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The Chinese model of modernization – nature, historical stages, sociocultural characteristics

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Abstract

In this paper the Chinese society modernization is characterized as a complex, dynamic, and non-uniform process. The authors identify and give a description of three stages of the Chinese society modernization. The article also investigates the social ideals of ancient Chinese culture “xiaokang” – (small well-being) and “he” – (harmony), which played an important role in the conception of modernization of modern Chinese society. The author gives the summary of the contents of these ancient ideals, and analyzes their modern interpretation. It is shown how these ideas complement and enrich each other. It is argued that the advancement of these ideas, at the same time, reflects the intention to promote the co-evolution of economic and social indicators in China. Main content of ‘human-basis’ idea was disclosed as an important guiding principle of the Chinese society modernization. Three levels of understanding of a ‘human-basis’ philosophical idea were defined. Free personal development, people’s moral, intellectual, and physical qualities’ improvement are considered as a basic premise of modernization and long-term development.

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1. Introduction

Modernization is a world-historical process with a necessary and universal character. Furthermore, countries that want to adapt to external conditions and strive to achieve a high level of development to become competitive on the world stage, have to conduct technological and economic modernization. The impact of external factors (the threat to Chinese independence in the late 19th century) led to the realization of the need to import new technologies, and then new political, economic, and social institutions to the Chinese society.

Due to the transition to the market economy, balanced governmental regulation, and other competitive advantages, such as, cheap labor, high rates of economic growth have been achieved, relatively well-developed industry have been built, the informatization process and its combination with industrialization are being

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promoted. Within twenty years of reforms, Venbao's task (to feed and warm people) was solved; at the beginning of the 21st century, the goal of achieving Xiaokang task (low-income) is already close.

2. Body of Research

Modernization of China represents deep, gradual changes in economy, politics, culture, and society. These changes do not mean the rejection of an existing regime; it means the reform of an existing system. Only under condition of stability maintaining Chinese miracle was created to impress the world. Nowadays, it becomes clear that the modernization of China is a dynamic, complex, non-uniform and time-consuming process.

In general, we distinguish three stages of Chinese society modernization: 1) early; 2) revolutionary; 3) reformational. For each stage specific goals, challenges and constraints were characterized.

At the first stage, the goal was to win over the national independence. At the second one, to seek out new state system forms, national economy recovery, as well as economy industrialization, creating the new identity (Mao). At the third, the main goal becomes creation of a pragmatic development concept, taking into account national specificities, revival of the national spirit, of the Chinese people.

Modernization processes brought profound changes in the traditional Chinese way of thinking. First, traditional agrarian society was characterized by conservatism, but informatization, globalization, and marketization processes taking place in modern society are increasingly forcing people to fix their eyes on the future, set new goals and achieve them. Second, in the traditional society 'collective' was valued more than 'individual'; as importance of 'individual' increases in the modern Chinese society, more attention is paid to the integration, coordination, and harmonization of various interests. And, third, under influence of modern science the analytical and critical spirits are being brought up in Chinese society.

The official course of the Chinese people's Republic at the present stage is reflected in two main concepts: first, "the conception of comprehensive building of a xiaokang society", which was proposed by Deng Xiaoping, secondly, "the conception of building a harmonious society", proposed by the former Chairman of the PRC Hu Jintao. Let's analyze the main categories of these concepts, namely, Xiaokang (small well-being) and He (harmony), in greater detail. "Xiaokang society" is often translated as a moderately wealthy society that does not reflect the full meaning of this conception. Thus, in the Canon "Shi Jing" (XI-VI BC) there is an ode "People suffer" (民亦劳止,迄可小康), which in translation by A.A. Shtukin is read as follows:

For now, our people are wearied of their labors -
Let their inheritance be eased. (Shi Jing, 1987)

Here the word "eased" is translating the expression xiaokang, the Hieroglyph "xiao" is translated as small, and the Hieroglyph "kang" has the following meanings: "welfare", "joy", "health", thus, xiaokang should be better translated as "small well-being", "small peace". The description of the xiaokang society from the ancient texts indicates that the basis of such society should constitute adherent appeals to ritual and doing one's duty. It calls for solidarity and mutual assistance, and fair government.

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping, whose reforms marked a new stage in the development of China, for the first time started to mention the concept of "xiaokang". "At the end of this century, even if we reach a certain aim in our course of modernization, our average per capita gross national product will remain quite low. In order to reach the level of the richer countries of the third world, say, with GDP of 1,000 T US dollars per capita, we should make considerable efforts" (Collected works of Deng Xiaoping, 1994). In 1982, at the XII Congress of the Communist party of China, he set the task "by the end of the XX century to increase the GDP twice... And the material conditions of people's life should reach the level of xiaokang" (Collected works of Deng Xiaoping, 1994). As you can see at that period the "xiaokang" category was understood only from the economic

development point of view, which certainly was important for the country, the main part of the population of which considered the well-being by having at home a thermos and a bike.

