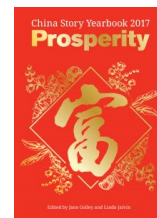


The China Story



中(成)全球研究中心

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE ON
CHINA IN THE WORLD



Jiang Shigong on 'Philosophy and History: Interpreting the "Xi Jinping Era" through Xi's Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP'

Posted on 11 May 2018 by [Gloria Davies](#)

An Introduction by David Ownby and Timothy Cheek



This essay by Jiang Shigong 强世功 (b. 1967), published in the Guangzhou journal Open Times (开放时代) in January 2018, aims to be an authoritative statement of the new political orthodoxy under Xi Jinping 习近平 (b. 1953) as Xi begins his second term as China's supreme leader. It offers a new reading of modern Chinese history in general and the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in particular, arguing that Xi Jinping's 'thought' (sixiang 思想) is the culmination of a century's historical process and philosophical refinement, produced through the ongoing dialectic of theory and practice. This is 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' 习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想, which Jiang defends as the new ideological superstructure to the material base of China's economy after nearly forty years of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Although the language bears considerable resemblance to the propagandistic slant of People's Daily editorials, Jiang's text is not a specious rant, but an intelligent and penetrating critique of the limits and failures of the liberal democratic system. It also offers a considered case for an alternative way of viewing politics and history that defends the past actions and current legitimacy of the CCP and holds up Xi Jinping as the man of the hour to complete China's century-long recovery of its dominant place in the world.

Jiang Shigong is no mere propagandist; he is a well-respected legal scholar and professor at Peking University Law School, focusing on constitutional law.[2] His academic work has attracted the attention of international China scholars, culminating in a special 2014 issue of the research journal, *Modern China*, in which Western scholars engaged Professor Jiang on his ideas about Chinese constitutionalism. He is also a well-known defender of China's position on the proper management of the Hong Kong question, and in 2017 published an English book entitled *China's Hong Kong: A Political and Cultural Perspective*.

For those who have followed intellectual trends in China since China's rise, Jiang's text offers both similarities and differences. Some similarities, such as a focus on proper 'thought' and a preoccupation with the

hegemony of Western models of modernisation, characterise virtually all thinkers of the reform period, or of China's modern period in general, be they liberal, conservative, Marxist or Confucian. In terms of intellectual discourse since China's rise, Jiang likewise joins other thinkers in a fundamental attempt to rethink the contours of modern Chinese history and the basic historical narrative shaping views of China's past and future.[3]

The starting point for this rethinking of modern Chinese history is likely Gan Yang's 甘阳 (b. 1952) 2005 lecture at Tsinghua on 'uniting the three traditions' 通三统, in which he calls for a new view of Chinese history that will bring together the 'traditions' of the Qing dynasty, Maoist socialism and Deng's policies of reform and opening.[4] Gan's goal is to create a new continuity based on sixiang, to replace the manifest discontinuity that has marked China's experience since the Opium War. The notion itself is appropriately classical, since Gan's objective is conservative. The initial 'integration of the three traditions' proposed by Dong Zhongshu (c.179-104 B.C.E.) was that of China's Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, which consciously built on one another's institutions and rituals, despite their differences. Gan's proposition is that today's China must put aside discussions of war, revolution and class struggle to craft a narrative that will blend the positive elements of Chinese traditional culture, socialist commitment to equality, and capitalist economic efficiency. If at first glance the idea may appear fanciful, its goal is laudable: a stable, prosperous China at peace with herself and with others.

China's rise, and the West's apparent decline, particularly since 2008, have inspired many Chinese intellectuals to follow Gan's lead and engage in a fundamental questioning and reimagining of the narrative of China's modern history. The New Left scholar Wang Shaoguang 王绍光 (b. 1954) has proposed a new periodisation based on regime capacity, a seemingly anodyne innovation, but one that marks the New Left's embrace of statism.[5] In his 'A Confucian reading of the China Dream', the New Confucian Chen Ming 陈明 (b. 1962) proposes to 'transcend left and right, unite the three traditions, and renew the party-state', indicting China's liberal tradition, the notion that China's modernisation will inevitably lead to Western-style democracy, as well as its socialist heritage, particularly its internationalist aspects, as well as Mao Zedong's 毛泽东 (1893-1976)

Cultural Revolution.[6] Liberals, too, have joined in. Xu Jilin 许纪霖 (b. 1957) has attempted to fashion a liberal compromise with Chinese tradition, discussing the possibility of Confucianism's serving as China's 'civil religion' and attempting to craft a new, more cosmopolitan Chinese foreign policy by proposing an updated 'Chinese universalism' 天下主义 2.0. [7] Gao Quanxi 高全喜 (b. 1962), the constitutional scholar and conservative liberal, vents his frustration on China's own liberal tradition, criticising it for a lack of hard-headed engagement with the nitty-gritty of politics. He notes that Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962), the shining symbol of Chinese liberalism, made few contributions outside the realms of culture and literature.[8]

The most extreme of these reformulations call into question not only the pertinence and utility of universal Enlightenment values, but also the basic building blocks of modern Chinese history and historiography: the Republican revolution (1911), the May Fourth movement (1919), the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (1921). If May Fourth thinkers sought to break with China's Confucian tradition, today's thinkers seem to want to put the messy twentieth century, with its wars and revolutions, behind them once and for all, even if their goal is to create a stable, prosperous China that possesses her own cultural agency at home and abroad.

Here is where Jiang differs. He offers his own rereading of modern Chinese history, but one in which the CCP once again plays the leading role. Jiang, like Xi Jinping, wants to put an end to the freewheeling audacity of today's intellectuals and bring them back to the church of Marxism. His narrative is compellingly simple: China stood up under Mao, got rich under Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 (1904-1997), and is now becoming powerful under Xi Jinping. The details of the essay show why this is so and why 'the Era of Xi Jinping' will bring to fruition all of these dreams of Chinese wealth and power by 2049, the centenary of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Jiang goes into some detail to show how the Xi Jinping era fits in the narratives of the history of the CCP, the history of Chinese civilisation, and the history of the international Communist movement. By the middle of the essay this allows Jiang to declare that Xi Jinping's thought is now the key to China's contributions to world civilisation. Past and present, China and the world— Jiang integrates everything into a

seamless story of how the development and recovery of Chinese agency is bringing about the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The pillars of Jiang's argument are: first, the living value of Chinese Marxism, or Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, as an analytical system or political theory; second, the fundamental role of traditional Chinese cultural resources in the creation of Chinese socialism; and finally, the creative role played by Xi Jinping, China's current and future 'supreme leader' 领袖—a title previously limited to Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 (1887-1975).

Jiang's defense of the usefulness of Marxist ideology is likely the most robust we have seen since Zhang Chunqiao 张春桥 (1917-2005) (who was later one of the notorious 'Gang of Four' purged after the death of Mao) made the case for his quite different reading of Mao Zedong Thought in 1975.[9] Speaking as a member of the supreme standing committee of the Politburo of the Central Committee in January 1975, Zhang outlined a commitment to radical political struggle and repression of capitalists (and people reflecting 'capitalist thought'). Jiang's argument is of course very different from Zhang's (and both are of course partial and incomplete). Jiang emphasizes history, not class struggle, and his goal, like that of Gan Yang, is essentially conservative and constructive. Still, Jiang employs the tools of dialectical materialism with great skill and rewrites modern Chinese history as the product of the ongoing dialectical relationship between theory and practice in the context of state building and world building.

