

Original Contributions of Chinese-style Modernization to the Marxist Theory of Modernization

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Abstract: Chinese-style modernisation is an important result of the Sinicisation and modernisation of the Marxist theory of modernisation. The theoretical contributions are not only summaries of the development experience but also new interpretations of the generative mechanism, subject structure, value goals and civilizational connotations of modernisation from the perspective of historical materialism. Marx's theory of modernisation explains the reasons for the development of modern society in the changes of the mode of production, analyzes the spread of modernisation around the world from the perspective of world history, and sets a value norm for the all-round development of all people. Based on the above reasons, Chinese-style modernisation has broken away from the explanatory framework of capital accumulation and the idea that the Western model is the only way, adding elements such as the will of the people, common prosperity, independent development and innovation in the form of civilisation to the theory of modernisation. Therefore, modernisation is no longer considered to be only economic development, technological dissemination and institutional import; rather, it is a historical process that integrates the development of productive forces, social equality, human development and civilisation progress.

Keywords: Chinese-style modernisation, Marxist theory of modernisation, Common prosperity, Forms of civilisation

1. The basic issues of the Marxist theory of modernization

To clarify the theoretical contributions of Chinese-style modernisation, we first need to go back to the basic theoretical problem of Marxism on the rise and development of modern society. Marx and Engels did not call their system of thought the "theory of modernisation", but they still provided one of the first explanations for modernisation in terms of changes in the mode of production, the formation of world history, criticism of capitalist modernity and free and all-around development of people. Thus, Chinese-style modernisation is a new way to achieve the aims and values of modernisation based on the basic ideas mentioned above.

1.1 Changes in the Mode of Production and the Rise of Modern Society

According to the theoretical system of Marxism, modernisation is not mainly about the development of technology, industrialisation or expansion in scale; rather, it is an all-round change in society based on modifications to the mode of production. Marx pointed out in the "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" that "the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life". Therefore, the development of modern society should be understood in terms of its mode of production and the internal contradictions of this mode. Without the development of productive forces, there would be no change in the relations of production and thus no modernisation; only a renewal at the material level would have taken place.

According to Marxist theory, the driving force of modernisation is the development of basic social contradictions. Capitalist modernisation began with large-scale machine production and built a world market and a wage-labour system; thus, it has expanded the productive forces in society and removed the restrictions of the natural economy and hierarchical relations. However, in the course of creating rich material wealth, the capitalist mode of production constantly reproduces the antagonism between capital

and labour, the conflict between the socialisation of production and the private appropriation of capital, and alienated relations in which human activities are controlled by the power of things.

Therefore, the essence of modernisation is not only the improvement of productive tools and the increase in the scale of the economy, but also changes in social relations, institutional structures and modes of human existence that result from changes in the mode of production. In determining whether the path of modernisation is historically rational, one should consider not only its ability to promote the development of productive forces but also its capacity to solve problems of growth and equity, efficiency and order, material progress and human development. It provides a foundation for studying Chinese modernisation, but it should be based on the actual socio-historical conditions in China and not simply imported from abstract Western empirical models.

1.2 The Development of World History and the Rise of National Paths

Marxist theory of modernisation also has its own view of world history. Modernisation is not a closed process that occurs spontaneously in isolated nation-states; rather, it is a historical process of the development of productive forces, the expansion of intercourse and the formation of the world market. Marx and Engels said that "the bourgeoisie has developed all the instruments of production and, through very convenient means of communication, has drawn in all the most barbaric countries of civilisation...". It has built many large cities, increased the urban population considerably compared with the rural area, and thus saved a large number of people from the "idiocy" of rural life. It is popular with all kinds of people around the world.

This thesis shows that capitalist modernisation is a world-historical phenomenon, and capital has brought together originally dispersed and closed nations and areas in a unified world-historical process through the world market.