But already in the 90-ies of the XX century, when “wenbao” - to feed and shelter the people - was achieved, the next step becomes the adoption of the “concept of comprehensive building of the xiaokang society”. The Chinese leadership is trying to cover all the spheres of social life with the concept “comprehensive”: the economics, politics, culture, science, legal system, morality, environment, national defense capacity and so on. The term “comprehensive” also means that all parts of the country, the total population of China is expected to reach a xiaokang level. In the updated conception of xiaokang the emphasis is also made on a coordinated development. In particular, it was recognized that such common indicators as per capita income is not appropriate to assess the level of xiaokang, as they can hide the actual disbalance.

Due to the rapid economic development the country's GDP has significantly increased the income of people, but still there exists an acute problem of the gap between different regions, between urban and rural areas, between rich and poor. For example, in 2011, the average income of urban residents was 21810 yuan a year (or 3635 dollars), and rural residents - 6977 yuan a year (\$1163) (XVIII Congress of the CPC, 2014). That's why, “the conception of comprehensive building of the xiaokang society” was complemented by the idea of a harmonious, coordinated development of the society.

The “He” category (concordance, friendship, harmony) always had a great significance for the traditional culture of China. The ancient Chinese philosophy, attached a great importance to the attainment of harmony and integrity, and following the principle of the Golden mean “中庸之道” (Zhongyong zhi Dao), under the influence of which the main features of the traditional thinking of the Chinese, holism, the aspiration for harmony and unity, had formed. Since ancient times a lot of attention was paid to social harmony as the basis of mutual understanding, conflict resolution, cooperation, and mutual assistance. Harmony “he” is the main principle of communication, the main norm of governing relations between people, between man and society.

This category is a supreme national ideal for which the culture of Confucianism strives, the essence of it is the coordination of everything heterogeneous, and the achievement of a new harmonious unity on this basis, in the birth of something new in the process of interaction of the opposites.

The traditional spiritual culture continues to have a huge impact on the socio-political practice, in General, all aspects of life of the Chinese people having its structuring and negentropy influence. After the fourth generation coming to the power, the main aim of the development was announced to build a harmonious society, corresponding to the principles of Confucianism.

“The conception of building a harmonious society” has become a logical continuation of the “conception of building the xiaokang society”. It is interesting that the new theory has not replaced the previous one, on the contrary, these concepts have become complementary. The Chinese leadership is making a great effort to give support to the citizens of retirement age by establishing the foundations of security. To achieve social justice a progressive tax rate is applied, implying minimum tax deductions at low wages (salaries). The tasks of the state is creation of the necessary infrastructure: roads, transport, sports, defense and social objects. The idea of harmony (he) has strengthened the social orientation of the “xiaokang” concept, and also filled the modern conception of China's development with new content. For example, it is an idea about the necessity of harmony between Nature and man. There was much told about the building of the ecological civilization of China at the international ecological forum.

Comprehensive development now means harmonious development, which implies the harmony between society and nature, man and society, man and other people, and finally, between man and his inner world. Another important theoretical addition is the scientific view on the development. The “Scientific View” on development is an indication of the comprehensive, harmonious and sustainable development, which means the overcoming a number of unilateral accents in economic and social policy. There is no emphasis on the growth of economic indicators to the detriment of notice of social problems. Instead of stressing the thesis about the enrichment of separate regions and individuals, the emphasis is made on entire formation of the Central Asia society, joint

growth of well-being and overcoming a serious property differentiation” (Titarenko, 2009). So, active building of a harmonious society can be interpreted as an attempt to promote co-evolution of economic and social indicators. Uneven development of the city and the village, the Western and Eastern regions is one of the weakest points of the Chinese society. Combining two most important conceptions of development, based on traditional ideals of “xiaokang” and “he”, allows to have a new view of old problems and to find rational ways of their solution. So, it was decided to reduce the differences between the city and village, i.e. giving urban appearance to the village. This means the development of infrastructure, improvement of the social service quality, approximation of the level of income to the income of urban residents, raise of the rural population' cultural level.

