

The Generative Logic of the Civilizational View of Chinese-style Modernization

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Abstract: *The Chinese concept of modernization and civilization is a concept of modernization and development with Chinese characteristics proposed under the guidance of the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, combining China's historical traditions, social practices and development needs, integrating China's excellent traditional culture, modern civilization and socialist core values. This theory is guided by the Marxist concept of civilization, based on China's excellent traditional culture, based on the great practice of "two combinations", focusing on the development trends of the world today and the common demands of mankind, and embodies the organic unity of the three logics of history, theory and practice.*

Keywords: The civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization, Marxism, Excellent traditional Chinese culture, The "two combinations".

1. The Marxist View of Civilization Provides a Guiding Ideology

The Marxist view of civilization is an important part of the Marxist theoretical system. It is a profound summary and theoretical sublimation of the laws of historical development of human society, and provides an important theoretical perspective for us to understand the civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization.

In their works, Marx and Engels usually defined civilization by analyzing the relationship between the material basis and superstructure of social and historical development. In *Capital*, Marx pointed out that civilization is not only the embodiment of the improvement of material productivity and scientific and technological progress, but also the product of the evolution of social production relations and their superstructure. The development of civilization is the result of changes in social and economic forms, and each new social form is a revolutionary change in the mode of production of the previous stage. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels further elaborated on the nature of civilization, emphasizing that the progress of human society is driven by class struggle, and the height and perfection of civilization ultimately depends on the improvement of productivity and the rationalization of social relations. From the perspective of Marx and Engels, "civilization is not only a manifestation of culture, but also a social process reflected in the economic basis, class structure and political form of society" [1]. Therefore, true civilization progress is not only the accumulation of material wealth, but also the process of realizing the liberation of social relations, individual freedom and equality. In this framework, Marx and Engels believed that with the advent of communism, the old class antagonism and oppression will be eliminated, and society will enter a new stage of civilization, that is, a free association without class differences and oppression.

Based on the materialist conception of history, Marx and Engels believed that the emergence and development of civilization was the natural result of historical materialism. They believed that the economic foundation of society, that is, the sum of productive forces and production relations, was the

fundamental factor that determined the form of civilization. The progress of civilization was not accidental, but was driven by the development of productive forces, technological progress and the interaction between them and production relations. "The basis of the civilized era is the exploitation of one class by another" [2]. In *The German Ideology*, Marx emphasized that people's material living conditions are the basis of social structure and ideology, and social development is fundamentally a process of transformation of productive forces and adjustment of corresponding production relations. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels further discussed how the family, private property and state forms gradually evolved with the changes in the mode of production. In other words, different stages of civilization reflect different contradictions between productive forces and production relations. With the renewal of the mode of production, the economic foundation of society changes, which in turn affects the evolution of superstructures such as law, politics and culture. From the perspective of historical materialism, Marx and Engels emphasized that "the history of civilization is the history of class struggles and changes in the mode of production, whose ultimate goal is the realization of a classless social form" [3], which is regarded as the highest stage of civilization.

Based on the materialist conception of history, Marx and Engels analyzed the interaction and integration of civilizations, believing that the interaction and integration between civilizations are driven by changes in the material production mode and economic foundation. With the development of productivity and the expansion of the market, the production relations and social structure have undergone profound changes, and the links between countries and nations have become increasingly close. In particular, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels pointed out that capitalist globalization has accelerated the interaction and integration of civilizations in various countries around the world. The expansion of capitalism has not only promoted the circulation of commodities, technology and ideas, but also intensified the collision and integration of different cultures and social systems. This kind of interaction and integration is not only a superficial cultural exchange, but the deeper reason behind it lies in the interaction between productivity and production relations. When different civilizations are

connected with each other driven by economic interests, this kind of interaction often has a certain class nature, which may be the absorption and integration of culture, or it may be a manifestation of oppression and exploitation. However, Marx and Engels did not simply regard it as a one-dimensional cultural conflict or exchange, but saw how it promoted the transformation of social production methods, social systems and ideologies in the process of historical development. The interaction and integration of civilizations will ultimately push society into a higher stage of global unity and become an important way for mankind to achieve freedom and liberation.

