



Innovation of Chinese Discourse in the Context of Reform and Opening Up

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Abstract: Through reform and opening up, China has moved from the edge of the world arena to the center and this great historical change in its development has created new requirements for the innovation of Chinese discourse. The remarkable achievements of reform and opening up have not only maintained the vitality of Chinese discourse, but also built the inherent foundation for holding confidence in discourse. The key reason why the policy of reform and opening up has facilitated the historic construction of Chinese discourse is that it is a scientific answer to the questions of our times about how to build socialism in a country relatively backward in the level of economy and education. In a new era for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the innovations and development of Chinese discourse have shown new features rarely seen before, among which the most significant is that constructing Chinese discourse is no longer a matter of individual cases but more of a common phenomenon. In the historic journey towards an all-round in-depth reform, broader theoretical space has been created for Chinese discourse. In addition, it is an important signpost in the path of promoting innovative development of Chinese discourse in a new era, namely, how to “tell China’s stories well”, and establish an appropriate mode for conveying Chinese discourse to the world.

Keywords: reform and opening up, Chinese discourse, sinicization of marxism, the thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, Chinese path, theoretical innovation

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The term “Chinese discourse”, instead of generally referring to a variety of discourse forms existing in China, refers in particular to the theoretical expression about “Chinese path”, an expression that has been gradually formed and developed since reform and opening up, i.e., the Marxism discourse system for interpreting the social development of contemporary China. This discourse system is centered on a scientific answer to the important question about how to promote the socialist construction in China through reform and opening up by carefully considering the conditions of the era and the specific realities. The policy of reform and opening up represents a new theoretical and practical form in the conceptual system and theoretical resource library of classical Marxism. The success in promoting reform and opening up is not a result simply attributed to the theoretical assumption of classical Marxist writers, but a major breakthrough achieved in a dilemma that has trapped China’s conventional socialist development pattern. As Deng Xiaoping said in later days: “The reform and the opening up policy have been successful not because we relied on books, but because we relied on practice and sought truth from facts” (Deng, 1993, p. 382). This point of view accords with the internal development logic and theoretical gene of Chinese Marxist theory. Chinese Marxist theory is not logically derived from a concept or conclusion made by classical Marxist writers, but built on the lively reality of China’s ever shifting and progressing revolutionary practice. In his early article *Oppose Book Worship*, Mao Zedong explicitly criticized the theoretical attitude of book worshipers, and insisted on carrying out practical struggles that are grounded in China’s revolutionary reality (Mao, 1991a, pp. 111-112). It is fair to say that Chinese Marxist theory shows at the deep level an important trait of putting practice before theory, i.e., instead of borrowing or inventing some abstract theories to guide China’s revolutionary practice and it keeps to the basic tenets of Marxism on the basis of current conditions and guides revolutionary practice through a combination of theory and practice, during which process it sums up experience and constructs new theoretical discourse. As a policy inherently holding fast to this theoretical path, reform and opening up has not been promoted under the guidance of existing abstract theoretical concepts or a whole set of predetermined concepts, discourse or a theoretical system, but guided by the basic tenets of Marxism to make breakthrough progress in both practice and theory in the spirit of “wading across the river by feeling for the stones.” “Existing problems have forced us to reform, and reforms are deepened once problems are tackled and solved” (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2014, p. 497). From the dilemma of conventional socialist practice, the cause of reform and opening up has grown into a trend against the wind. It has transformed not only China’s realities but also Marxist theory, facilitating the breakthroughs in discourse of Marxist theory with Chinese Characteristics.

Practice Breakthroughs and Theoretical Innovations in Reform and Opening Up

Looking at the history of Marxism and the international communist movement, the fight against dogmatism and fundamentalism used to be a core issue in the course of upholding and developing Marxism. In the development history of China's communist revolution, dogmatism exerted negative impacts on China's revolution in a period of time. Dogmatic practitioners indiscriminately imitated Marxist theory and mechanically applied book learning to real practice. Their self-righteous obedience to Marxist "rules" severely misrepresented and distorted the spiritual essence of Marxism. To solve the problem, Mao Zedong clearly pointed out, "Of course we should study Marxist books, but this study must be integrated with our country's actual conditions" (Mao, 1991a, pp. 111-112). However, the thinking about how to build socialism often failed to break the stereotypes in the previous international communist movement, but clung to the images envisioned by classical Marxist writers in terms of the future society, kept following the "Soviet model" as an example of real socialist construction, and dared not go one step beyond the limits prescribed by the doctrine of classical Marxism and the Soviet Union experience. Its limitations were both theoretical and practical.

First, classical Marxist theory focuses relatively less on socialist construction compared to the classical writers' plentiful works criticizing capitalism. Limited by the primary mission of overthrowing capitalist production relations and reigning order, classical writers undersupplied theories on how to build socialism. The classical Marxist writers did not provide a complete theoretical structure for socialist construction of the future, given that in *The German Ideology* a romantic assumption about future social division of labor was described like "Hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner" (Marx & Engels, 2009a, p. 537), and later in *Critique of the Gotha Programme* the communist society was divided into "first phase" and "higher phase", and imagined in such a way as "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (Marx & Engels, 2009b, pp. 435-436).