According to Marxist theory of world history, not all countries in their modernisation need to follow the path of the West. The way capitalism opens up world history is also a process in which unequal relations are produced, such as the division of centre and periphery and the disparity of development and deprivation. Capitalism has opened up the space of world history, but it has not achieved the ideal of common prosperity for all countries.

Therefore, according to the Marxist theory of modernisation, although there has been a general trend of modernisation in world history, there is no single path to modernisation. The all-round nature of modernisation is not the uniformity of institutional forms and choices of paths; rather, it is the independent exploration by various nation-states in the process of developing productive forces, changing social structures and improving the lives of the people. The goal of Chinese-style modernisation is to integrate the universal laws of modernisation with China's special conditions and thus build a path for socialist modernisation that differs from the path of Western capitalist modernisation.

1.3 Free and All-round Development of All People and the Socialist Value Criterion

The first part of the Marxist theory of modernisation is that the goal of development should be the all-round flourishing of the people. Different from the idea of capitalist modernisation, which reduces modernisation to the accumulation of capital, wealth creation and efficiency improvement, Marxism has always viewed modernisation in light of the unity of human emancipation and social progress. Marx and Engels put forward that the future society should be "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all"^[2]. This thesis puts forward the value orientation of the Marxist theory of modernisation: modernisation should not be realised through the enrichment of a minority or the expansion of capital, but rather aim at the development of all members of society.

Therefore, capitalist modernisation has had serious problems in the past. It is a very productive force, but at the same time, the development of this force is controlled by the logic of capital, reducing people's abilities, relationships and needs to the process of commodity exchange and capital accumulation. If modernisation only aims to increase the scale of the economic system and does not address problems such as social division, labour alienation and loss of subjectivity, then it has failed to solve the internal contradiction of capitalist modernity.

Therefore, the socialist orientation is a necessary condition for the Marxist theory of modernisation. Socialist Modernisation should not be considered capitalist modernisation or the import of institutional forms from the West; rather, it is based on the development of social productive forces, and its goal is to gradually eliminate the domination of human beings by the logic of capital and ensure that the results of modernisation are enjoyed more fairly by all people. The change in the mode of production answers the question of "why modernisation takes place", the process of world history answers the question of "in what space modernisation occurs", and the all-round development of human beings answers the question of "for whom and for what purpose is modernisation sought".

2. The Chinese Expression of Chinese-style Modernisation and the Marxist Theory of Modernisation

If the Marxist theory of modernisation provides the basic way and value norm for understanding the development of modern society, then the theoretical significance of Chinese-style modernisation is that it does not stop at the level of general ideas but rather transforms these ideas into specific institutional designs and development paths through long-term exploration. The theoretical contributions of this paper are most evident in the revision of the subject and goals of modernisation; it is no longer driven by capital but by socialist modernisation practice that is people-oriented and aims for common prosperity.

2.1 Surpassing the Logic of Capital with People's Subjectivity

Although the ideas of "freedom" and "equality" have been widely spread in the course of capitalist modernisation, the actual operating logic of modernisation has always been to expand capital. Production, trade and even the organisation of social institutions meet some of the demands for capital accumulation and reduce human activities to subordinate links in the movement of capital. Marx noted in Volume 3 of Capital that "capital is not a thing, but a particular social relation of production belonging to a certain historical stage in the formation of society; it is realised in a tangible object and carries a certain social character"^[3]. Therefore, the basic idea of capital is that it is not an indifferent economic instrument but rather an overwhelming system of social relations.

The first achievement of Chinese-style modernisation is that it has surpassed the leading position of the logic of capital. It does not deny the role of market mechanisms in the allocation of resources, and it is also acknowledged that capital, as a factor of production, has some positive functions in a limited area. It is not the first rule of the game for capital, though. Under the socialist institutional system, it will no longer be capital that drives modernisation, but the people. The new idea is that the object of modernisation is no longer "capital" but "the people"; that is, the people are now treated as the practical subject, the value subject and the beneficiary subject of modernisation.

