

The Historical Logic for the Proposal of the Socialist Core Values

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Abstract

The proposal of the socialist core values is that the Chinese Communist Party based on the basic national conditions of China’s socialist primary stage fully answers the question of the history that “what is socialism” from values dimension for the first time and then from the core level provides for the essence of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Key words: Socialist core values; Historical logic; Proposal

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INTRODUCTION

Since the day when socialism is proposed, it is the unity of value, theory and movement. In the critique of capitalist society and the reveal of the general law of human society development, it proposes its own value proposition, theoretical perspectives and thus guides the real movement. After the victory of the October Revolution in Russia established the world’s first socialist state. Since then socialism is not only a value, theory or movement, and it has become a real institution. Since the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party, its main leaders always adhere to understand socialism

from the perspective of the unity of value, theory and system. However, at different times, according to the prevailing social and historical conditions, the answer to the fundamental problem of the socialist revolution and construction — “what is socialism” — has focused differently. We have experience and lessons in this process, but eventually through generations relay of exploration — from the reveal of the characteristics of the socialist system to the generalization of the nature of socialism and to the refining of the socialist core value, the Chinese Communist Party has a more profound understanding of socialism.

1. MAO ZEDONG’S REVEAL OF AND ADHERING TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIALISM

Faced with China’s backwardness in modern times, the independence and prosperity of the country have become a common pursuit of all people with lofty ideals. Mao Zedong, who has a profound traditional cultural background, based on traditional Chinese literati’s yearning for utopian society, not only wants to achieve country’s independence and prosperity through revolution, but also hopes to achieve the ideal of common prosperity through revolution. Prior to the establishment of the socialist system in China, Mao Zedong has clarified the characteristics of the country to be established through revolution: “The richness is the richness of all people and so is the prosperity. We all share it.” (*Works of Mao Zedong [Vol. 6]*, 1999, p.495) Therefore, the early Chinese communists including Mao Zedong chose Marxism, and that is because, on the one hand, they recognize the value of the position Marxism preaches; on the other hand, that the victory of the October Revolution in Russia provides a real road and institutional guarantee for the realization of this value. It is in these two senses that Mao Zedong says,

The salvos of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism. The October Revolution helped the world and also helped China's advanced people use the proletarian world outlook as the tool to observe the fate of the country and to reconsider their own problems. Go to the road of the Russians — this is the conclusion. (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.4]*, 1991, p.1471)

It is not difficult to see that at that time, Mao Zedong was very sure that only socialism can save China, and only socialism can ensure the realization of the value and goals he had always pursued.

Therefore, in order to achieve its value and goals as quickly as possible, after Mao Zedong led the Chinese people to establish the socialist system in politics in 1949, through a brief transition and through the three major reforms, in 1956 we initially established a socialist economic system. The reason for this is because Mao Zedong hoped to promote the development of productive forces through adjusting the superstructure and production relation. In the three major transformation period he made it clear that,

The purpose of the socialist revolution is to liberate the productive forces. Agriculture and handicrafts are transformed from individual ownership into socialist collective ownership, and private business is transformed from the capitalist ownership into socialist ownership. They are bound to greatly liberate productivity. This creates social conditions for a tremendous development of industrial and agricultural production. (*Selected Readings of Mao Zedong, II*, 1986, p.717)

From the word “bound to” we can see that, on the one hand, Mao Zedong attaches great importance to the development of productive forces; on the other hand he is convinced of the absolute superiority of public ownership and he is convinced that public ownership will be able to greatly liberate and develop productive forces. Following this logic of thinking, when there is a problem in China's economic development, he naturally attributes it to: “First, the ownership transformation is not complete, such as ‘public-private co-ownership’ and some of agricultural cooperatives and artisanal cooperatives are ‘in semi-socialist nature’; the second is ‘the existence of bourgeois ideology’” (Ibid., p.268) Then with further transformation of ownership, we are in the pursuit of “big, public, pure” ownership; then we have the Cultural Revolution against “bourgeois ideology”, hoping after the establishment of socialist system in politics and the completion of the socialist transformation of the ownership in economy we complete the socialist revolution in the ideological and cultural level so as to further develop the productive forces and achieve socialist value and goals.