Second, the relatively limited experience gained from socialist construction has made the work of exploring China's socialist construction path more complicated and arduous. During the earliest days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, drawing upon the Soviet Union experience, the only reference example back then, was in some measure an inevitable historical choice. However, the Chinese Communists, with Comrade Mao Zedong as their chief representative, "had always felt unsatisfied and not in a good mood" (Mao, 1999, p. 117) in learning from the Soviet Union experience, so they looked for theories and experiences from the library of China's rich revolutionary theories to guide socialist construction, forming the path dependence for China's socialist exploration. Amidst this process, the theoretical

discourses about revolutionary struggles such as “mass movement”, “final battle” and others were introduced to guide the practice of China’s socialist construction, showing the path dependence under the specific historical conditions with inadequate existing experience. However, because of the inherent difference between revolution and construction practice, the exploration using revolutionary theory to guide socialist construction underwent twists and turns.

Facing the reality of the relative shortage of classical Marxist writers’ discourses about socialist construction, it was impossible for the Chinese Communist to pin its hopes on obtaining ready and directly applicable answers from the classical theoretical discourse to promote socialist construction with Chinese characteristics, and must resolutely advance innovation in theory and practice based on proceeding from reality of China’s socialist construction and that of contemporary China. In this sense, the relative shortage of classical theoretical discourse served the exact purpose of avoiding excessive dependence on, and blind obedience to, the classical theory on building socialism. The relative shortage of classical discourse about socialist construction and the challenging and pioneering practices in reality forced the Chinese Communist to proceed from the actual situation and keep moving forward by developing practical Chinese innovations, forming Chinese experiences and upgrading them to Chinese discourse. The reason why it was impossible to pin hope on obtaining ready answers from classical Marxist writers in promoting the socialist construction in contemporary China was that the depth and breadth of needed practical activities here, if reaching their utmost extents, far exceed the envisions made by the classical Marxist writers (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2018, p. 346).

The Chinese Communist Party has upheld and developed the socialist construction with Chinese characteristics through reform and opening up, has pressed ahead with the double innovation of Chinese practice and Chinese discourse, and resolutely freed itself from the constraints of two wrong thinking modes. The first is dogmatism. This attitude holds closely to the classical books of Marxism while neglecting concrete historical realities and features of the times; blindly copies the remarks and quotes from the classical books and mechanically applies them to practice in reality, resisting new breakthroughs in theoretical discourse that could make it possible to adapt to practical features and the characteristics of the times. However, such an attitude is ignorant of the fact that openness is the essential attribute of Marxism (Xi, 2018a, p. 9). The only way to make Marxist theory keep pace with the practice and the times and use new theoretical discourse to guide new practice is to see Marxism from the developmental perspective. The second is empiricism. This attitude holds on to the perceptual experience of reality and refuses to accept summary and guidance at the theoretical level, arguing that the existing experience is enough to advance practical development. However, such an attitude does not understand that without the guidance of

a scientific theory, any new practice is substantially blind. The effectiveness of existing experience is bounded by time and space and must be continually renewed and upgraded under scientific theory. Take the socialist construction experience of the Soviet Union as an example. The key to the new trail that has been successfully blazed for the cause of the socialist construction with Chinese characteristics lies in the establishment of a scientific and rational attitude held towards the Soviet Union experience. This attitude recognizes the relative rationality of the Soviet Union experience, which can be deemed as a theoretical summary proved by practice and adapting to the demands of socialist construction in the Soviet Union back then. Moreover, the attitude profoundly recognizes the space-time limits on the rationality of the Soviet Union experience. It could only play its guiding role in the socialist construction of the Soviet Union (in space) back then (in time) but could not be directly applied to socialist China that was quite different in practical situations and historical traditions.

The radical innovation of classical Marxist theoretical discourse, i.e. the debate about the criterion for testing truth, heralded the breakthrough and development driven by reform and opening up. When measuring the significance of the debate about the criterion for testing truth, evaluators often confined its target domain within the “Two Whatevers” (a dogmatic belief holding whatever Marx and Engels said must be correct), believing that thanks to the debate, people’s minds were freed and the ideological obstructions imposed by the “Two Whatevers” policy were eliminated. It is true that the debate about the criterion for testing truth indeed pointed straight at the “Two Whatevers” policy on the face of it, but in a more fundamental sense, it was designed to reestablish the ideological line of “freeing our minds and seeking truth from facts” through the debate, and served the fundamental purpose of better advancing China’s socialist construction. Therefore, the debate over the criterion for testing truth was targeted at the basic assumptions made by classical Marxism about socialist construction. What had been exploded was, in fact, the dogmatic worship of the assumptions in classical theory, and a path of seeking truth from facts has since been established in the exploration of socialist construction depending on China’s concrete reality. As clearly pointed out by Deng Xiaoping at that time, the “Two Whatevers” policy did not accord with Marxism, and this issue was “fundamentally related to the way of looking on Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought” (Deng, 1994, p. 114). This quotation specifically refers to how to look on the ideas regarding socialist construction contained in Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. As the conventional Chinese socialist practice ran into difficulty, the Chinese people faced a pressing task of exploring how to build socialism. “Because one cannot find the answer in the Marxist and Leninist books of how to build socialism in China, and because each country has its own situations and different experiences, it is important to think independently” (Deng, 1993, p. 260). In the course of supporting and guiding the debate over the criterion for testing truth, Deng Xiaoping kept in his mind the big