Jiang's integration of traditional Chinese thought with Communist theory builds on a flirtation between the New Left and the New Confucians which has been underway for some time [10] as well as on Gan Yang's 'uniting the three traditions'. The text is littered with classical Confucian expressions like 'original intention' 初心 which liken the scholar's commitment to the Way to the Communist's dedication to revolution. Communism is presented as the equivalent of the 'learning of the heart' 心学, one of the Chinese names by which Neo-Confucianism is known, linking Wang Yangming's 'innate knowledge' 良知 to Maoist voluntarism in a creative attempt to redefine communism as a goal to be achieved by cultivating the proper spirit rather than through class warfare. As China moves

forward, it also embraces its past; what will flourish in the twenty-first century and beyond is Chinese civilisation.

Thought requires a thinker, hence Jiang's embrace of Xi Jinping. Xi is credited here with correcting and completing the course of Reform and Opening launched by Deng Xiaoping and successfully charting a third path between the failed Soviet Union and the failing United States of America. While 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' may be clumsy branding, Jiang's defense of Xi's thought deserves careful reading because it reflects a sophisticated, intelligent understanding of how Chinese leaders (and intellectuals sympathetic to those leaders) view China's accomplishments and future possibilities. For those who have wondered why Xi Jinping seems to be turning back the clock, Jiang provides an answer. It is not an answer that will appeal to Western (or Chinese) liberals, but it suggests that Xi is more than simply Mao (or Qianlong) 2.0.

This translation is part of a larger project entitled 'Reading and Writing the China Dream', financed as an Insight grant by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Council. The project's website is currently under reconstruction but will be completed shortly.

Jiang Shigong: ‘Philosophy and History: Interpreting the “Xi Jinping Era” through Xi’s Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP’

Translation by David Ownby.

Notes by Timothy Cheek and David Ownby

Abstract

This text interprets the significance of the ‘Xi Jinping era’ in Party history, the history of the Republic, the history of Chinese civilisation, the history of the international Communist movement, and the history of mankind, from the perspective of the internal linkages between philosophy and history. In the modern era, the central narrative of Chinese history has been that of the Chinese people as masters of the nation, possessed of a spirit of struggle, unstintingly seeking out their own independent path to modernity. The ‘Chinese solution 中国方案’, which is the path to modernity created by socialism with Chinese characteristics of the new era, while learning from and absorbing the Western and the Soviet models, and taking Chinese culture as its base, has fashioned a new set of development concepts and theories that will serve as the contribution of ‘Chinese wisdom 中国智慧’ to the process of the modernisation of the civilisation of all mankind. Throughout this process, China has consistently confronted the question of the Sinification of Marxism. As a universal philosophical truth, Marxism must not only be integrated into the concrete practice of Chinese history but must also be merged with Chinese traditional culture. The Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era that has taken shape since the Eighteenth Party Congress employs the traditional Chinese ‘Learning of the Heart’ 心学 to re-enliven Communist ideas, and this accomplishment, together with the great revival of the Chinese nation, has constructed and consolidated the spiritual strength of the entire Party and people. In addition, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era uses modern legal thinking to perfect the Party’s leadership of the state, thus reactivating Chinese traditional

political culture, and propelling national governance toward modernity. For this reason, I will argue that the great mission facing the Xi Jinping era is to construct the superstructure to be integrated into the market economy of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, which requires both devising new constitutional arrangements that will smooth relations between Party and state, while also building the core values of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.

Keywords: ‘Xi Jinping Era’, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, Chinese Solution for Modernisation, Sinification of Marxism

On 18 October 2017, the Nineteenth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party opened smoothly in Beijing. Some media outlets proclaimed that the world had entered the ‘Chinese age’, because the fact that ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics has entered a new era’ refers to a new era not only in China, but in the world at large. This new age has already been labeled the ‘Xi Jinping era’ by perceptive scholars in China and abroad.

If we want to understand the Xi Jinping era, we must first seriously study Xi’s great address to the Nineteenth Party Congress, ‘Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era 决胜全面建成小康社会,夺取新时代中国特色社会主义伟大胜利’.[11] At present, the media is circulating expert analyses and interpretations, focusing on the new concepts, viewpoints, ideas and measures pronounced in the speech, in the hopes that these will enter into the minds, speech and actions of all Party members and society at large, becoming the political consensus of the entire Party and the various peoples of the entire nation, bringing Party leadership into step with the people as an organic, unified active agent, thus realising the strategic challenges and magnificent plans of the Xi Jinping era. For this reason, Xi’s report to the Party Congress is the core text consolidating the people’s hearts in the new era and can even be seen as a political expression of how the CCP will respond to its historical mission over the next thirty years.

If we want to understand the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, we must first understand the CCP. The CCP is a principle-driven political party that believes in Marxism. It is a collective vanguard whose historical mandate, revealed by Marxism, is pursued with commitment and a spirit of sacrifice. It is a highly secular, rational and organized organ of political action. For this reason, the Party’s first mission is to resolve the tension between philosophical truth and historical practice, to unite the universal philosophical truth of Marxism with the concrete, historical reality of China’s political life, producing lines, orientations and policies that can provide concrete guidance in practice. This process is one where theory guides practice and practice tests theory, and where practice allows for the evaluation, improvement, and creation of theory. This process of

dialectical movement between theory and practice, philosophy and history, is precisely the ‘Sinification of Marxism’, which has created a long and rich intellectual tradition.[12] The Party’s new thought can only be understood, inherited, and carried forward when viewed within a tradition beginning with Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Important Thought of the ‘Three Represents’, Scientific Developmentalism, and Xi Jinping Thought for Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era, revealed at the Nineteenth Party Congress.

The actual tradition to which this theory is linked is the Chinese philosophical tradition created by Confucius in the ‘Axial Age’, circa 500 B.C.E. Philosophical notions such as ‘study’ and ‘knowledge’ must be integrated with ideas of ‘practice’ and ‘action’ from concrete life practices, and only when we ‘study, and in due time practice what we study 学而时习之’, only with ‘the unity of knowledge and action 知行合一’ can we obtain true knowledge.[13] For this reason, the Chinese people feel that philosophy is not just ‘knowledge’ as understood in the Western metaphysical tradition as theories and research produced by academic scholars, but is instead something that reveals a historical mandate and consolidates the political consensus of the entire Party and people and which, for this reason, becomes a guide to action. One important reason why Westerners have difficulty understanding the theories of the CCP is that their way of philosophical thinking has been constrained by the metaphysical tradition of the West. They are accustomed to a logical process that proceeds from concept to concept, and hence cannot truly understand the Chinese philosophical tradition of the ‘unity of thought and action’. They cannot link up theoretical concepts with concrete historical practice, and cannot understand the unique interpretive strategies that the Chinese philosophical tradition has always employed. For this reason, if we wish to understand the Xi Jinping era announced by his great report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, as well as the historical mission of the Xi Jinping era and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era developed to accomplish this historical mission, then we must have not only a philosophical approach, but also, and more importantly, an historical approach. This great report to the Nineteenth Party Congress was written in

such a way as to integrate philosophy and history, and thus to link universal philosophic reflections with concrete historical practice.

The historical positioning of the Xi Jinping era: from natural time to political time

From the point of view of my research, the great report at the Nineteenth Party Congress actually positions the Xi Jinping era in history in four ways.

First is its position in the history of the CCP and in the history of the PRC. The report clearly points out that: ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics has entered a new age, meaning that the Chinese people, who have long suffered in the modern age, have now made a great leap, from standing up 站起来, to becoming rich 富起来, to becoming strong 强起来. ‘Standing up’, ‘getting rich’, and ‘becoming powerful’ are ways to divide the histories of our Party and our Republic, referring respectively to the Mao Zedong era, the Deng Xiaoping era, and the Xi Jinping era that we are currently entering. These divisions are not those understood by academic historians but must be analyzed from a political angle. Using historical divisions to express political thought is a basic method employed by traditional Chinese philosophy.