From the above analysis it is not difficult to see that, Mao Zedong's understanding of socialism has upheld the unity of value, theory and system. With the guidance of Marxism, he learns from the experience of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, hoping to promote the development of productive forces through socialist

revolution in political, economic and cultural aspects and at the same time achieve the pursuit of socialist core values. However, due to separating from the level of development of productive forces and presetting the superiority of the socialist system, and thus the standard whether the relation of production is advanced or not is dogmatized as whether it is “public” or “private” and “socialism” or “capitalism”. In such a mindset, although there are pragmatic and beneficial trials in the process of socialist construction over the relation of production, yet because of the special international and domestic environment, Mao Zedong eventually fall into the dogmatic adhering to the characteristics of socialist system. The result is that it not only failed to further promote the development of productive forces to realize the value and goals of socialism, but also caused people's confusion about socialism.

2. DENG XIAOPING AND JIANG ZEMIN'S GENERALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATURE OF SOCIALISM

Faced with people's confusion and even doubt of socialism after the “Cultural Revolution” and some people who have not fully got rid of the influence of the wrong “leftist” thought and are stubborn to the road of class struggle, as a staunch communist, Deng Xiaoping primarily thought about the answer to “what is socialism and how to build socialism” rather than whether or not to adhere to the socialist path.

From Deng Xiaoping's thinking track, we can see that, his exploration of the question “what is socialism” has gone from the description of the appearance of characteristics to the generalization of the inherent nature and from opposite exclusion to positive answer. Early on, Deng Xiaoping mainly thought about the question “what is socialism” from the perspective of the superiority of socialism. Based on the reflection of the lessons from the “Cultural Revolution”, using opposite exclusion method, Deng Xiaoping illustrates the superiority of socialism from the economic, political, cultural and other aspects: “Poverty is not socialism and slow development is not socialism either. Otherwise what superiority does socialism have?” (*Selected Works of De Xiaoping [Vol.3]*, 1993, p.55) In this period, his thinking about socialism is concentrated expressed in the characteristics of socialism summarized in the report of the 12th Party Congress:

The elimination of the system of exploitation, public ownership, distribution according to work, the national economy develops as planned and in proportion, the power of the working class and working people... highly developed productive forces and labor productivity higher than capitalism... socialist spiritual civilization with the core of communist ideology. (*Selected Important Documents Since*, para.5, 1986, p.27)

At this time, Deng Xiaoping's understanding of socialism has inherited the Marxist vision of socialism in general and learned from lessons in our early days of socialist construction. He emphasizes the fundamental significance of the development of productivity reflecting the superiority of socialism: "Socialism has many tasks, but the fundamental one is to develop the productive forces, and on the basis of development of productive forces it will demonstrate the superiority over capitalism." (*Selected Works of De Xiaoping [Vol.3]*, 1993, p.137) With the superiority of socialism revealing in the depth, Deng Xiaoping gradually clarified the essence of socialism, and made a classic expression in the South conversation: "The essence of socialism is to emancipate and develop productive forces, eliminate exploitation and polarization, and ultimately achieve common prosperity." (*Ibid.*, p.373) As for how to emancipate and develop the productive forces and ultimately achieve common prosperity, the answer is through reform.

Deng Xiaoping's saying of the essence of socialism has reversed the dogmatized understanding of the characteristics of socialist system which previously went beyond the level of productivity, and it has incorporated the material foundation and value goals of socialist society into the essential requirement of socialism. However, since its focus is to interpret the nature of socialism from the economic perspective, in the process to guide the practice of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, it is distorted as it only focuses on GDP, which greatly promotes the development of productive forces, but also brings a lot of problems. To overcome this limitation, based on Deng Xiaoping's theory of the essence of socialism, Jiang Zemin enriched and developed this theory. In 2001, he stressed in the "July 1" speech that "to promote the comprehensive development of human beings is the essential requirement of Marxism on the construction of a new socialist society." (*Selected Works of Jiang Zemin [Vol.3]*, 2006, p.294) Based on common prosperity, he reaffirmed the value pursuit of socialism to promote the overall development of people so as to develop the essence of socialism.

