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The Exemplary Paradigm of Chinese-Style Modernisation

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Abstract: Modernisation is not synonymous with Westernisation. In the space of a few decades, China has followed a 'parallel' path to modernisation—a journey that took Western developed nations several centuries to complete via a 'sequential' approach—thereby creating the miracle of rapid economic development and long-term social stability, and presenting the world with an alternative vision of modernisation. Beginning with a scientific definition of the concept of modernisation, this paper systematically analyses how Chinese-style modernisation comprehensively surpasses Western modernisation across three dimensions: development philosophy, value orientation and aspirational goals—transcending binary oppositions through exchange and mutual learning, prioritising the people over the pursuit of wealth, and by prioritising common prosperity over polarisation. It further elucidates the global significance of Chinese-style modernisation as a new form of human civilisation, providing 'Chinese wisdom', 'Chinese solutions' and 'Chinese strength' for latecomer nations on their path to modernisation.

Keywords: Chinese-style Modernisation; New Form of Human Civilisation; Common Prosperity; Putting the People First; New Path to Modernization.

1. Introduction

Not long ago, following China's introduction of the 240-hour visa-free policy, the 'Tax Refund on Departure 2.0' scheme was rolled out in stages, prompting a surge of foreign bloggers into China, with 'China trips' becoming a key source of traffic for many of them. Upon setting foot on Chinese soil, they encountered a modern nation characterised by diversity, inclusivity, harmony and stability—a stark contrast to the one-sided, stereotyped and even distorted portrayal of China within the reporting frameworks of mainstream Western media. Chinese-style modernisation is the only correct path to building a strong nation and achieving national rejuvenation. This article will analyse it from three perspectives: conceptual definition, transcendence of mechanisms, and global significance [1]. 2Dispelling Myths: A New Definition of Modernisation

2. Debunking Myths: A New Definition of Modernisation

2.1. What is Modernisation

To understand Chinese-style modernisation, one must first grasp the concept of modernisation itself. Although scholars both in China and abroad hold differing views, these can generally be categorised into three schools of thought. The first view holds that modernisation is a historical process whereby economically underdeveloped nations catch up with the world's advanced standards through large-scale technological revolution, yet it overlooks 'soft' factors such as changes in people and civilisation; The second view equates modernisation with industrialisation, similarly overlooking human elements; the third view regards modernisation as a 'form of civilisation', yet fails to provide a description of its foundations. It is evident that modernisation is a comprehensive concept; whilst various schools of thought offer their own definitions, there is no single, fixed rule for what constitutes modernisation. As a defining category of the Party's theoretical innovation in the New Era, the connotations and essence of Chinese-style modernisation must be grasped through the logical unfolding of the categorical system [6].

2.2. Modernisation Does Not Equate to Westernisation

In recent years, as several Western capitalist countries have been the first to achieve modernisation, the notion that 'modernisation equals Westernisation' has gained considerable traction. However, Marxism has long elucidated the universal laws governing the development of human society, emphasising that 'the mode of production of material life conditions the whole process of social life'. In other words, provided that a modern mode of production can be established and operated sustainably, comprehensive social modernisation will be realised, albeit at varying speeds. We must therefore clearly recognise that being the first does not imply being the only way. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and particularly since the launch of reform and opening-up, China has almost simultaneously accomplished the 'Four Modernisations'. In a matter of decades, it has traversed in a 'parallel' manner the path of modernisation that developed Western nations took several centuries to complete in a 'sequential' manner. This has created the miracle of rapid economic development and long-term social stability, shattering the myth that 'modernisation equals Westernisation' and presenting the world with an alternative vision of modernisation [1][2].

3. Analysing the Mechanisms: A New Vision of Comprehensive Surpassing

3.1. Development Philosophy: Exchange and Mutual Learning Transcend Binary Oppositions

Firstly, from the perspective of development philosophy, Western countries' theoretical foundations regarding foreign policy typically fall into two categories: the theory of

democratic peace and the theory of civilisational conflict. The 'democratic peace' theory posits that all nations in the world can be divided into two categories: democratic states and non-democratic states. It holds that the mission of US foreign policy is to transform non-democratic states. This has given rise to the peculiar phenomenon whereby nations treat one another civilisationally within their own spheres, whilst the international community adopts an attitude of collective exclusion to subjugate and transform non-democratic states—a dynamic that gave rise to the wars in Iraq and Syria. The 'Clash of Civilisations' theory, on the other hand, asserts that Islamic and Confucian civilisations pose a threat and challenge to Christian civilisation. The essence of these two concepts is to view the world in terms of a binary opposition—either one or the other.

China, however, emphasises exchange and mutual learning, and advocates the construction of a humanistic framework based on mutual respect. At the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilisations, President Xi Jinping pointed out: 'Human civilisations differ only in their diverse splendour; there is absolutely no distinction between high and low, superior and inferior.' [3] The Chinese approach to modernisation, which upholds the principle of seeking common ground whilst reserving differences, stands in stark contrast to the 'law of the jungle' and 'zero-sum games' emphasised by the West. By transcending the Western modern civilisation's theory of binary opposition, it is charting the course for humanity's modern development.