picture of China's social development, turned the debate into a process of thinking over the country's development trends and fate, and based the debate on the advancement of socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics (Tao, 2018).

Fundamentally, the debate over the criterion for testing truth has freed our minds, abandoned the dogmatic attitude towards classical Marxist theory, and established the theoretical attitude towards the Soviet Union experience and China's conventional socialist construction experience in a scientific and realistic way, i.e. following the path of socialist construction with Chinese characteristics and on this basis continuing to promote the historic construction of Chinese discourse. Therefore, the emancipation of the mind raised by the debate over the criterion for testing truth was targeted at two domains: first, in the theoretical sphere, was the dogmatist view on the theoretical assumptions made by classical Marxist writers about future socialism; second, in the practical sphere, was the empiricist attitude of copying the Soviet model in the conventional socialist construction practice. In addition, it is particularly worth mentioning that freeing our minds does not mean a competition for daring to revolt against classical Marxist theory, but implies freeing people's minds on the basis of adhering to the basic tenets of Marxism. Therefore, freeing our minds and seeking truth from facts are in essence dialectically united in the course of reform and opening up. This is the root cause for China to continually form theoretical discourse with characteristics of its own, and of the times, about Marxism and socialist construction.

Development of Reform and Opening Up and Internal Needs for Discourse Construction

Throughout the whole historical process of social development, in particular the history of the rise and rejuvenation of great powers in modern times, it can be seen that such a rise is not only a process of economic development driven simply by objective material forces, but a process implying the rise of discourse and the construction of theoretical logic. The realization of economic rationality and improvement of material productivity at a superficial level are piloted by the independent construction of theoretical discourse at a deeper level. This is especially prominent during the rise and development of bourgeois societies in modern times. The replacement of feudalism with capitalism appears to be a victory for the mode of capitalist production, but what has taken place in parallel with or even one step ahead of this objective transition in mode of production is the construction of logic in the theoretical expression of the bourgeois mode of production. The victory of capitalism over feudalism is not only manifested as the innovation of mode of production and others from an objective dimension, but also as the logic in the theoretical discourse of capitalism from a revolutionary dimension. Bourgeois revolutions are mainly characterized by the revolutionary subversion of conventional forms at the level of concept and ideology and the

construction of new theoretical logic. “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away” (Marx & Engels, 2012, p. 403). The modern theoretical discourse frequently used to characterize the capitalist mode of production, such as “industry”, “capitalism” and “proletariat”, comprises those modern words and theoretical discourse that have been invented and constructed along with the capitalist development, representing one of the important forms in a rising capitalist society. As British historian Eric Hobsbawm said, without these modern words and discourse, it is impossible to fundamentally measure the far-reaching significance of capitalist revolution, or to conceive the significance of this greatest revolution since the birth of farming culture, metallurgy, characters and city-states for human ideological history (Hobsbawm, 2014, p. 2).

It is evident that the enormous historic implications brought by the bourgeoisie within a period of history are not confined to the colossal liberation and elevation of social material productivity—“The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together” (Marx & Engels, p. 405), but more importantly manifested as the worldwide dominant position exclusively secured by bourgeois theoretical discourse and ideology. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx once wrote such a sentence: “It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image” (Marx & Engels, 2012, p. 404). As a matter of fact, the rapid development of productive forces promoted by the bourgeoisie is in synchronization with the construction and output of bourgeois theories. The development of productive forces requires new theoretical discourse, and an abundant supply of such new theoretical discourse further promotes the development of capitalist productive forces.

Taking the bourgeois modernization for an instance, this concept, in fact, implies a strong inclination to discourse manipulation by the logic of capital. It is objectively true in history that modernization (here means the industrial revolution and the rational enlightenment campaign of the bourgeoisie) indeed originated in Western capitalist countries, so the Western world actually acquired the time priority status in modernization. However, such time priority was transformed by bourgeois ideologues into logical uniqueness and exclusiveness through the manipulation of discourse logic, namely, capitalism represented the only possible path towards modernization for mankind. In its theory, all national states must follow the logic of capitalist discourse and only the path of capitalism can lead to the so-called transformation from the traditional to the modern. Obviously, bourgeois theorists had completed the theoretical construction from two dimensions through ideological manipulation: the first was the man-made opposition between the backward and the advanced, the traditional and the modern; the second was that the Western model was dressed up as the only path towards modernization, i.e. construction of a theory arguing that capitalism signals the “the end of

history”. In a manner of speaking, along with the establishment of capitalism markets across the world and their ever-expanding effects, capitalist theoretical discourse was continuously constructed, output, and at last held a dominant position. To critically deconstruct the myth fabricated by capitalist theories from the Marxist perspective, the key is to reveal the historic connotations of capitalism and its ruling order. “Whatever was born can always die, which is why social systems like to present themselves as immortal... Marx was the first to identify the historical object known as capitalism—to show how it arose, by what laws it worked, and how it might be brought to an end” (Eagleton, 2011, p. 3).

