system or "modern nation construction" was regarded as the goal to deepen the reform. Xi Jinping stressed that "The rule of law or the rule of man is a fundamental issue in the political civilization of human beings, and also a major problem all the countries must face and tackle in the process of modernization".<sup>[11]</sup> "The rule of law is one of the most important achievements of human civilization, its essence and main idea is of universal significance for the state and society governance, so we should learn from the excellent achievement of the rule of law in the world".<sup>[12]</sup> It enables us to uphold and develop the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. Finally the system will become an organic part of the civilization development of human systems.

The development of socialism promotes the development of human civilization, and socialism



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*The rule of law is one of the most important achievements of human civilization.*

itself is part of the development history of world civilization in the contemporary and modern times. Instead of deviating from the road of human civilization, Socialism with Chinese characteristics is a direct successor of the advanced thoughts of human beings. China is both "Taking its own road" and "taking the inevitable road of the history". It is a great contribution to the development of world civilization and human's exploration of an ideal society and the creative development of Marxism, to build a comprehensive well-off society and further to achieve the vision of socialist modernization and national revival. By retrieving the development process history in a broad historical horizon, Xi Jinping helps Party members and cadres to strengthen their confidence in the road, concentrate on theoretical study, stick to their belief, as well as open a new horizon for the discourse of continuing the construction of Socialism with Chinese characteristics.

## Part II

Chinese characteristics lie in their insistence on China's actual conditions. Deng Xiaoping's interpretation of China's road is "To integrate the universal truth of Marxism and the concrete reality of our country, take our own road and construct Socialism with Chinese characteristics."<sup>[13]</sup> When it came to the reality or national conditions of China, emphasis was placed on the actual situation that China was in the primary stage of socialism, however, the national conditions of China not only includes the reality but also the history, and the reality of China not only refers to the existing reality but also the historical reality." History is the reality in the past, while reality is future history."<sup>[14]</sup> Since the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPC, the actual national conditions in economy, politics and society and the historical conditions are included in the state analysis on the basis of Socialism with Chinese characteristics by Xi Jinping. He points out that over the 5,000 years of civilization history of the Chinese nation, over 170 years struggling history in modern times of Chinese people, over 90 years striving history of the CPC, over 60 years development history of the P.R. China and over 30 years exploration history of reform and opening up, all of these histories can be traced back to the same origin.<sup>[15]</sup> The road of Socialism with Chinese characteristics "is developed in the great practice of over 30 years reform and opening up, the continuous exploration of over 60 years since the founding of the P.R. China, profound summary of over 170 years development history of the Chinese nation in the modern times, and an inheritance of over a 5,000-year civilization history of the Chinese nation. It is of deep historical origin and extensive realistic foundation. The Chinese nation is extraordinarily creative. We have created the great Chinese civilization and we can also

continue to expand and walk on the development road suitable to national realities."<sup>[16]</sup>

The Chinese civilization history is an integral part of world civilization history. Xi Jinping points out that "With a continuous civilization history of more than 5,000 years, the Chinese nation has created extensive and profound Chinese culture and made indelible contribution to human civilization progress."<sup>[17]</sup> As a cohesively developing civilization, under the impact of foreign cultures, the Chinese civilization absorbs and integrates the advanced part of those cultures in an inclusive way and retains its own core part." The Chinese nation is tolerant and open to others. In the long historical process, it continuously learned from the excellent achievements of others and further converted into our own wealth. In this way, our national characters are formed gradually."<sup>[18]</sup> "The Chinese civilization is generated on the land of China, and is also formed after constant integration and meriting from each other."<sup>[19]</sup> Due to this cultural trait, it did not perish under the repeated impact of colonial expansion of capitalism in the modern times, but repeatedly tested in the process of absorbing foreign things. Ultimately, it succeeded in the exploration of the development road of socialism, creation of the theories of socialism and establishment of the modern system with Chinese characteristics.