Western civilisation is built on a philosophical-theological tradition of binary antagonisms, between phenomenon and existence, life on earth and in heaven. In the Christian tradition, the ultimate goal and meaning of human existence comes from God in heaven, which is why the final goal of Western striving is to arrive at the realisation of various versions of the ‘end of history’. But in the tradition of Chinese civilisation, the worldly and otherworldly realms are not strictly separated, and are both absorbed in a complete world where heaven and mankind are one. The goal and meaning of life for Chinese people was not how to get into heaven, but rather how to locate a universal, lasting meaning within the historically existing ‘family-state universe 家国天下’. For this reason, Chinese people, and especially politicians, all sought to establish their name in history through professional achievements. And the goal of Chinese historians was not a simple research for objective facts, as emphasized by modern

historians, but was rather a philosophical search for universal values and meaning in the factual record. Sayings like ‘the Six Classics are all histories 六经皆史’ and ‘the classics and history are one and the same 经史不分’ confirm this idea.

For this reason, the construction of legitimacy in the Chinese political order must first be a historical construction. The classical political order in China began with the Three Sovereigns and the Five Emperors [roughly the third millennium BCE] and the reigns of Yao, Shun and Yu [who ruled during this period], and the reason that those who won power and ruled called themselves ‘emperor’ was because they hoped to obtain political legitimacy from the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors as they worked to establish a new regime. But modern political order must be constructed on the basis of China’s modern history since 1840. For this reason, China’s political disagreements often also begin from differences in historical narratives. In the past few years, theoretical innovations that we have seen in China in fields like the New Qing History, the history of the Republican Revolution, the history of the Republic, and in Party history have all to different degrees contained veiled political demands.[15] Hence, the periodisations applied to Party history and Republican history and the historical positions accorded to the Party and to national leaders, and to the construction of the Chinese political order, are all extremely important. These historical periodisations constitute the most basic principles of Chinese political life at the deepest level. The preface to China’s Constitution begins with an historical narrative, and each time that there are theoretical advances in or revisions to the Party Charter, this requires changes to the preface to the Constitution, which undoubtedly signals the transformation of basic political principles into the basic principles of the nation in terms of the fundamental law. For this reason, all reports to the Party Congress start with the history of the Party and the history of the country. They discuss the development of and changes to the Party’s line, principles and policies, adjusting the periodisation as necessary. This is the dialectical relationship between inheritance and tradition in the Party’s theoretical tradition.

Beginning with the report to the Fourteenth Party Congress, a new style of periodisation was employed, based on generational politics 代际政治,

respectively recounting the historical contributions made by the first generation of the central leadership collective with Mao as the core Party leader, and the second generation of the central leadership collective with Deng Xiaoping as core Party leader. Subsequently, the reports to the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Party Congresses took this a step further in their discussion of ‘the first generation of the central leadership collective with Comrade Mao Zedong as the core Party leader’, ‘the second generation of the central leadership collective with Comrade Deng Xiaoping as core Party leader’, ‘the third generation of the central leadership collective with Comrade Jiang Zemin as core Party leader’. The use of this generational political historical periodisation grew out of the special background attached to the events of 1989, and it was effective in consolidating Party Secretary Jiang Zemin’s authority within the Party and in preserving the continuity and stability of the policy of Reform and Opening. It was the prolonged development ushered in by this political and policy stability that allowed China to carry out the historical transformation from the ‘China has stood up’ of the Mao Zedong era to the ‘China has become rich’ of the Deng Xiaoping era.

The Chinese people readily accept generational politics. For one thing, Chinese Confucian culture emphasises the hierarchy of relationships between elder and younger, and to a great degree affirms the objective political results achieved over the natural passage of time. For this reason, generational politics is beneficial to political stability. In addition, this generational change neatly accords with the lengths of the mandates accorded to national leaders by the Constitution, and objectively constitutes a political situation requiring generational change. But the history of humanity does not respect the divisions of natural time. Political life by its very nature is not natural, but man-made, and history is ultimately produced by human beings. Historical time is absolutely not the natural time of Newtonian physics but is instead political time as created by people, and even the way we periodise history is a product of politics. Indeed, it is precisely because of different time periods referring to historical missions and meanings developed out of political processes that we have the distinction between ancient and modern times, or ‘since 1840’, ‘since 1949’, ‘since the period of Reform and Opening’. One might say that generational

politics based on natural time cannot easily become the basic form of the construction of political time. For example, illustrious figures in Chinese political history like founding emperors Qinshihuang (秦始皇, r.247-220 BCE), Han Wudi (汉武帝, r.141-87 BCE), Tang Taizong (唐太宗, r.626-649 CE) or Song Taizu (宋太祖, r.960-976 CE) did not achieve their place in history because of their generational position but instead because of the historical space they opened up through their actions. It was their own political efforts that created political time, which later became references as people established historical divisions.

Even more important is the fact that generational politics can easily be misunderstood, as they can give the impression that the political authority of every generation of leadership is handed down or inherited from the previous generation. In fact, in the case of the CCP, the political authority of every generation of political leadership comes from their belief in Marxism and from the power bequeathed to them by the people of the entire nation. It is a legitimacy grounded in an historical mission and the support of the people. Should we confuse the source of legitimacy it would undoubtedly diminish our Communist ideals and convictions and the political confidence that these ideals and convictions represent the interests of the people and the state. It would weaken the Party's political authority at a basic level. For this reason, the report presented at the Nineteenth Party Congress no longer employs the natural time of generational politics to construct the history of the CCP, but instead approaches the question from the perspective of historical mission, and opens a new political space on the basis of a specially determined political time period, dividing the history of the CCP into the three stages of 'standing up', 'getting rich', and 'becoming strong', and on this basis sums up the great contributions made by the Party leading the whole nation and its people in each stage. In fact, this style of narrating political time is a style of historical narration used by many Party congresses in their reports. For example, the report of the Fifteenth Party Congress (1997) used three historical periods—the Republican Revolution, the founding of New China, and the period of Reform and Opening—to position Deng Xiaoping Theory, thus clarifying that Deng Xiaoping, like Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong, was a founder of the Republic.

For this reason, the report of the Nineteenth Party Congress does not directly employ the historical narrative style of the report to the Eighteenth Party Congress, choosing instead a narrative style that combines classics and history, or that uses history to explain the classics, using three examples of ‘deep awareness’ to periodise CCP history.[15] The first stage in this periodisation was from 1921, when the CCP was founded, through 1949, when New China was established and the CCP completed the nation-building mission of the democratic revolution, ‘realizing the great leap from thousands of years of feudal autocratic politics to popular democracy’. The second period was from 1949 and the founding of New China, through 1978 and the policy of Reform and Opening, in which a unified CCP led the people to accomplish the transformation from ‘standing up’ to ‘getting rich’, or in other words, ‘establishing an advanced social system corresponding to our country’s conditions, completing the broadest and deepest social change in the history of the Chinese people, providing the basic political preconditions and institutional basis for all of the developments and progress in contemporary China, and accomplishing a great leap in which the Chinese people, who had been continually backward in modern history, changed their fate, and steadfastly moved toward prosperity, wealth and power’. The third phase was from 1978 and the policy of Reform and Opening, through the opening of the Nineteenth Party Congress, when our Party ‘followed the tide of the times, responded to the wishes of the people, and had the courage to reform and open up; and this awareness created a powerful force for advancing the cause of the Party and the people. Our Party embarked on the path of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Thus was China able to stride ahead to catch up with the times’. This accomplished the historical transformation from ‘getting rich’ to ‘becoming powerful’.