It was under the very impact of modern colonialism that since modern times China was caught in the wave of modernity and kept suffering from invasions and oppression by Western powers during this process. “Laggards are beaten”, a sentence used to describe the survival predicament which modern China once fell into, also reflects in some way modern China’s theoretical deprivation in comparison with the modernized Western world, i.e. the inability to explain its position in the historical map of the world back then, and to answer the question of the times about which direction modern China should pursue. Just as a scholar pointed out, “Right of speech is built on the material premise, and whether the words of a country carry weight or not primarily depends on the hard power behind it” (Chen, 2017). In the face of the theoretical predicament where discourse was scarce, some prominent Chinese figures with lofty ideals took the lead to learn from Western and initiated their explorations. Throughout this historical process, learning and imitating Western theories always remained to be the right path no matter how the learning focus shifted from implements to systems and then to culture. However, practice proved that merely simulating Western theories could not help explain the essential question in regard to the social development direction of China since modern times began. Why the teacher (Western countries) frequently invaded his student (China) (Mao, 1991c, p. 1470) is a question of the times always torturing China’s social development up to modern times. Facing the predicament and theoretical deprivation that had troubled China’s social development in modern times, the early CPC forerunners chose Marxist theory as their tool for observing the big picture of the world and performing social reconstruction. Marxist theory has shown its strong vitality in China, not because of its self-consistence in logic but of its ability to take on the task of explaining major issues arising in the historical course of China’s social development in modern times. Marxist theory conforms to reality and can explain and guide practice, which is the root cause of why Marxist theory has gained a firm foothold in China and shown its strong vitality. “What doctrine a country may choose is based on whether it can resolve the historical problems that confront that country” (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2014, p. 109). As Mao Zedong once said: “When we say Marxism is correct, it is certainly not because Marx was a ‘prophet’ but because his theory has been proved correct in our practice and in our struggle. We need Marxism in our struggle” (Mao, 1991a, p. 111).

It was under the very guidance of Marxist theory that the Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by Mao Zedong combined with the practical experience in China's revolutionary struggles and thus coined many Chinese theoretical expressions that fit the realities of China and were able to guide the practice there. The most striking example is the materialization and sinicization of Marxism. Marxism has never been an abstract theory but a theory only working when adapting to specific circumstances. "We can put Marxism into practice only when it is integrated with the specific characteristics of our country and acquires a definite national form" (Mao, 1991b, p. 534). On the basis of China's revolutionary practice and experience and by summarizing and refining Chinese experience via Marxist theory, the Chinese Communist Party has greatly enriched and developed the theoretical discourse for guiding Chinese practice, e.g. theory of new-democratic revolution, theory of socialist revolution and other new localized forms of Marxist theory in China, pushing forward the Chinese revolutionary practice from one success to another.

Following the guidance of Marxist theory and respecting Chinese experience are the basic principles for the CPC to construct Chinese discourse in each of the historical periods of revolution, construction and reform. The continuous progress achieved in Chinese practice has served as the key factor for developing a Chinese discourse which is endowed with richer content, more exuberant vitality and increasing influence. For a long time, as limited by the basic national conditions of the primary stage of socialism, China remained at the edge of the world arena, a vulnerable position in the world's structure of political and economic relations, and had a weak power of speech and less international influence. This situation is attributed to the following two facts: the current international political and economic relations are mainly built by a minority of Western developed countries to reflect their will and aspirations, while a greater number of late-developed countries have been excluded from the international discourse system and therefore left in a passive position being manipulated by the logic in Western discourse; besides, the Chinese issues have often been explained by Western society under the West-centrism, using the indigenous Western models or theories indiscriminately applied to Chinese practice. Therefore, most of these explanations are derived from their imaginative or caricature-like descriptions of China, a foreign land in their eyes. For the moment, China's weak position in the Western-dominated international discourse system remains fundamentally unchanged. The construction of a discourse system with Chinese characteristics and displaying Chinese styles still faces many challenges and problems. Since reform and opening up, with its overall national strength and international influence gradually increasing, China has moved step by step from the edge of the world arena to somewhere near the center. China, as a great power, needs to have corresponding theories to match its status, theories that can explain the reasons for China's development and indicate its prospects. The contradiction between the demand generated from theories and practice, and the relative shortage of Chinese discourse has become a major issue and a

principal contradiction, posing challenges to the construction of Chinese discourse.