The subjectivity of the people can be seen in many aspects of life, such as political participation, economic development, social construction and cultural creation. Through institutions, Chinese-style modernisation has included the interests of the people in the national development plan and continuously improved the living standards of the people through development achievements. The people-oriented development idea has changed the values of modernisation and provides new practical support for Marxist theory of modernisation.

2.2 Reshaping the Goals of Modernization with Common Prosperity

According to the logic of the subject, the goals of modernisation put forward by the different theoretical systems are also fundamentally different. Capitalist modernisation generally refers to economic development, efficiency improvement and wealth accumulation; as an inevitable consequence of its operation, there is a concentration of wealth among a small number of people and social division. The severe problem of capitalist modernisation is that although it can produce wealth, the institutions have failed to resolve the structural conflict between the accumulation of wealth and social equality.

The main content of the innovation in goal-setting for Chinese-style modernisation is the proposal and progress of common prosperity. Common prosperity is not simple equality; it is not an abstract ideal separate from the actual stage of development, but rather, through institutional design in the course of high-quality development, regional, urban-rural and income disparities will be continuously reduced so that all

people can share in the benefits of modernisation more equitably. Based on the above research, Chinese-style modernisation is an organic combination of the general features of modernisation and Chinese characteristics, and among them, common prosperity is a necessary attribute that distinguishes it from capitalist modernisation.

The purpose of this is to make the Marxist value criterion for human development an institutional goal in the construction of modern society. Modernisation is no longer about "getting rich"; rather, it is the continuous improvement of living and working conditions for all sectors of society, the expansion of development opportunities for all people, and a fairer distribution of the benefits of development. Therefore, Chinese-style modernisation has changed the mode of explanation for the traditional modernisation theory and no longer believes that growth priority, tolerance for differentiation and ex-post compensation are universal laws.

3. Reconstruction of the Narrative of World Modernisation Theory in Chinese Modernisation

The theoretical significance of Chinese-style modernisation is not only confined to the development experience of China but also encompasses the numerous achievements in breaking away from the modernisation narrative that has long focused on Western experience. In the present theoretical system of modernisation, Western experience is often taken for granted and used to build an explanation system that focuses only on the path of capitalist development without proper reference. The proposal and implementation of Chinese-style modernisation have gradually gone from one model to many different ideas of modernisation, providing new intellectual resources for re-evaluating the choice of the modernisation path, institutional form and civilisation connotation.

3.1 Breaking the Theoretical Myth of "Modernisation is Westernisation"

With the spread of capitalism around the world in recent years, the history of Western countries has gradually been regarded as a model for modernisation. Industrialisation, marketisation, liberalisation and the institutional system that supports them are considered to be the only ways to modernise society in this story. Therefore, the theoretical inertia that has developed so far has often placed the modernisation practices of late-developing countries within the coordinates of "imitation-catch-up", and modernisation is equated with the replication of the Western path.

Marxism has shown the objective role of capitalism in creating world history, but it does not view capitalist modernisation as the end goal of human development. On the contrary, by pointing out the flaws in capital, Marxism has shown that there are internal contradictions in the process of modernisation, and it is capable of developing further in society. Based on the above theoretical foundation, Chinese-style modernisation does not conform to the idea of modernisation and is not solely based on the West. Based on the above research, Chinese-style modernisation has started a non-capitalist path of modernisation, and its attributes of modernity include the unity of social progress and human development, as well as the unity of instrumentality and purpose^[4].

The theoretical significance of this result is that modernisation no longer needs to be presented as a story of linear development and does not have to be achieved through the pursuit of a specific goal; instead, it will be a continuous process of emergence in all parts of history. All the ways of modernisation are in line with the general laws of modernisation; they are just different expressions of these general laws in different historical and cultural contexts.