It was precisely the internal necessity of such political logic that propelled the history of the CCP to this fourth period. The report to the Nineteenth Party Congress clearly proclaims that Socialism with Chinese Characteristics has entered a new era, which will extend from the date of the Nineteenth Party Congress to China’s 100-year anniversary, during which time will be realised the modernisation of socialism and the great revival of the Chinese nation. To realise this great strategic objective, the report

to the Nineteenth Party Congress systematically develops Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and carries out comprehensive, systematic planning regarding the overall mission of the new era, its development strategy, main social contradictions, general and strategic development stages, and concrete work requirements. The planning contains both philosophical concepts as well as political principles, mission goals and overall steps, strategic points of emphasis and systematic plans, long-term developmental goals and five-year work deployments. All of this constitutes an overall strategy for building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the new era. It is the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and the national governance plan constructed on the basis of that ideology, that will propel socialism with Chinese characteristics into a new historical period, and thus open up a new political space.

The construction of political time: correctly understanding the positioning of a leader in history

The report to the Nineteenth Party Congress puts forward Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and systematically discusses the strategy for governing the country and organizing politics in the new era, and on this basis, China enters what scholars understand as the Xi Jinping era. Thought, strategy and era together constitute a trinity, but the core element is thought. One can say that it is Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era that gives birth to the strategy leading to the realisation of the modernisation of socialism and the great revival of the Chinese nation, and it is precisely this governance strategy, in its concrete implementation in history, that has propelled socialism with Chinese characteristics into the new era. For this reason, the Xi Jinping era does not appear automatically as a part of natural time but is created by diligent struggle of the entire Party, the entire country and the entire people, under the leadership of the Party center with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core.

When we look back at the relatively long period before the report to the Eighteenth Party Congress, we see that there were political forces,

inside the Party and out, that hoped to pit the Deng Xiaoping era against the Mao Zedong era, that hoped to use the Reform and Opening line created by Deng Xiaoping to negate the socialist system established during the Mao Zedong era, and that advocated undertaking subversive reforms of the political system following the economic reforms, even proclaiming that if such ‘reforms of the political system’ were not undertaken, then the economic reforms might well be reversed, and the results of the economic reforms could not be guaranteed. The goals of their so-called ‘reforms of the political system’, it goes without saying, were to gradually weaken and eventually eliminate the leadership of the Party on the basis of a separation of Party and government and to bring about a Western democratic system.

Given this background, and in the face of the unequal development and increasing disparities in wealth appearing in the process of Reform and Opening, and especially the appearance that capitalist forces were wantonly monopolising the people’s wealth, the common people began to feel nostalgia for the Mao Zedong era, which led some people to turn things around and to try to use the Mao Zedong era to negate the Deng Xiaoping era and the policy of reform and opening. In the words of the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, China at the time faced a double crisis: one was to repeat the errors of following the ‘heterodox path of changing banners’ 改旗易帜的邪路 that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the other was to return to the ‘old path of feudal stagnation’ 封闭僵化的老路 from the period before Reform and Opening.

At a moment of historical crisis, Xi Jinping assumed the position of General Secretary of the CCP and adopted a series of effective measures, especially those of governing the Party with sternness and fully suppressing corruption, which can be said to have turned the tide. In the evaluation of many, this reaction in a moment of crisis saved the Party and the state and saved Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. The evaluation of these five years in the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress is that these were ‘an extraordinary five years’ 不平凡的五年, five years that contained ‘an historical change:’ ‘We have solved many tough problems that were long on the agenda but never resolved and accomplished many things that were wanted but never got done. With this, we have brought about historic shifts in the cause of the Party and the country’. It was the historical nature of

the achievements of these five years that established the foundation for the position of leadership authority that Xi Jinping achieved as core leader.

In terms of Weberian theory, General Secretary Xi Jinping's position as the core of the Party center, the core of the entire Party, his authoritative position as leader, arises not only from the 'legal authority' obtained by virtue of his legally defined positions as Party Secretary, National Chairman, Chairman of the Central Military Committee and not even from the 'traditional authority' born of the Party's historical tradition. More important is the fact that Xi Jinping, at a particular moment in history, courageously took up the political responsibility of the historical mission, and in the face of an era of historical transformation of the entire world, demonstrated the capacity to construct the great theory facilitating China's development path, as well as the capacity to control complicated domestic and international events, thus consolidating the hearts and minds of the entire Party and the people of the entire country, hence becoming the core leader praised by the entire Party, the entire army and the entire country, possessing a special 'charismatic power'.

After the Eighteenth Party Congress, Xi Jinping clearly noted that the thirty years before Reform and Opening and the thirty years after Reform and Opening could not be seen as mutually contradictory. In addition, both the Party's political beliefs and the political principle that 'the Party leads everything' dictate that the two thirty-year periods be linked together, as was done in the Party's report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, which presents Party history and PRC history as an integrated, continuous history of development. In the process of this historical development, leadership undoubtedly played an important role in pushing history forward. In the early period of Reform and Opening, there were a few people who wanted to completely repudiate Mao Zedong, but Deng Xiaoping resolutely opposed these proposals, clearly pointing out that 'Had there been no Comrade Mao Zedong, at the very least our Chinese people would have groped in the dark for a much longer period'. And it was under Deng Xiaoping's guidance that the Party center arrived at an objective evaluation of Mao Zedong's contributions and failures.[16] In the same way, in the absence of Reform and Opening and the modern reconstruction pushed

forward by Deng Xiaoping, China could not have risen so quickly, carrying out the historical leap from ‘standing up’ to ‘getting rich’.

For this reason, the Xi Jinping era did not occur naturally, but was created by leaders leading people. Leaders rely on political parties, and political parties are rooted in the people; leaders, political parties, and the masses interact in a healthy manner. This is both an important aspect of Marxist-Leninist organisation and the result of the experience of Chinese history. But in the recent past, the construction of China’s rule of law gradually fell into the erroneous zone of Western concepts in the process of studying the Western rule of law, and consciously or not, the notions of ‘rule of law’ 法治 and ‘rule of man’ 人治 came to be seen as antagonistic. We overly fetishized legal dogma and institutional reforms and came to understand the rule of law simplistically as a machine in which rules functioned automatically, overlooking the fact that if we want to use ‘good laws’ to carry out ‘good governance’ then we need good social culture and moral values to systematically support the effective functioning of legal regulations and institutions. The rule of law and the rule of man are not completely opposed to one another but are complementary. A society governed by the rule of law cannot ignore the need to provide people with ideals and beliefs and a moral education. It cannot ignore the positive role played by moral values and a healthy social climate in governance, nor can it ignore the key historical function of leaders and great people, political parties and the masses.

In the annals of human history, what has always played a determining role in the unfolding of history is people, because the history of mankind was itself created by people, and good institutions require people to administer them. One important reason that Western thinkers are continually examining the flaws in the Western democratic system is that these democratic institutions are corrupting human nature. This is especially true in competitive elections controlled by money and the mass media, which have reduced ‘democracy’ to mere ‘elections’. This kind of system will find it difficult to produce politicians who can genuinely represent the people. It will instead easily produce glorified lobbyists at the beck and call of various interest groups. It was on the basis of conclusions about the history and experience of humanity that, since the Eighteenth Party

Congress, the Party center has carried out correctives to the plans underway since the policy of reform and opening with regard to building the rule of law. This corrective merged the Party leadership with the entire process of construction of a socialist rule of law, not only pointing out that ‘ruling the country through morality’ and ‘ruling the country through law’ are mutually supporting principles of governance, but also bringing Party rules and Party discipline that are under the control of the Party constitution into the system of governance of socialism with Chinese characteristics, firmly laying the foundation of the legal basis for the Party leading the people in governing the country.

Communism and the great revival of the Chinese nation

The second positioning of the Xi Jinping era accomplished in the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress is its positioning within the history of Chinese civilisation.