The Remarkable Achievements of Reform and Opening-up Practice and the Inner Basis of Chinese Discourse Construction

Theoretical discourse has always been related to particular political, economic and social relations, and used to culturally express and further explain the developments in social, political and economic spheres from the theoretical level. Thus, theoretical discourse, as a form of expressing logical concepts, can reflect the sum total of specific social relations in real life (its theoretical significance), and most of all the activities in material production (its practical significance). Marx once clearly interpreted the material foundation of ideas and theories, saying that historical materialism “Has not, like the idealistic view of history, in every period looked for a category, but remains constantly on the real ground of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice” (Marx & Engels, 2012, p. 172). In this sense, the construction of theoretical discourse has never been an abstract process of logical deduction from one concept to another, irrespective of external circumstances, but an activity in theoretical production carried out on the basis of a particular material production and the realistic conditions resulting therefrom. Theoretical production can reflect the conditions of material production in the abstract. The material mode of production in a society can directly determine its corresponding theoretical mode of production. In this case, the production and supply of theories will reach a level that matches the level of material production in the society. The pre-industrial era could only be the period of the feudal society, for which the theoretical discourse could only be that of pre-modern feudalism. In addition, the industrial era shaped a society of industrial capitalists, in which a range of modern enlightenment theories was successively developed to indicate the direction and prospects of massive industrial production.

Speaking of full confidence in theories, we should not be confident in abstract concepts nor theoretical discourses that are separated from practice because in reality they can hardly stay vital. Confidence in these abstract concepts is basically a theoretical illusion. In fact, confidence in discourse does not result from the forms of the concepts expressed in discourse, but from the real power behind the discourse. Since reform and opening up, China has constantly created new Chinese discourse and maintained strong confidence in it. The main reason behind this achievement does not lie in the rhetoric or fine generalization skills contained in these theories, but the remarkable results realized from Chinese practice which is the strong realistic support for Chinese discourse. The material power behind the discourse has fundamentally ensured the vitality of Chinese discourse and therefore nourished the strong confidence in it.

Through reform and opening up, China has greatly emancipated social productivity,

improved people's living conditions and enhanced its international influence. To a large extent, "China Shock" and "China Miracle" have become the major words used by Western societies to describe China's progress and development. The remarkable results achieved in the course of reform and opening up indicate that the way of development paved by the Chinese people under the leadership of the CPC has been in line with China's realities and people's needs. Following the Chinese way of development is a matter of course resulting from the uniformity of historical, theoretical and realistic logic. The significant accomplishments made in the socialist practice with Chinese characteristics since reform and opening up have at bottom ensured the possible space for creating Chinese discourse and proved the value of scientific and rational Chinese discourse at the practical level. Because measuring the scientific and realistic values of theoretical discourse is by no means a simple process of abstract logic but an active process in which subjective concepts must be subject to and tested by realistic practice. "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question" (Marx & Engels, 2012, p. 134). Chinese discourse has been constantly built and generated on the basis of Chinese experience accumulated through Chinese practice. Only continuous victories in Chinese practice can thoroughly demonstrate the science of Chinese discourse.

At the beginning of reform and opening up the issue of how to build socialism was mainly explored by way of "wading across the river by feeling for the stones", due to which any discussion on the universality of Chinese experience and Chinese discourse was intentionally avoided. This is mainly attributed to the following factors: socialist practice with Chinese characteristics was at that time an unprecedented exploration for which there were few existing theories and experiences ready for direct application, also Chinese discourse itself lagged behind the pace of Chinese practice. Therefore, there was little room for discussions on the universality of Chinese discourse at the beginning of reform and opening up. Furthermore, socialism with Chinese characteristics is the product of analyzing and understanding the situations that cornered socialist practice. The most important experience is to avoid abstract theoretical contentions and focus on the resolutions of practical problems in reality. "It was my idea to discourage contention, so as to have more time for action. Once disputes begin, they complicate matters and waste a lot of time. As a result, nothing is accomplished. Don't argue; try bold experiments and blaze new trails" (Deng, 1993, p. 374). Therefore, it is no wonder that efforts were seldom invested in exploring the universality of Chinese discourse in the context of promoting socialist practice with Chinese characteristics throughout the country. Finally, the relatively few achievements in practice at the beginning of reform and opening up made it difficult to build the material foundation for exploring the universality of Chinese discourse. The relative insufficiency mentioned above does not mean that nothing was achieved at the beginning of reform and opening up, but that in contrast with the present achievements after 40 years of practice, the achievements at that time were

valued in a relatively limited sense, and mainly manifested as the improvement of socialist productive forces. Today's practice has delivered multi-dimensional results and scored achievements in solving some worldwide problems, endowing itself with universal value and significance. The practice over the past 40 years proved that upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics in the course of reform and opening up are the inevitable outcomes of historical development. The experience gained during this process will provide enlightenment for solving worldwide and historic conundrums. Such significant achievements and confidence in theory serve as a fundamental guarantee that enables the discussion on Chinese discourse to transcend the dimension of particularity and evolve to that of universality. Brand-new theories like the community with a shared future for mankind can be created on the basis of current practice, and this is mainly because Chinese practice represented by reform and opening up has achieved unprecedented results and laid a solid material foundation for building Chinese discourse and confidence in theory.