3.2 Opening Up the Space for Independent Modernisation of Late-developing Countries

According to the theory of late-modernisation, many developing countries are still in a dependent-development stage and have been pursuing the path of modernisation by learning from and adapting the experiences of early-developed countries. Based on the above, it is not feasible to achieve this end, and it may also exacerbate the development problems of institutional transplantation and structural mismatches. Through the long-term development of Chinese-style modernisation, it has been shown that it is possible to achieve independent and self-reliant modernisation under the conditions of world history.

Autonomy does not mean independent development; rather, it refers to keeping the independence of development plans, institutional design and value orientation in a world of division of labour and international exchange. The first is that Marxist theory can be used to study national history in light of world history. Based on the above research, China's modernisation and Chinese-style modernisation show that the concept of modernisation has been transformed, improved and optimised in the Chinese context, and have also produced new theoretical innovations and practical creations^[8].

Chinese-style modernisation has shown that late-developing countries can be modernised without copying the West's model. For the reasons mentioned above, the old idea of "late-development-dependency-catch-up" is outdated, and developing countries have made more flexible choices in their development. Its world-class status is not due to a fixed model that can be directly applied; rather, it shows that modernisation should be based on national circumstances, and indigenous mechanisms for dealing with the relationship between the state and the market, efficiency and fairness, development and stability, openness and autonomy need to be built.

3.3 Enriching the Theoretical Landscape of Modernization with Innovations in Forms of Civilization

Chinese modernisation is to say that it has elevated the problem of modernisation to the level of forms of civilisation. The general view of the old modernisation theory is that modernisation is a slow process of economic and social development, and it pays less attention to the corresponding civilisation system and its intrinsic value orientation. Chinese-style modernisation is the theoretical expression of the new form of human civilisation, so modernisation is also about civilisation and not only development.

Marxism believes that the succession of social formations is, in fact, the development of forms of civilisation. Capitalist modernisation has built a very advanced material civilisation, but at the same time has also given rise to problems such as social division, value alienation and development imbalance. Chinese-style modernisation does not contradict the all-round development of modern civilisation; rather, it can integrate all kinds of elements from all sectors based on this foundation. Based on the above research, Chinese-style modernisation is not modernisation in one area; rather, it is a theoretical form that includes a goal system, a value system and a practical system.

At this time, modernisation is no longer about replacing tradition with modernity; rather, it is a creative transformation and integration of the two, as well as an opening up of the nation to the world. Based on the above research, the civilisation view of Chinese-style modernisation is based on the Marxist concept of civilisation and draws from cultural inheritance, practical construction, experience summarisation and theoretical sublimation; it carries the civilisation creative significance of the modernisation path^[7]. Other studies have also indicated that socialism with Chinese characteristics is building a new type of human civilization and has shown its civilizational significance in the process of Chinese-style modernisation^[5].

By adding the dimension of forms of civilisation, Chinese-style modernisation has promoted the development of the theory of modernisation from a "development paradigm" to a "civilisation paradigm", and it has also expanded the explanatory space for Marxist theory of modernisation and altered the basic structure of the narrative for world modernisation theory. Modernisation is no longer the history of the spread of Western experience; rather, it is the history of different countries developing their own forms of modern civilisation in the course of world history.

Conclusion

In short, the first contributions of Chinese-style modernisation to the Marxist theory of modernisation are not only to put forward a different development path from that in the West but also to offer a system of answers to problems such as the theoretical foundation, subject structure, value goals, path form and civilizational implications of modernisation. Chinese-style modernisation is in line with the general ideas of Marxism on changes in the mode of production, the world-historical process and the free and all-round development of people, and also promotes a new development of these ideas through concrete actions in China. Therefore, Chinese-style modernisation can improve our understanding of the laws of socialist modernisation, break through the theoretical limitations of the Western-centric modernisation narrative, expand the path space for developing countries to achieve modernisation, and add new theoretical content

to the study of modernisation through innovative forms of civilisation.

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