From the above analysis we can see that Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin also understand socialism from the perspective of the unity of value, theory and system. They also hope to promote the development of productive forces through reforms so as to realize the value goals of socialism. However, since in this stage, the socialist essence theory emphasizes the development of productive forces and the value goals of "common prosperity" and "the overall development of human beings" are so lofty and abstract, more implementation in practice is just GDP index. The socialist value goals of "common prosperity" "the overall development of human beings" have become a figurehead, which thus has sparked doubt about the nature of the reform.

3. HU JINTAO AND XI JINPING'S EXPLORATION AND CONCISENESS OF THE SOCIALIST CORE VALUE WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

Faced with people's doubt on the nature of reforms, since the 16th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee represented by Hu Jintao adheres to reform, start from China's specific national conditions of the primary stage of socialism, proposes socialism we build should be "a society which is democratic, with rule of law, justice, sincere, amity, vital, stable and in order and in which man and nature live in harmony" (*Selected Important Documents Since*, para.5, 2006, p.206). And in the process of promoting the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics it clarifies that, "social harmony is the essential attribute of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the important protection of national prosperity, national rejuvenation and people's happiness." (*Selected Important Documents Since*, para.5, 2006, p.648) It thus also combines the ultimate value goal of socialism that Marxism reveals with China's basic national conditions in the primary stage of socialism and the reality of socialist construction, and puts forward specific value pursuit of socialism with Chinese characteristics and deepens the understanding of the essence of socialism.

It is not difficult to see that, in order to avoid the figurehead of the ultimate socialist value goal for its long-term time and complexity in the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the CPC Central Committee with Hu Jintao as the representative has begun to try to determine the specific value goals of socialism with Chinese characteristics to ensure the socialist nature of the reform, but at that time the exploration of the value of socialism with Chinese characteristics was not very clear. Along this train of thought, after the reveal of the content of the socialist core value system, ultimately in the end of 2013, the 24-word socialist core values were officially announced. So far, the Chinese Communist Party, based on China's basic national conditions of primary stage of socialism, has fully answered the historical question "what is socialism" from the dimension of value for the first time and has provided for the nature of socialism with Chinese characteristics from the core level. About the 24-word socialist core values, there are three aspects to clarify:

First, while it is named as socialist core values, in fact, they are neither talking about socialist values in a general sense, nor the ultimate values of socialism based on highly developed productive forces. They are core values of socialism with Chinese characteristics which are compatible with China's national conditions of the primary stage of socialism. This means that the core values are what we need in current socialist construction, and they can be achieved through a period of construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Second, the proposal of 24-word socialist core values is not to replace the ultimate value goal of socialism such as “common prosperity” and “the free and comprehensive development of human beings” but specify the ultimate value goal, using the 24-word socialist core values as a guide. The construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics ultimately is to achieve the ultimate value goal of socialism.

Third, to understand socialism from the 24-word core values is not to negate the previous understanding of socialism, but to develop and deepen the previous understanding. The proposal of the 24-word socialist core values is not to negate the adhering to the basic system of socialism, nor to deny the nature of socialism to emancipate and develop productive forces; on the contrary, to achieve core value goal of socialism with Chinese characteristics as identified in the 24-word core values still needs to be based on the establish in the liberation emancipation and development of productive forces and still depends on upholding and improving the basic system of socialism.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the understanding of the logic of socialist core values is directly related to the understanding of its meaning. Based on the current realistic logic of socialist core values - the new situation where international cultures blend and values clash and new features that under reform and opening up as well as the development of socialist market economy, ideology becomes diverse. The approach is to put emphasis on the spread of socialist core values to lead the social ideological trend and forge consensus, although to some extent can provide positive energy for the construction of a comprehensive well-off society, yet it is difficult to achieve the mission

to advance the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and help to realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of China. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the logic of socialist core values from a historical height. As mentioned above, from a historical logic, the socialist core values are that the Communist Party of China, based on the basic national conditions of the primary stage of socialism, fully answers the historical question “what is socialism” of the value dimension for the first time, and then the core level provides the essence of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Its proposal has provided the clear value guidelines for the comprehensive deepening of the reform, defined a clear theoretical space and provided the ultimate evaluation criteria.

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