Innovations of Chinese Discourse in the Context of Reform and Opening Up

Theoretical discourse has never meant to be a system of abstract concepts because the generation and development of any theoretical discourse cannot thoroughly break away from the decisive effect of the social and historical conditions of an era. As far as the universal law of human social and historical development is concerned, the generation of theoretical discourse is closely related to the material production and communication activities of mankind. It is the direct product of humans' material activities. In addition, human's material production activities are primarily subject to the certain conditions of the times, i.e., "conditioned by the definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness [das Bewußtsein] can never be anything else than conscious being [das bewußte Sein], and the being of men is their actual life-process" (Marx & Engels, 2009a, pp. 524-525). This shows that the formation of theoretical discourse in itself is the inner demand of social practice activities; the construction of a theory is nothing but abstract expressions based on social practice; the structure of internal logic from which a theory is generated also conforms to the universal law of human epistemology. Simply put, there will never be a whole set of theoretical discourses during the initial stages of any human social practice activity. The generation of theoretical discourse is fundamentally synchronized with the development of social practice activities. In this connection, Marx once explicitly pointed out the social and historical features of generating theoretical discourse, "from the start the 'spirit' is afflicted with the curse of being 'burdened' with matter, ... Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well;

language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men” (Marx & Engels, 2009a, p. 533).

Theories grow out of the logical summary of practical experience, while discourse speaks for the times in an abstract way. On the part of the mechanism for generating theoretical discourse, any theoretical discourse can be defined primarily as the systematic and abstract summary of practical experience. Theoretical innovation cannot be separated from practical innovation. Realistic practice provides theoretical construction with the most basic materials and valuable experience. Without practice, theoretical innovation will come from nowhere.

As far as Marxism is concerned, this theory formation was established primarily as a result of summarizing the practical experience gained through the European proletarian revolutionary movement in the 19th century. In the development history of Marxist theory, the primary classical theory kept receiving impacts of practical experience from other countries during its dissemination and given theoretical responses to them. The result was that classical Marxist theory had adjusted itself to specific circumstances, taken on national features and kept pace with the times. Therefore, a consecutive train of new theoretical forms was created by developing Marxism. This is at bottom decided by the openness of Marxist theory. In the face of classical Marxist theory, the CPC has also adhered to its very theoretical feature of openness and made constant breakthroughs in the development of Marxism based on China’s practical experience, according to China’s realities and incorporating Chinese characteristics. Mao Zedong pointed out on many occasions that it is important to create a new Marxist theory in combination with the features of the times and of practice. “For China, Marxism-Leninism are necessary reading. That comes first. However, communists of any country and the proletarian philosophical circles of any country must create a new theory, write new works, and produce their own theoreticians to serve the political tasks facing them. No nation can at any time rely only on what is old” (Mao, 1999, p. 109). “Now that we have entered the period of socialism a whole new series of problems has appeared. If we only have *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*, do not meet the new needs, write the new works, give form to new theory, it will not do” (Mao, 1999, p. 109). Since reform and opening up, a completely different situation of China’s socialist construction has been posed in front of the CPC who has held to the basic tenets of Marxism and the guiding position of Marxism in constructing Chinese discourse on one hand, and creatively developed the classical Marxist theory based on the brand-new practice of reform and opening up and incorporating the characteristics of China and of the times on the other hand. Just as Deng Xiaoping put it, “We cannot forget our forefathers! The problem is to get a clear understanding of what socialism is and how we can build and expand it” (Deng, 1993, p. 369). General Secretary Xi Jinping also clearly pointed out in his speech at a gathering commemorating the 40th anniversary of China’s reform and opening-up that one basic successful experience of this practice is to uphold Marxism as the guiding ideology and explore theoretical innovation based on practice. “There is no textbook

of golden rules to follow for reform and development in China, a country with over 5,000 years of civilization and more than 1.3 billion people. No one is in a position to dictate to the Chinese people what should or should not be done” (Xi, 2018b).