Starting from the materialist conception of history, Marx and Engels explained the inherent laws of human social development, and through this law, revealed the evolutionary path and future prospects of civilization. They believed that social progress is driven by the contradiction between productivity and production relations, and the development of civilization is the result of the transformation of various social forms in history. Specifically, with the continuous improvement of productivity, the original production relations and social structure gradually become unsuitable, leading to revolutionary changes in society. For example, from primitive communes, slave society, feudal society to capitalist society, each stage of social form is a revolutionary transcendence of the previous stage. Marx and Engels believed that the evolutionary law of civilization is a process from low to high, and this process will eventually lead mankind to a communist society. In this society, public ownership of the means of production and a classless society will eliminate exploitation and oppression, enable mankind to develop together on the basis of freedom and equality, and realize the comprehensive liberation of man. The future picture of civilization is not only a society with abundant material wealth, but also a society where mankind realizes the liberation of all mankind in free association, marking the final maturity of civilization and the realization of the ultimate goal of human history. Through this analysis, Marx and Engels provided a profound theory of social development and put forward revolutionary expectations for future civilization.

2. China's Excellent Traditional Culture has Laid a Cultural Foundation

China's long history has been flowing with a brilliant civilization of more than 5,000 years, carrying rich historical accumulation. The excellent traditional Chinese culture contains the concepts of people-oriented, harmony among all nations, world peace, and advocacy of harmony, which has laid a solid cultural foundation for the formation and development of the civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization. The civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization has also endowed the excellent traditional Chinese culture with new value connotations and expressions in the practice of modernization.

First, the Chinese political ethics of "people are the foundation of the state, and a solid foundation brings peace to the state" is sublimated into a people-centered development concept. "People are the foundation of the state, and a solid foundation brings peace to the state" comes from "Shangshu-Five Sons' Song". This sentence conveys the "people-centered" thought in ancient Chinese political ethics.

"Xunzi-Ai Gong" says: "The king is a boat; the people are water. Water carries the boat, and water overturns the boat." "Book of Rites-University" also says: "If you win the people, you win the country; if you lose the people, you lose the country." Both emphasize the importance of public support in national politics. From the discussion of the relationship between the king and the people in early Chinese classics, it can be seen that ancient Chinese politicians and thinkers generally agreed that "people are the foundation of the state, and a solid foundation brings peace to the state." From the perspective of the grand historical view, since the formation of Chinese civilization, many wise kings in history have emphasized the "people-centered" thought and have a common understanding of the relationship between the king and the people. Since the founding of New China, especially since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the development thought of adhering to the people-centered approach proposed by the Party Central Committee has been deeply implemented, and the profound connotation of people-centeredness has been shaped with practical actions. From poverty alleviation to education equity, to the construction of a social security system, people's needs and well-being have always been the fundamental basis for policy making and social progress. Chinese modernization not only pursues economic growth, but also pays more attention to the quality of economic development and people's sense of gain, happiness and security. Whether it is promoting rural revitalization, green development, or implementing an innovation-driven development strategy, all policies have the ultimate goal of improving people's overall well-being.

From "people are the foundation of the country, and a solid foundation brings peace to the country" to "people-centered", the sublimation of this thought shows that the Party always puts the people in the highest position in its heart. It is a modern interpretation of the thought of "people are the foundation of the country, and a solid foundation brings peace to the country", and gives this traditional wisdom a new contemporary significance.