True modernization of society is impossible without a ‘modern person’ education. Indeed, a person is an architect of scientific and technological revolution, reforms, and progress. Productive forces development is impossible without human intervention, his or her active work or creativity. At present, no one doubts the fact that human capital is a driving force and a decisive factor of economic growth. Investments into the human capital always give positive effect. That is why a lot of attention is paid to ‘human-basis’ idea in China.

For a long period philosophical idea of ‘human-basis’ was a theoretical construction, on practice it was first used in enterprise management. In recent years, there are attempts to realize this principle in educational, scientific, management spheres, etc. It is thus assumed that orientation towards person should be a leading idea.

We suggest three levels of understanding of this idea. First, this idea outlines the role and place of the person as a subject and goal of socio-historical development. The person is an architect of history, main leading figure of history. History is a history of person’s self-realization, person’s self-expression in labor and production processes. Thus, K. Marx said: ‘any so-called history is nothing else than a creation of human by labor, nature formation for human’ (Marks., Engels, 1974). The person itself is a product of history, it truly changes, develops, it creates oneself in a historical development process. At the same time, there is no doubt that the level of social progress is defined by a development of a person.

While accepting Marxism ideas, the idea that social development’s ultimate goal and supreme value is human’s emancipation, which is regarded as one’s liberation from economic coercion, was accepted almost unchanged, so that one could develop as a person, overcome social anomie, and restore the lost harmony with other people and with nature.

Second, it is very important for modern China to promote human modernization, and value orientation change. A ‘human-basis’ idea should be formed: respect for human rights, individual autonomy, and basic human needs; pursuit of full self-realization of human nature.

Third, the main content of this idea is ‘everything is for the people’, because the ultimate goal of any activity is to meet material and cultural needs of the person, as well as its comprehensive development. Therefore, China is taking measures to humanize service, including public, sector. The following principle is being introduced: to comply with client’s interests and with his legal rights, to respect customers’ different capabilities, their individuality, etc.

Once the ‘human-basis’ idea has become an important guiding principle of the ‘comprehensive Xiaokang society construction’ concept, its starting point and ultimate goal became the fundamental interests of the broadest strata of Chinese people. At the 16th Congress of the CPC the ‘three representatives’ idea of Jian Zemin was taken, the statements about the need to develop activity, initiative, and ability of the population, as well as the need to mobilize all positive factors and forces were made.

As it was mentioned above, person’s comprehensive development is the main moral and value factors in the Xiaokang society. Achievement of harmony between human beings is one of the basic requirements of comprehensive Xiaokang society construction. From our point of view, the content of the comprehensive person’s development problem is showed in following two aspects:

First, it is a free personal development as ability of self-realization, when person takes humanity as the main goal of its life.

As is well known, K. Marx distinguished three stages of the person's evolution: 'the relationship of personal dependence (completely primitive in the beginning), these are the first forms of society in which people's productive capacity develops to a small extent in isolated areas. Personal independence, based on non-property partiality, represents the second big formation, in which the system of general social metabolism, universal relations, and comprehensive needs and universal potencies develops for the first time. Free individuality, based on universal development of individual, and on turning their collective, social productivity into their public domain – that is a 'third stage' (Marks, Engels, 1974). Of course, Marx examines human development in the economic dimension. But we would like to stress something else: that Marx uses freedom as the most important characteristic of the future human. His position can be outlined as follows: human's evolution is a human's freedom development.

Freedom as a value has got an abstract, general and indeterminate nature. But it is freedom that can neither feed nor warm person, which is a person's main value, without which one's life is meaningless.

Second, comprehensive person's development is the development of one's abilities. Comprehensive person's development means development of one's physical and intellectual abilities, one's spiritual qualities. The overall person's structure is composed of many interconnected and interacting psychophysical factors, such as temperament, will, memory, ideals, beliefs, intellect, self-awareness, etc. Getting rid of narrow kinship, professional, ethnic, national boundaries and engaging in a variety of public relations, the person can carry out a complete comprehensive development of one's own nature. Comprehensive person's development means also the development of one's needs. On the one hand, the need is the source and driving force of our activity, on the other hand, new requirements are developed through the process of activity. Comprehensive person's development implies achieving harmony between diverse needs, such as natural and social, spiritual and material, individual and collective, etc.

3. Conclusion

Thus, if it is impossible to eliminate the arising contradictions completely, it is probably that through their mutual concordance, adaptation and combining they can be led to effective and rational combination. It is very important for the society to establish mutual respect, mutual help and mutual confidence.

To summarize, we note that China is familiar with the ideas of individualism, science, freedom, and democracy, but they have not become intrinsic for the individual and social consciousness. General standard of living is still very low. Education of 'modern person' is prerequisite for the successful modernization and long-term economic growth.

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