Being open-minded about Marxism as a scientific attitude has naturally led to reform and opening up, a policy that has been developed as an innovation of classic Marxist discourse under the guidance of the basic tenets of Marxism, based on the concrete reality of China’s socialist construction, in line with the demand of the times and taking on Chinese characteristics. The key reason why the policy of reform and opening up has facilitated the historic construction of Chinese discourse is that it is a scientific answer to the question of the times about how to build socialism in China, which was relatively backward in economy and culture. The Chinese way of development is essentially an expression of the important question, in philosophical sense, i.e., “Where is China going next?” (Wang, 2018) Specifically, facing the practical dilemma caused by the excessive dependence of conventional socialist practice on the theoretical assumptions made by classical Marxist writers in terms of the future society, the CPC has established the scientific principle of emancipating minds, and instead of being constrained by the specific conclusions drawn by classical Marxist writers, put more emphasis on liberating minds from restrictions and fetters in order to accord with the ever-shifting practice activities, and think over and address problems based on the concrete reality of China’s socialist construction. In the spirit of emancipating minds, the CPC has scientifically analyzed the specific conditions of China’s socialist construction, i.e., the basic national conditions that China is at the primary stage of socialism and will remain so for a long time to come, and creatively brought up a brand-new theoretical discourse about the primary stage of socialism. Being guided by the theory about the primary stage of socialism, the CPC clearly has recognized that it is imperative to emancipate and develop productive forces, since poverty and slow development are not the features of socialism, and therefore shifted its focus of work to economic development and proposed the policy of making economic development as the central task. To emancipate and develop socialist productive forces, it is necessary to remove through reform the mechanisms and institutions unfit for the development of productive forces, draw upon advanced production technology and managerial experience from Western developed capitalist countries through opening to the outside world so as to thoroughly promote the self-improvement and self-adjustment of the socialist system. The brand-new discourse and practice of reform and opening up have helped change the understanding of the essence of socialism, i.e., from the excessive emphasis on the purity of socialism at the level of static production relations to understanding the essential attributes of socialism with a paradigm of dynamic function from the perspective of combining productive forces with production relations, i.e., “Liberation and development of the productive forces, elimination of exploitation and polarization, and the ultimate achievement of prosperity for all” (Deng, 1993, p. 373).

At present, a new era for socialism with Chinese characteristics has arrived, setting a new historical direction for China's social development. Since modern times, Chinese society has been realized the Chinese nation has stood up and grown prosperous and is becoming strong. This new historical direction can be understood from the following perspectives: first, identity reconstruction of the subjectivity of the Chinese nation, indicating that Chinese society has followed a historical path since modern times from standing up and getting prosperous to becoming strong; second, the historical genealogy of socialist development, indicating that socialism has been given enormous vitality and vigor in China in the 21st century; third, the paths of mankind towards modernization, indicating that the Chinese path provides China's approach and China's wisdom for the diversification of humans' modernization drive (Xi, 2017, p. 10). In a new era for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the generation and development of Chinese discourse have shown new features rarely seen before, among which the most significant is that to construct Chinese discourse is no longer a matter of individual cases but more of a common phenomenon. Chinese discourse is a product of Chinese style, which has been constructed and created in a gradual process based on Chinese practice, and it also shows many new features containing connotations and value dimensions shared by all in the world. Because an important sign showing that a new era for socialism with Chinese characteristics has come is that China is "moving closer to center stage and making greater contributions to mankind" (Xi, 2017, p. 11). In the context of this new era, the progress and development of contemporary China have been more closely linked with the historical development of the world, and China's contributions will extend to an increasingly broader scope and benefit more people and countries. During such a process, China needs to keep building theoretical discourse corresponding to its status as a great power as mentioned before, during which new theories such as exploratory construction of a new international pattern of political and economic relations, global governance system construction and point of view on non-traditional international security have been constructed and created in succession on the basis of Chinese practice. In addition, China also needs to create new concepts, categories and expressions that can be understood and accepted by Western society (Xi, 2016, p. 24). The current construction of Chinese discourse not only holds firm to the local characteristics based on Chinese practice, but also highlights its universality going with the tide of historical development around the world. The reason why the theoretical value and practical significance of Chinese discourse can transcend from the dimension of particularity to that of universality is that it has been based on the remarkable results constantly yielded by Chinese practice, a realistic foundation for nourishing confidence in theory which decides the possibility of Chinese discourse's ever-increasing value.

It is certainly noteworthy that despite the historic achievements since reform and opening up, Chinese discourse still faces many difficulties in furthering the construction of discourse. For example, due to the fact that theoretical innovation lags behind practical

development, it is still difficult in some measure to find proper and accurate concepts and theoretical discourse to generalize the difficulties of vivid and varying practices in actual operation; the relatively immobilized forms of theoretical discourse make it hard to meet the ever-accelerating demands of the masses and indirectly impede the dissemination of the theoretical discourse; with vague and general contents, the theoretical discourse is unable to precisely and effectively reflect relevant practice activities. As Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee said, we are fully qualified to express our opinions on interpreting Chinese practice and building Chinese theory, but in fact our research in philosophy and the social sciences still has little influence around the world and our related theories are still seldom heard or disseminated (Xi, 2016, p. 24). From another angle, the problems and challenges facing Chinese discourse now also truly provide an important opportunity for the innovation and development of discourse, especially in the new era for socialism with Chinese characteristics when many new conditions and problems have emerged in the course of practice. Therefore, it is necessary to create new theoretical forms and contents that are geared to these new conditions and problems to meet the brand-new demands of the real practice in terms of theory. In addition, in the process of reflecting new conditions and solving new problems, a solid foundation has been laid for the construction of new theories. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee pointed out what is faced by contemporary China is the most widespread and profound social reform in our country's history and the most ambitious and unique practice innovation in human history. This unprecedented practice will surely generate powerful impetus and vast space for theoretical development and academic prosperity (Xi, 2016, p. 8).