Second, the Chinese economic ethics of "controlling profit with righteousness and controlling desire with morality" is creatively transformed into an important foundation for the common prosperity of all people. "Controlling profit with righteousness" comes from Confucianism, which advocates that in economic activities, righteousness should be higher than profit, that is, when pursuing economic interests, ethics and social justice must be observed. Mencius emphasized that "if you are rich and noble because of benevolence and righteousness, you will not give it up; if you are poor and humble because of benevolence and righteousness, you will not do it", revealing the economic concept of taking moral obligations as the code of conduct. "Controlling desire with morality" reflects the moderate pursuit of material desires, emphasizing the reasonable satisfaction of needs on the basis of following natural laws and ethics, rather than blindly pursuing the maximization of personal interests. This value orientation seeks a balance between economic development and social order by restraining greed and excess. In the context of modernization, the concept of "controlling profit with righteousness and controlling desire with morality" has been given new connotations of the times and has become an important ethical support for the common prosperity of all

people. This is mainly reflected in the fact that Chinese modernization emphasizes that economic development is not just about pursuing GDP growth, but about making economic achievements benefit all people and achieving fairness and justice in the whole society. This goal of common prosperity is highly consistent with “controlling profit with righteousness”, indicating that the acquisition of economic benefits should be based on satisfying the basic rights and interests of the people and the harmony of the whole society. Secondly, it constrains the profit-seeking behavior of capital and serves the overall interests of society. In the process of reform and opening up, the market economy has injected momentum into China’s development, but it has also brought about the problems of the gap between the rich and the poor and the disorderly expansion of capital. By drawing on the ethical concept of “controlling profit with righteousness”, Chinese modernization focuses on the regulation of capital behavior and puts forward “two unshakable” - both protecting the private economy and emphasizing common prosperity, ensuring that capital serves the overall interests of society. Finally, it emphasizes restraint of desire and green and sustainable development. Inspired by the idea of “controlling desire with morality”, Chinese modernization attaches importance to restraining excessive consumption, opposing extravagance and promoting green development. By advocating a simple and moderate lifestyle, promoting harmonious coexistence between man and nature, and thus achieving sustainable and long-term social welfare in the process of modernization. The civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization not only focuses on economic growth, but also pays more attention to social equity, moral ethics and environmental protection, which is inherently consistent with the concept of “controlling profit with righteousness and controlling desire with Taoism” in traditional culture. In the context of the diversification of global modernization models, this civilization concept provides Chinese wisdom on how to maintain ethical values and achieve economic equity and social harmony in modernization.

Through creative transformation and innovative development, the Chinese economic ethics of “controlling profit with righteousness and controlling desire with Taoism” has been deeply integrated into the theory and practice of Chinese modernization, laying a cultural and value foundation for the common prosperity of all people. This modern expression of the essence of traditional culture not only inherits the core spirit of China’s excellent traditional culture, but also provides important theoretical support for building a modern civilization concept with fairness and justice as the core.

Third, the Chinese social ethics of “moderation as the foundation, harmony as the way to success” is creatively transformed into a community with a shared future for mankind. “Moderation as the foundation” comes from the Doctrine of the Mean, which means that “moderation” is the essence and root of things, emphasizing moderation, balance and internal harmony. In traditional culture, “moderation” is not only a norm for individual and collective behavior, but also a reconciliation of the relationship between man and nature, man and society, and various social classes. The complementary “harmony as the way to success” embodies “harmony” as the highest criterion for moral behavior. In

Confucianism, “harmony” represents coordination and coexistence in social relations, and is the fundamental purpose of all social behavior. It promotes harmonious coexistence between people and countries. The concept of “community with a shared future for mankind” is China’s unique contribution to the development of the world. It emphasizes that the interests of countries around the world are closely related and their destiny is common. In this concept, “harmony” is no longer limited to harmony at the individual or national level, but extends to harmony and common development at the global level. As “harmony as the way to success” says, the goal of globalization should not be the superiority of a single country or nation, but the common progress and well-being of all mankind. “Harmony” not only means eliminating conflicts, but also reflects cultural diversity and inclusiveness. In promoting the concept of “a community with a shared future for mankind”, the civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization advocates respecting the uniqueness of different cultures and civilizations, and promoting diversity and common prosperity through dialogue and cooperation. This is consistent with the “doctrine of the mean” in traditional culture, that is, to coordinate the interests of all parties through moderation and balance, and promote the global society to move towards win-win development. “The middle is the root” emphasizes the fundamental of social behavior and advocates the overall interests of society. In today’s globalized context, this idea is transformed into China’s responsibility in international affairs and advocates the establishment of fair, just and cooperative relations between countries. Chinese modernization should not only focus on domestic development, but also emphasize global public interests, put forward a win-win international relations view, support multilateralism and the reform of the global governance system, and promote countries around the world to jointly face global challenges such as climate change, poverty and disease.