Chinese civilisation once realised the greatest accomplishments of the agricultural era of human history, and, through the commercial relations facilitated by the land-based and the maritime Silk Roads, exchanged with and learned from Western civilisation. When the West fell into the dark period of the Middle Ages, Europeans in search of trade with Asia accidentally discovered the new American continent, which gave rise to the age of European imperialism throughout the world. According to the view of America’s ‘California scholars’, prior to the Eighteenth century, China was at the very least the center of the world economy.[17] At the time, Chinese culture was the envy of the West, and China’s prosperity was an important force creating globalization. Yet since 1840, modern China has experienced humiliation and misery. From the Self-Strengthening Movement through the 1898 Reforms and the 1911 Revolution, countless brave souls continually sought out the path for the renewal of the nation, but without success. Only in 1921, with the founding of the CCP, did the history of the Chinese people experience a fundamental transformation.

As a Marxist political party, the highest political ideal of the CCP has always been to bring about the arrival of communism. But in the actual history of the efforts to achieve that highest ideal, there emerged within

the Party from the very beginning a struggle between two revolutionary lines. One was to ‘take Russia as our master’, and thus to position the Chinese revolution within the global picture of the international Communist movement, blindly copying the revolutionary line of Soviet Russia. The other line was rooted in the soil of China, and positioned the Chinese revolution within modern Chinese history, aiming to create a new revolutionary line based on Chinese realities. During the anti-Japanese War, this contradiction became the question of whether to prioritize class struggle or national struggle. After the Wuyaobao 瓦窑堡 meeting in December 1935, when the theory was put forth that the CCP could contain ‘two vanguards’, representing both the working classes and the Chinese people as a whole, the political ideology of the CCP evolved toward the organic unity of communism and nationalism, which initiated the gradual unfolding of the Sinitification of Marxism.

After the founding of New China, the CCP drew on its belief in the ideals of socialism and communism to engineer a comprehensive social mobilization, which released a great political force to establish the institutional basis for the People’s Republic. But after the ‘Cultural Revolution’, China fell into an unprecedented crisis of confidence. In the face of this, Deng Xiaoping used the theory of the early period of socialism to project communism into a more distant future, and also brought forth the ‘theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’. Yet because people in general lacked the support of a genuine spiritual belief in this theory, the values of Western capitalism took advantage of the situation and rapidly came to dominate society, which provoked a political firestorm.

It was against this background that Jiang Zemin 江泽民 (b. 1926), in a talk at Harvard University in 1992, first used the slogan concerning the ‘great revival of the Chinese nation 中华民族的伟大复兴’, and shortly thereafter also proposed the concept of the ‘Three Represents’. The former consolidates the spiritual strength of the entire Party and the people of the entire nation via nationalism, and the latter allows the CCP to represent the political interests of newly arisen social strata, successfully avoiding the crisis of representativity that would occur if the Party could only represent the interests of workers and peasants. Later on, Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 (b. 1942) went a step further in offering his notion of the ‘advanced

construction' 先进性建设 of the Party, so as to avoid the situation where the CCP would lose confidence in its ideals and become an interest-group political Party whose goal was the simple harmonization of various interests, avoiding becoming the 'Party of the whole people 全民党' like that of the former Soviet Union. One could say that in the process of the development of the theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, launching the slogan 'the great revival of the Chinese nation' was a key shift. From the perspective of the history of Chinese civilisation, the great revival of the Chinese nation means that China is following the Shang-Zhou period, the Qin-Han period, the Tang-Song period, and the Ming-Qing period and is entering into the fifth period of overall revival. The brilliant political imagination of thousands of years of Chinese civilisation successfully fills the spiritual vacuum left by the weakening of the Communist vision. This nationalist political confidence has become an important spiritual force consolidating the entire Party and the people of the entire nation; this national self-confidence and feeling of pride are beneficial to China's political stability and have propelled China's economy through its rapid rise. After the Eighteenth Party Congress, Xi Jinping went a step further and raised the great revival of the Chinese nation to the level of the 'China Dream' 中国梦, providing the Chinese people with a future vision of an ideal life.

Of course, if we lack the guidance of the higher ideals and faith of Communism and rely only on the great revival of the Chinese nation, then China might well lose its way. From the perspective of international relations, simplistic nationalist slogans can easily provoke nationalist reactions and worries in other countries, particularly countries close to China. This is why the Western 'China threat' theory is so attractive. Westerners often start out from their own historical experience as a hegemon and interpret the great revival of the Chinese nation as a restoration of China's historical suzerainty in East Asia, thus seeing China's rise as a challenge to Western hegemony. America's 'pivot to Asia' and her attacks on China on questions related to the East China Sea and the South China Sea use this as an excuse. Western scholars always wrongly see China's rise as a replay of Germany's challenge to English hegemony, or the Soviet Union's challenge to the United States, and have begun to pay attention to

what they call the ‘Thucydides trap’.[18] What ‘One Belt One Road’ proposes is a new concept and structure for ‘negotiating, building and sharing together’ on the basis of promoting global free trade, that will recreate the prosperity and stability that the commerce between East and West during the era of the ‘Silk Road’ produced. But in the world-view of Western hegemony, the propositions of ‘One Belt One Road’ have been understood as a regional political strategy worthy of Halford Mackinder and Alfred Thayer Mahan.[19] They use this to sow discord between China and the countries involved in ‘One Belt, One Road’, in the hopes of containing China’s development.

From the perspective of China’s internal politics, the great revival of the Chinese nation is not necessarily in contradiction with Western liberal democratic systems. China’s liberals have seen new political possibilities in this, which has resulted in divisions within the liberal ranks, in which one group has begun to adjust its strategy, seeing their past fetishisation of individual rights and free markets, and their consequent opposition to the nation and the people, as a kind of political immaturity. This group has hastened to embrace the rise of the nation as a political subject. This has spurred the development of the ‘big country group’ 大国派, which argues that only by adopting a liberal democratic constitution can we truly carry out the great revival of the Chinese nation. For them, the English and American constitutions must become the model for the rise of Chinese politics, while the failures of Germany and the former Soviet Union serve as negative lessons for China’s rise. At the same time, a group of cultural conservatives has also emerged with the launching of the slogan of the great revival of the Chinese nation. They have developed into a kind of ‘revive antiquity group’ 复古派 and advocate the ‘Confucianisation of the Party’, denying the historical accomplishments of the nationalist revolution led by the CCP in terms of equality, and going so far as to negate the May Fourth Movement and the Republican Revolution. In this context, the dregs of feudal restorationist thought have floated to the top, joining together with commercial capital and cultural capital, hoping that these feudal relationships and interests will penetrate the Party. One could say that these two streams of political thought have joined together with liberal thinking about the so-called ‘reform of political institutions’ to present a

challenge to the political authority of the CCP's leadership of the country and to the political system. In this context, Xi Jinping's renewed insistence on Communist ideals and beliefs has determined the highest ideals and beliefs and the final developmental direction of the great revival of the Chinese nation.