3.2. Value Orientation: Putting People First, Not Profit

In the process of modernisation, the question of 'for whom development is intended' has always been a fundamental one. In June 2026, a train derailment in Iowa resulted in a massive fuel spill. This accident was by no means a one-off—statistics released by the US Department of Transportation show that since 1990, there have been an average of more than 1,600 train derailments per year across the United States, amounting to at least three incidents per day on average. What is the root cause of these frequent derailments? The US railway network is primarily composed of seven private companies. The privatisation of the railways has made profit maximisation the sole objective of development; 'extra-long trains' have become the norm, whilst the tracks have been neglected in terms of maintenance and repair, leading to frequent accidents. The crux of the derailment problem lies precisely in the 'profit-first' mentality inherent in the private sector.

In contrast, in China, high-speed rail has become a hallmark of the country's development capabilities. With investment of nearly one trillion yuan over the past decade, China has built the world's largest high-speed rail network. The Sichuan–Tibet Railway is hailed as an engineering marvel, a colossal project involving an investment of over 300 billion yuan and taking 12 years to complete. Given the immense difficulty and cost involved, why was it built? Let us go back more than 20 years, when General Secretary Xi Jinping visited Tibet. The journey of over 400 kilometres from Lhasa Gonggar Airport to Bayi Town in Nyingchi took a full day by road; yet during his inspection tour of Tibet in 2021, travelling on the Fuxing bullet train, the journey from Nyingchi to Lhasa was reduced to just over three hours. As the General Secretary stated, 'The planning and construction of the Sichuan–Tibet Railway is a major initiative to promote Tibet's development and improve people's livelihoods'. China's railways epitomise the 'people-first' development philosophy, which stands in stark contrast to the essence of Western modernisation—which pursues only capital and serves the interests of a select few. The 'people-first' development philosophy has transcended the trap of 'money-first' development [1].

3.3. Goals and Aspirations: Common Prosperity Transcends Polarisation

In an era where high-speed rail speeds continue to rise, slow trains travelling at 32 kilometres per hour still chug along at a leisurely pace. At present, China still operates 81 pairs of public-service slow trains, which embody the steadfast pursuit of the principle that 'on the path to common prosperity, not a single person shall be left behind'. One of the major challenges facing global modernisation is the inequality that accompanies it; in Western countries, the excessive gap between rich and poor has led to severe class divisions. The common prosperity pursued by Chinese-style modernisation aims precisely to resolve this issue [7][8].

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Central Government has worked through various channels to address imbalances between urban and rural areas and between the eastern and western regions of the country. From lifting nearly 100 million people out of poverty and winning the battle against poverty, to the full realisation of a moderately prosperous society, these achievements are vivid illustrations of the pursuit of common prosperity. From this perspective, common prosperity transcends polarisation [8].

Former US President Lincoln once coined the deeply resonant democratic slogan 'of the people, by the people, and for the people', which has long been regarded as a beacon of Western democratic civilisation. However, based on the analysis of the three aspects outlined above, have the dichotomies, the primacy of money and the polarisation inherent in Western modernisation truly realised 'of the people, by the people, and for the people'? Far from it. Chinese-style modernisation, characterised by mutual learning and coexistence, putting the people first, and common prosperity, has achieved a comprehensive transcendence of Western modernisation, offering a new path to modern development [1][5].

4. Proposing a Solution: A New Choice of Global Significance

Take Rwanda as an example. Following the outbreak of the 1994 genocide, Rwanda was once regarded by the United Nations as a cautionary tale and widely recognised as a 'hell on earth'. Yet today's Rwanda is a vastly different place—its GDP has grown several-fold, its per capita GDP ranks among the highest in Africa, and it has become the cleanest country on the continent. What lies behind such a dramatic transformation? China taught Rwanda a method that enabled it to choose a development path best suited to its national conditions. China not only helped Rwanda overcome its financial difficulties but also provided various technologies, enabling it to develop through its own efforts. If we can help a country like Rwanda, we can help many more developing nations on their path to modernisation—not only by providing them with Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions, but also by infusing them with Chinese strength and offering Chinese support. General Secretary Xi Jinping has successively put

forward the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilisation Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative, showcasing the peaceful and inclusive nature of Chinese civilisation that has been pursued since ancient times, and continuously guiding the world towards a path of shared civilisational development.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored various issues concerning Chinese-style modernisation from three perspectives. Chinese-style modernisation is a great and arduous undertaking; it cannot be accomplished by a single group of people or a single generation alone. It requires the sustained efforts of generation after generation, and demands that every individual contribute through their work. On this new journey in the new era, as long as we remain steadfast in following the bright path of Chinese-style modernisation, we will undoubtedly achieve the resplendent glory befitting a great nation.

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