By creatively transforming the Chinese social ethical thought of “the middle is the root, and harmony is the way to achieve success” into the global concept of “a community with a shared future for mankind”, the civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization not only inherits the moral and harmonious spirit in Chinese culture, but also demonstrates China’s responsibility and mission in the context of the new era. This transformation provides China with a theoretical basis for promoting global cooperation and sharing development results, and also provides a Chinese solution with far-reaching influence for the future development of world civilization.

3. The Great Practice of “Two Combinations” Provides a Realistic Basis

The civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization was initiated and continuously promoted by the Communist Party of China in the “two combinations”. At the symposium on cultural heritage and development on June 2, 2023, the General Secretary delivered an important speech, pointing out that “to open up and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics on the basis of the profound foundation of more than 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, it is the only way to combine the basic principles of Marxism with China’s specific reality and with China’s excellent traditional culture”

[4]. The “two combinations” are important theoretical and practical innovations of our party, the practical operational framework of China’s modernization path, and the fundamental driving force for promoting the development and practice of the civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization. This great practice provides a realistic basis for the proposal and development of the civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization.

The “two combinations” are important theoretical innovations of our Party and are also the key to promoting Chinese-style modernization. The report of the 20th National Congress pointed out that “Chinese-style modernization is socialist modernization led by the Communist Party of China. It has both the common characteristics of modernization in various countries and Chinese characteristics based on its own national conditions [5].” First, Chinese-style modernization is closely integrated with China’s historical and cultural traditions, emphasizing China’s own cultural confidence and value system. China has a civilization history of thousands of years. Confucian culture, Taoist thought, the collectivism and harmony concepts of the Chinese nation have deeply influenced the development of Chinese society. Chinese-style modernization is not simply imitating the Western modernization model, but adhering to its own cultural roots and historical background, absorbing the beneficial results of global modernization, and promoting the formation of a modernization path with Chinese characteristics. Second, the basic theories of Marxism provide theoretical guidance for Chinese-style modernization. The basic theories of Marxism, such as historical materialism, class struggle, and the relationship between productive forces and production relations, have profoundly influenced China’s modernization process. By combining Marxist theory with China’s actual situation, the Communist Party of China has put forward the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics, clarified the modernization path in many aspects such as economic construction, political construction, cultural construction, and social construction, and especially emphasized the unity of economic development and social equity, promoting the continuous deepening of socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics. Finally, the “two combinations” emphasize the combination of practice and theory, especially the experience accumulated by the Communist Party of China in the long-term revolution and construction process, which has become an important practical basis for promoting Chinese-style modernization. Since the reform and opening up, China has gradually adjusted and improved the socialist market economic system based on China’s actual conditions, while adhering to the socialist direction, and successfully promoted the rapid development of the national economy and the overall progress of society. In this process, the “two combinations” helped China find a development path that suits its national conditions and avoided the narrow choice of wholesale Westernization or sticking to tradition.

The “two combinations” provide a theoretical basis and practical path for the proposal and development of the Chinese concept of modernization and civilization by deeply understanding China’s history and culture and combining the basic theories of Marxism with China’s actual situation. This civilizational view of Chinese-style modernization is based on China’s actual situation and is consistent with the trend of

globalization. It is a fusion and innovation of traditional civilization and modern civilization, and embodies the core values of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

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