Essentially, modernization is a two-way interaction between the modern and the traditional, and is a process of cultural transformation and innovation adapted to the modern development trend on the foundation of traditional cultures. The excellent traditional Chinese cultures contain rich philosophic thoughts, political wisdom and moral resources, which provide beneficial enlightenment for people to understand and transform the world, useful insights for modern state governance and advanced ideological and cultural construction,



an important reference for solving the problems facing the contemporary human beings. In terms of political and legal systems, the governance system of a country is closely related with its historical heritage and cultural traditions." The governance system of our country today is a result of long-term development, gradual improvement and endogenous evolution on the foundation of the historical heritage, cultural traditions, and economic and social development of our country."<sup>[20]</sup> "The ancient Chinese legal system contains abundant wisdom and resources, and the Chinese legal system becomes an independent school in several major legal systems in the world. We should pay attention to the study of the traditions and successes and failures of our ancient legal system, so as to explore and inherit the essence of the Chinese legal culture, absorb the nutrition, and skim the cream."<sup>[21]</sup> In the traditional Chinese culture, the values of benevolence, people orientation, integrity, justice, harmony and great unity are the major sources of the core values of socialism. In terms of the relationship between China and the world, the upholding

and pursuit of peace, harmony and concordance of Chinese civilization is the historical and cultural gene to China's adherence to the road of peaceful development, advocating the concepts of "harmonious civilization", promotion of cultural exchanges and meriting from each other, and construction of a global "community with a shared future".

Based on the development history of the Chinese nation, the theoretical discourse of Socialism with Chinese characteristics has deep and profound historical and cultural meanings. Chinese civilization and other civilizations across the globe are results created by human civilization. Socialism with Chinese characteristics, rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese cultures, is a civilization-integrated product in essence, and has made unique contribution to the diverse world civilizations. It did not fall from heaven, but was selected and preserved in the unique Chinese cultural traditions and the unique historical destiny in the modern times; as a historical concept, the Chinese dream is consistent with China's historical themes in the contemporary and modern times, and is Socialism



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*The excellent traditional Chinese cultures contain rich philosophic thoughts, political wisdom and moral resources.*

with Chinese characteristics with the theme of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. China's road has both extensive practical foundations and a deep and profound historical origin and cultural accumulation. We take our own way with a broad stage, deep historical heritage and strong power forward.

### Part III

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPC, Xi Jinping's interpretation of Socialism with Chinese characteristics in the great horizon of civilization development history has expanded the vision of Socialism with Chinese characteristics, opened a new theoretical space for the discourse regarding the continuing evolution of Socialism with Chinese characteristics, or what can be called the academic expression of China's road. All of these need in-depth discussions in the intellectual circle, with the historical discourse being one of the most important. It places Socialism with Chinese characteristics in the historical process of human civilization development, which is helpful to respond to various challenges and criticisms to Socialism with Chinese characteristics at home and abroad and enhance its self-confidence and strategic concentration.

Further, it is of epistemological significance and consistent with the systematization tradition of the classical theories of Marxism, to include human civilization history and the prehistory of Socialism with Chinese characteristics into the discussion framework of Socialism with Chinese characteristics. In the development history of Marxism, any systematization moves forward based on the theoretical theme, to lay a historical and theoretical foundation for a more convincing theoretical theme, such as Engels and Lenin's systematization of Marxism, and Mao Zedong's

systematization of New Democracy. When Engels tried to construct Marxism system in *Anti-Dühring* and *The Development of Socialism from Utopian to Scientific*, he first made investigations of theoretical history before Marxist philosophy, political economics and scientific socialism were discussed. He made a full analysis and discussion about the history of European modern philosophy, economics, and socialism. Lenin first discussed European modern history particularly philosophy, economics, various socialism doctrines as well as the French Revolution when he analyzed the systematization of Marxism in *The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism* and *Karl Marx (Marx's Biography and Overview)*. When Mao Zedong discussed the systematization of the New Democracy in the works *The Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China* and *Theory of New Democracy*, he first analyzed the national conditions and the nature of Chinese conditions and society. With national conditions as the basis of argumentation, he designed system structure with the nature of Chinese society as the starting point, and argued the inevitability of New Democracy based on the Chinese Revolution and the conditions of the times.

The experience in constructing classical theories provides a feasible path for the systematization of the theories of Socialism with Chinese characteristics. In the system construction of Socialism with Chinese characteristics, Deng Xiaoping's Theory, the "Important Thought of the Three Represents", the "Scientific Outlook on Development", and the Governance Thoughts of Xi Jinping should be viewed as a whole, and a common theoretical theme should be abstracted. This theme can be expressed as how to construct and develop socialism and realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in such a country of unique history and cultures like China.

Based on this theme, we should move forward from the aspects of human civilization evolution, China's national conditions, and the theory history of socialism and extend to economics, politics, culture, society, ecology, Party building, and international affairs. This two-way extension

method can avoid the limitations of respective discussion about these four theories in their historical order. All the content is centered on the theme and a system is established with close integration of each part.

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