Both utopianism and communism are ideas that trace their origins to the Western civilisational tradition. It was Christianity's historical conception of linear time that changed the classical view of time as cyclical. This not only planted the seeds of utopian thought that imagined a beautiful future, but also introduced the notion of the development of social progress in Western theory. For this reason, Western scholars believe that Christian salvationist theology and views of historical progress in modern theory are part of the same genealogy, and some attribute the rise of communism to Christian Gnosticism. This is why Marxism can be read as a secular version of determinism. But Marx consistently emphasised that 'communism' must be transformed from utopianism into a scientific socialism, which meant that communism had to be realised in real life, becoming a concrete state of life subject to testing, in which 'communism' would become a 'communist society' in a truly scientific sense. If we say that in Marx's time, socialism had not yet been built, meaning that communism could only be a distant philosophical notion, then after Soviet Russia and China built socialist countries, the 'time table' and the 'route map' for the realisation of communist society became more accessible. Communism now confronts the challenge of being transformed from a philosophical concept to a 'communist society' with concrete institutions and structures. Whether in the case of Lenin's fantasy of 'Soviet power plus electrification' or Mao Zedong's imagining of eating from the 'community pot' in the period of the People's Communes, ideals, once they descend into the world, lose their original lustre. It was precisely the inner tension between communism as a philosophical concept and the construction of a communist society in a genuinely scientific manner that led Mao Zedong to begin to wonder about basic philosophical questions such as whether communist society was a contradiction in terms. It is like the 'pursuit of the millennium' in Christianity, in which God's return to earth can only be

repeatedly pushed forward. If we really were to experience God's judgement here on earth, Christianity might also lose some of its lustre.

What we must pay particular attention to is the fact that when Xi Jinping emphasises a return to Communist principles, he is not talking about the 'communist society' that was of a piece with scientific socialism but is instead using the idea that 'those who do not forget their original intention 初心 will prevail', drawn from traditional Chinese culture. In so doing, he removes communism from the specific social setting of the Western empirical scientific tradition, and astutely transforms it into the Learning of the Heart in Chinese traditional philosophy, which in turn elevates communism to a kind of ideal faith or a spiritual belief. For this reason, communism will never again be like it was under Mao Zedong—something that was meant to take on a real social form in the here and now—but is instead the Party's highest ideal and faith. It has become part of Party education and Party cultivation, the 'Learning of the Heart' of the CCP. Communism is not only a concrete society to be realized in the distant future but is also the highest ideal that will be absorbed into current political practice, a vibrant spiritual state. Communism is not only a beautiful future life, but is also, and more importantly, the spiritual state of Communist Party members in their practice of political life. In this way, communism merges with specific historical process and daily life as ideals and struggles. Precisely within the context of traditional Chinese culture, the understanding of this highest ideal is no longer that of Marx, who thought within the Western theoretical tradition; it is no longer in humanity's Garden of Eden, 'unalienated' by the division of labor within society. Instead it is intimately linked to the ideal of 'great unity under Heaven' 天下大同 from the Chinese cultural tradition. The last section of the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress begins with the phrase 'when the Way prevails, the world is shared by all' 大道之行，天下为公, an ultimate ideal that encourages the entire Party and the people of the entire nation. And in the specific contents of the report we also find the passage, developed on the basis of the notion of 'great unity under Heaven' from China's tradition, to the effect that 'the young will have education, the students will have teachers, the workers will have remuneration, the sick will have

doctors, the elderly will have care, those seeking housing will have housing, the weak will have support’.

For this reason, to return to the topic of ‘not forgetting original intentions’, in his 2016 speech commemorating the 95th birthday of the CCP, Xi Jinping used the term ‘original intentions’ to refer to the great ideals of communism, and in the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress he referred to ‘seeking the happiness of the Chinese people, seeking the revival of the Chinese nation’. The difference between the two is that, for the entire Party, the ‘July 1 address’, celebrating the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, is a highly philosophical intellectual reflection and a spiritual baptism, which is why he paid even more attention to the highest ideals of communism, and transformed them into the ‘Learning of the Heart’ for CCP members. By contrast, the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress is concerned more with the entire Party, with its mission in this stage of history, and with concrete strategies of governance, and hence he accords more attention to the great revival of the Chinese nation, a more pressing belief and goal, in which communism takes its place in the concrete work of Party-building as a core socialist value. We can say that Xi Jinping’s new reading of communist concepts is a model of the Sinification of Marxism in the new era, in which Marxism must not only be integrated into China’s current situation but must also be absorbed into Chinese culture. For this reason, communism’s highest spiritual pursuit and the realisation of the great revival of the Chinese nation are mutually supporting and complementary, and together have become the spiritual pillars through which Xi Jinping has consolidated the entire Party and the peoples of the entire nation.

It is precisely because of its faith in the ideals of communism that the great revival of the Chinese nation absolutely cannot return to China’s past, and instead must ‘renew an ancient country’. The great revival of the Chinese nation must be closely linked to the building of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. If we say that during the Deng Xiaoping era, the accent, in the slogan ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ was on ‘Chinese characteristics’, then in the Xi Jinping era the accent is on ‘socialism’, using socialism’s basic political principles to correct both the liberal and the conservative interpretations of the great revival of the Chinese

nation. And this means that Socialism with Chinese Characteristics must once again assume a position within the world communist movement.

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era: the Chinese solution for modernisation

The third positioning of the Xi Jinping era provided by the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress is within the history of the international Communist movement. The report especially points out that Socialism with Chinese Characteristics has entered a new era, indicating that ‘scientific socialism is full of vitality in 21st century China, and that the banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics is now flying high and proud for all to see’.

Marx and Engels advocated scientific socialism and promoted the communist movement in the world, and thus began the search for the road toward the modernisation of socialism. If we say that Marx and Engels were part of the first phase of socialist experimentation in Western Europe (i.e. the Paris Commune), then the second phase is the Soviet model based on the construction of socialism after the October Revolution, and the impact this had on the socialist camp. New China basically imitated the model of the URSS in the period immediately after its founding. From Deng Xiaoping’s initial exploration of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics through Xi Jinping’s further advocacy of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, this approach has continually matured and taken shape, and now firmly stands as the third phase in the search for the path toward the modernisation of socialism.

In fact, this phase began with Mao Zedong’s reflection on the Soviet model after 1956 and with his ‘On the Ten Great Relationships’, as China began to chart an independent developmental path toward the modernisation of socialism. Yet because of particular historical circumstances, the search for a Chinese path became the even more radical ‘Cultural Revolution’. Reform and Opening in fact returned to the road opened by the ‘On the Ten Great Relationships’, once again searching to build socialism with Chinese characteristics. When the Soviet path toward the modernisation of socialism completely failed, due to the disintegration of the Soviet

Union and the end of the Cold War, China lifted the great banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics onto the world stage, and it became a powerful competitor to Western capitalism as a model of development. Scholars have pointed out that if, at the outset, socialism saved China, now China has saved socialism.

What should be noted is that the concept first employed by Deng Xiaoping was ‘a socialism with Chinese characteristics’, which was also the central topic of the report of the 13th Party Congress (1987). The report of the Fourteenth Party Congress (1992) changed this to ‘Socialism, with Chinese Characteristics’. Beginning from the report of the Sixteenth National Congress, this became ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’. On the face of it, this appears to be nothing but linguistic hair-splitting, but in fact, the changes reflect a profound political importance. The first two expressions take for granted that a fundamental ‘socialism’ exists, the socialism defined by the works of Marx and Lenin and by the practice of the Soviet Union, and that we had only added a few ‘Chinese characteristics’ to the basic socialist framework. But the idea of ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ means that socialism does not really have a fundamental developmental model, and instead consists of a handful of basic principles and ideas. These principles and ideas must be continually explored and developed in practice following the advance of time. ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ is not adding Chinese characteristics to an already defined ‘socialist framework’. Rather, it uses China’s lived experience to explore and define what, in the final analysis, ‘socialism’ is. For this reason, ‘socialism’ is not ossified dogma, but instead an open concept awaiting exploration and definition. China is not blindly following socialist ideas and institutions produced by the Western experience of socialism, but rather is charting the socialist developmental path on the basis of a greater self-confidence, taking the project of the modernisation of socialist construction to its third phase. For this reason, the report of the Eighteenth National Congress correctly talked about ‘self-confidence in the path’, ‘self-confidence in the theory’, and ‘self-confidence in the institutions’ involved in the construction of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. The reason that China has become increasingly self-confident and emboldened in its search for the path toward the modernisation of socialism has to do

with the depths of the Chinese cultural tradition. It was precisely Chinese culture that infused the idea of 'communism' with new spiritual capacity, opening a new path to the modernisation of socialism, and encouraging all developing countries to open their own paths to modernisation. For this reason, the report to the Nineteenth National Congress added 'cultural self-confidence' to the other three, so that now there are 'four self-confidences'.