To promote the innovation and development of Chinese discourse in the new era, it is imperative to concentrate on facilitating its dissemination across the world because Chinese people and people from Western societies are the potential audience to which the Chinese stories can be shared through Chinese discourse in a new era. Chinese discourse should be both "Chinese dialects" with a national style and "international discourse" that can get through to the rest of the world. In particular, with China's international position and influence steadily increasing, China needs to build its international discourse to match its "status as a great power", while the Western societies have also been increasingly eager to "understand China". Moreover, as the world steps into a period featuring great development, transformation and adjustment, the trend toward multipolarity, economic globalization, cultural diversity and IT applications has become more obvious, and countries in the world have kept strengthening their connections and interdependencies. Against this backdrop, many problems are beyond the capability of any single country and become universal and need to be tackled by the international community. "What is going on in the world? How should we respond to it? Unlike before, those who fail to see a clear picture of the world include not only developing countries but also some developed countries" (Publicity

Department of the CPC Central Committee, 2018, p. 4). Under such circumstances, China needs not only to provide appropriate discourse for the Western society to understand China's development, i.e., spelling out the Chinese stories, but also to provide China's approach in response to worldwide problems by combining them with its own practical experience. Expounding the truth of the world is undoubtedly a new task for the dissemination of Chinese discourse across the globe in the new era.

This task requires us to find new concepts and discourse that can be easily accepted by Western societies. It is undeniable that the Chinese and Western societies greatly differ in terms of social systems, values and ways of thinking. In nature, Chinese experience has been gained from the particular practices based on China's historical traditions and current situations. Introducing the experience directly into the context of a Western society can hardly arouse their concerns and interests, easily leading to an embarrassing situation where China's theories are understood and discussed by no one but itself. If the content system and expression forms of Chinese discourse are ill-adapted to those of Western discourse, then it will be difficult to arouse the discussions and communications about Chinese issues (Guo & Sang, 2016). So in designing the modes of disseminating Chinese discourse across the world, attention shall be paid to finding the proper means of expression to help the Western society easily understand the concepts of Chinese experience, and more importantly, to correlate Chinese experience with the problems faced by the human society, especially those of the Western societies during their development, to arouse their interests in Chinese experiences and theories, and motivate them to explore the theoretical values of Chinese experiences and theories based on their own actual situations and development. The concept of "a community with a shared future where our interests are closely intertwined," put forward by General Secretary Xi Jinping links China's development with the world's development and China's fate with the fate of all mankind. Such a concept decides that both Chinese and Western societies need to pay attention to this issue and also marks a great innovation in the way of communicating Chinese discourse around the world in a new era. Since the concept "a community with a shared future for all mankind" represents a set of discourse expressions different from those of socialism in aspects of subject, system, ideology and forming conditions (Liang, 2018), it can be more easily accepted by the Western capitalist societies. In addition, the concept also goes with socialism in the same ultimate direction and therefore fits the value orientation of socialism in contemporary China. It is worth mentioning here that searching for the discourse forms that are attractive and acceptable to Western societies does not mean being completely oriented to the Western society and catering to their tastes. For instance, to make the Western societies easily understand the social changes in contemporary China, some people misinterpret reform and opening up as the variant of neoliberalism in contemporary China. It is still needed to hold to the subject of Chinese discourse in creating ways of communicating Chinese discourse around the world.

In addition, Central Monism is a narrative pattern that shall be clearly opposed in creating ways of communicating Chinese discourse around the world. At present, the pattern of the international relations and international discourse systems are mainly manipulated by a minority of developed countries. The hierarchy in international divisions of labor in material production directly controls discourse production, so the current international discourse system takes on a strong feature of Western theory. In creating ways of communicating Chinese discourse around the world, it is important to clearly oppose the discourse hegemony of Western theory and steadfastly safeguard the right of speech of developing countries which are in the majority. It must be noted as well that opposing the narrative discourse of the Western monism does not mean exporting China's theoretical discourse and development patterns to other countries. The practice in contemporary China and Chinese discourse just serve as a reference of possible alternatives differing from Western models to a mass of late-developed countries in pursuing the development of a path adapted to their own actual conditions. As Chinese discourse is a theoretical summary based on China's local experience and the theoretical exploration carried out around major issues emerging in the social development of contemporary China, the profound national character captures its fundamental content and features. Only when the actual problems facing a nation are well solved on the basis of its own practice can the nation gain stronger capabilities to address the worldwide issues. Only when the Chinese practice is well summarized can it better serve the resolution of worldwide problems with its thinking and methods (Xi, 2016, p. 8).

Along with the further advancement of socialist practice with Chinese characteristics, the construction of Chinese discourse will definitely embrace a "theoretical spring". China can free itself from being somewhat dependent on the Western discourse system in the past, critically examine the previous theoretical resources of its own history and realities, and independently expound the theories about its way of development based on its experience in real practice.

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