Once we adopt the perspective of the international communist movement, the positioning of the Xi Jinping era can no longer be limited to Party history, the history of the republic or the history of Chinese civilisation. It enters the history of world civilisation through the international Communist movement. This means that Socialism with Chinese Characteristics must achieve universal recognition throughout the entire world.

The history of world civilisation is the history of the different countries and peoples throughout the world moving from tradition to modernity. In this process of transformation, the United States and certain Western European countries led the way in carrying out the transition to modernity. This led them to colonise other countries and peoples, forcing these countries and peoples to choose the Western model. Over the course of the Nineteenth century, Germany was the first to initiate the search for a path to modernisation that was different from the capitalism of England and the United States, a model that was later dubbed 'state capitalism'. After Germany's defeat in the two world wars, the challenge of the German model to the Anglo-American model failed. In the 20th century, the Soviet model posed the second challenge to the Western capitalist route to modernity, setting forth its own Soviet-style socialist route to modernity, and in so doing changed the world configuration. Late-developing countries like the USSR and China transformed themselves overnight from backward, feudal, agricultural countries to world superpowers, clearly illustrating the internal superiority of the socialist path. Yet the challenge of the Soviet model failed with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Western capitalism led by the United States seemed to usher in a worldwide victory and launched a campaign of 'globalisation' based on the Western model. For this reason, for some Western thinkers, the Western path to modernisation had become the only universal truth, and world history had entered the

phase of the ‘end of history’. In the eyes of other thinkers, however, while globalisation superficially led to ‘the end of the history’, in reality the end of history produced conflicts resulting in a ‘clash of civilisations’.[20] This notion replaced the ideology of the Cold War, and the civilisation of mankind risked a return to the premodern dark ages.

In this international context, the construction of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics not only has great significance with respect to the great revival of the Chinese nation within the context of the history of Chinese civilisation, it also possesses great significance with respect to the search for the future of the civilisation of humanity at large. Whether Chinese civilisation can make a new contribution to all of mankind depends, to a great degree, on whether Chinese civilisation can search out a new path to modernisation for humanity’s development. This is especially true in the case of late-developing countries: can they shake off the dependency imposed on them by capitalist modernity and break through the cultural conflicts and difficulties that they face in current world divisions? It was precisely in this sense that the report of the Nineteenth National Congress clearly positioned the Xi Jinping era within the history of world civilisation: ‘It offers a new option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence; and it offers Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind’.

During the Deng Xiaoping era, the goal of the exploration of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics was to understand how to solve China’s own development issues, and to avoid being ‘left behind’ by the tide of globalisation. The realities of this historical juncture led China to ‘hide its light under a bushel’ 韬光养晦 in the international system for some time. But following China’s rise to become the world’s second economy, China now stands at the center of the world stage and cannot ignore its obligations to the rest of the world by concentrating solely on her own fate. China must recalibrate its relations with the world, linking the construction of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics together with the development of the entire world, actively joining in the governance of the world, taking up her responsibilities to all of humanity. To accomplish this, since the Eighteenth Party Congress, Xi Jinping has devoted himself to pushing forward

the transformation of Chinese politics, economics and thought, clearly pointing out the necessity of building a new system of international governance on the ‘principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration’ 共商共建共享的全球治理观. This notion of ‘achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration’ traces its roots to ‘the world belongs to all’ 天下为公 thought from Chinese traditional culture, as well as from notions of harmony as expressed in the saying ‘harmony without uniformity’ 和而不同. All of this is without a doubt the contribution of Chinese wisdom to all of mankind.

In the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, the word ‘contribution’ appears eleven times, the most in any such Party report in history. And the reason that the CCP takes its ‘contribution’ to humanity as its own guide to action is precisely to prove that the great revival of the Chinese people is not nationalistic, but cosmopolitan. One root of this cosmopolitan spirit is in the Confucian universalistic (tianxia 天下) tradition, as we see when the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress invokes the notion of ‘when the Way prevails, tianxia is shared by all’ 大道之行，天下为公; another root is the communist belief in the liberation of all of humanity. The report to the Nineteenth Party Congress especially points out that ‘the Communist Party of China strives for both the well-being of the Chinese people and human progress. To make new and greater contributions for mankind is our Party’s abiding mission’.

Historically, Chinese civilisation made fundamental, important contributions to the development of civilisation in East Asia and throughout the world. Since the modern era, although China’s democratic revolution and socialist path have made important contributions to the liberation of oppressed peoples, these contributions were basically a result of choices and decisions made in the face of the Western model of modernization. But one of the reasons why we now emphasize the great revival of the Chinese nation and the historical importance of this revival is that we hope to integrate the various accomplishments of Western civilisation with the Chinese civilisational tradition, and create a new path to modernization, thus paving a foundational path for the civilisation of mankind as it moves from tradition to modernity. While many scholars propose the ‘Chinese model’ as being distinct from the ‘Western model’, Xi Jinping in his July 1, 2016

talk commemorating the founding of the CCP chose instead ‘Chinese wisdom’ and the ‘Chinese solution’. The very choice of these concepts illustrated Chinese wisdom, because a truly universal tianxia theory can contain within it varied developmental models. In fact, the ‘five basic principles of peaceful coexistence’ long upheld by the New China, and the traditional Chinese cultural notion that ‘the righteous king does not seek to rule people beyond the reach of law and civilisation’ 王者不治化外之民 are part of a shared vision. Historically, China never forced its culture on neighboring countries, and the reason that China’s culture has such deep roots that have continually developed and radiated outward, is because China respected the culture of neighboring countries and was good at adopting the positive points of those cultures for her own continual improvement, in such a manner providing a model posture and attracting the study and emulation of neighboring countries and regions.

For this reason, the ‘Chinese solution’ means that China absolutely will not force its development model on other countries as the West has done, but will instead provide a set of development principles, ideas and methods, allowing other countries to seek out a suitable development path in accordance with their own national character. In the same way, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, as the Chinese solution to modernisation, will not seek to mount a full-scale challenge to supplant the Western capitalist model, as did the Soviet model of socialism. In a world led by Western hegemony, proposing a ‘Chinese solution’ will naturally encounter opposition, contradictions and conflicts, but China will absolutely not take the initiative to provoke a new Cold War, because China consistently respects the development model of all countries, and continues to study and profit from the reasonable achievements of other models, hence enriching and bringing to perfection China’s own development. The report to the Nineteenth Congress clearly points out that we must ‘promote the creative transformation of China’s excellent traditional culture, creating a new development’, and we must ‘not forget our original intention, absorb elements from the outside, and face the future’. For just this reason, facing the regional and civilisational conflicts provoked by the Western advocacy of ‘the end of history’, China will, despite its rise, continue to maintain a low-key stance of restraint and avoidance of pacts, and in the course of the

unfolding international events will never first choose sides on the basis of ethnic, religious, cultural or ideological disagreements.

China will always adopt a pragmatic attitude and in the face of conflict do its utmost to preserve excellent commercial, political and cultural relations, all the while striving to provide public goods such as infrastructure, transportation and the Internet to the rest of the world, especially to developing countries. China's wisdom of 'principled avoidance of conflict' will quietly change the world, in the course of which China will truly display a sort of cultural self-confidence and political maturity. For this reason, in distinction to the search for world hegemony that followed the rise of Germany, the USSR, and the United States, China has in fact upheld a kind of 'Chinese exceptionalism' throughout its rise. This exceptionalism neatly underscores the difference between Chinese and Western culture which is that while Western culture consistently attempts to arrive at the resolution of any antagonism in favor of one of the original positions, Chinese culture consistently seeks to find the unity within the antagonism, which results in a pluralism based on ideas of harmony. For this reason, the ambition of the 'Chinese solution' is precisely to absorb all positive elements from throughout the world from its basis in Chinese civilisation and tradition, and thereafter to promote the modern transformation of Chinese civilisation and tradition, ultimately creating a new order for human civilisation that both transcends and absorbs Western civilisation.

From this perspective, both the Nineteenth century German and the 20th century Soviet challenges to the Western development path were ultimately divergences from within Western civilisation. All of these are 'end of history' developmental models based on the Christian tradition. Only the 'Chinese solution' that we are currently building is a new developmental path truly constructed on the basis of the history and tradition of Chinese civilisation. If we say that from the beginning of the modern era through the Deng Xiaoping era, the main mission of China's modernisation was to learn from and digest the achievements of Western capitalist modernity and socialist modernisation, then the 'Chinese solution' to modernisation engineered in the Xi Jinping era clearly seeks to transform this study and absorption into the rebirth of traditional civilisation, and hence create a developmental path to modernity different from that of Western

civilisation. This means not only the end to the global political landscape of Western civilisation's domination since the age of great discoveries, but also means breaking the global dominance of Western civilisation in the past 500 years in the cultural sense, and hence ushering in a new era in human civilisation. In the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, this new era is described as follows: 'We should respect the diversity of civilisations. In handling relations among civilisations, let us replace estrangement with exchange, clashes with mutual learning, and superiority with coexistence'. This clearly begins from the standpoint of Chinese civilisation, negates the two Western post-Cold War civilisational development paths of 'the end of history' and the 'clash of civilisations', and paints a new portrait of the development of the civilisation of mankind.

Master and Slave: the origins of Western philosophical subjectivity[21]

The report to the Nineteenth Congress takes as its chronological axis the 5000 years of the history of the civilisation of the Chinese people, and as its spatial axis the challenge of Western civilisation to Chinese civilisation since the Opium War, and narrates the 'glorious epic' acted out by generation after generation of Chinese people on this great historical stage. The history of this chronological and spatial context formed the starting point for the development of modern Chinese history.

The Chinese classical cultural tradition constituted a universal tianxia order throughout the East Asian world, and hence built an ancient system of international law, alongside those of the Islamic world and the Western world: the tribute system. The tianxia order and the tribute system made up a universal system of diversity within unity, capable of absorbing different peoples, cultures and religious beliefs, which enabled the Chinese people to maintain a high level of cultural independence and agency. But following the Western-led effort to accomplish the transformation to modernity and the imposition of capitalist modernity, non-Western countries, faced with unfeeling Western capitalism and the naked violence of colonialism, were either destroyed, colonised, or forced to abandon their own country's cultural traditions and completely accept Western

cultural beliefs and lifestyles, in the process becoming dependent on the West. This was the modern fate delivered to China at gunpoint by the West since 1840: either accept 'the extinction of the nation and the people', or, like Japan, take the path of complete Westernisation and become a coloniser and enslave other countries. On the basis of a systematic criticism of the capitalist development path, Marx proposed the ideals of communism and the socialist development path, and in so doing thoroughly upheld the principle of equality for all oppressed peoples and nations. This socialist development path first achieved initial success in Russia, which displaced the process of modernisation from a Western-centered capitalist phase to an Asian-centered socialist phase (the Soviet Union and China). Hence, it was the victory of the October Revolution and the transmission of Marxism into China that opened up a different path to modernity for the Chinese people.

From a superficial perspective, Western capitalism and Soviet socialism, as two different development paths to modernity, were two institutional models and development strategies chosen by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the two classes leading the modernisation process. However, behind this in fact were two choices of existential values: the choice between untrammelled theft and peaceful coexistence, the choice between dependence on the West and independence and sovereignty. For the Chinese people, this is a basic choice between two personalities, national characters and spiritual lifestyles, a choice between being part of the Way and being someone's tool.[22] It's like when two people fight. Some people, when they lose, give up completely. They grovel in defeat and become submissive, like a little brother or a hired thug. Other people, even if they lose, refuse to admit it but instead fight back and eventually defeat their opponent. The former has an easy life but lacks dignity; the latter knows that to protect his dignity he will have to follow a difficult and painful path. In Western philosophy, these two personalities constitute the philosophical difference between master and slave.

Chinese traditional philosophical thought worshipped the idea of harmony expressed in the saying 'the unity of heaven and man' 天人合一. For this reason, Chinese people cannot completely understand the Western style of thinking that has produced subject and object, master and slave. In

the modern era, what came in with the Western boats and cannons was precisely this so-called 'philosophy of mastery'. In the past, we understood this philosophy of mastery as modern science that destroyed religious superstition and established the central importance of man, and that produced the opposition between subject and object that followed the objectification of the world through a scientific epistemology. For this reason, the modern Western philosophy of mastery is also seen as the philosophy of epistemology. This philosophy has an intimate link to Western political life.

The sprouts of the Western philosophy of mastery are found in ancient Greek philosophy. The idea that 'man is the measure of all things' defined his ruling position. But the 'man' in this picture must be situated in the concrete life of the Greek city-state. Political life in ancient Greece was built on the foundation of a master-slave relationship institutionalised in the slave system. Slaves were only 'talking tools', and hence were not 'men' but instead 'things'. Only city-dwelling slave-owners could be free people and become citizens of the city-state and on that basis become 'men' in the philosophical sense. For this reason, in Western thought, master, free man, citizen, person and subject in fact all pointed to the same idea.

Following the Western age of discovery and the brutal territorial wars that accompanied the process of the construction of modern nation-state, Western philosophy argued that only independent people, only those who were willing to fight to the death for their own existence, possessed 'the master personality' and had the wherewithal to be a 'master', and only the rights possessed by this master could rise to the level of 'sovereignty'. Hobbes, Hegel and Nietzsche, and Marx all understood the struggle for master status as the driving force behind historical development and progress. But only those sovereign persons who have recognised one another in the struggle can become equal subjects in international law and enter the club of international society. This was the beginning of the Westphalian system. From that point forward, regardless of whether it was the Congress of Vienna or the Paris Peace Conference, the Yalta Conference of the G8 Summit, all were products of this philosophy of mastery. Order was the result of the subject dominating the object, internal order was the

result of class domination, and international order the result of the domination of power.

On the day that Marxism entered China it brought with it a new notion of the philosophy of mastery. This was the idea that the working class and the laboring masses were agents in a historical mission. Whether China was ultimately to follow a path to modernity dependent on the West, or instead seek out a path to modernity that conformed to China's situation and that was independent and autonomous, this question, in philosophical terms, was whether China could ultimately be the master of its own fate and live in the forest of the world's peoples with that posture. Politically, however, the question became whether the agency of the Chinese revolution was dependent on Western ideas of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, or instead if China would seek independent liberation at the hands of the working class and the laboring masses. After the founding of the CCP, the Marxist philosophy of mastery would be intimately linked to the historical construction of the Chinese people as political agent. This basically dispensed with the Chinese capitalist elite which since late Qing times had displayed a dependent nature manifested in weakness and compromise in the face of the West, and with an uncompromising, independent posture of a master, the working class and the laboring masses appeared on the world political stage, challenging the Western path to modernity and the world order this modernity had shaped.

The report to the Nineteenth Party Congress renders the following evaluation of the birth of the CCP: 'The Chinese people have had in the Party a pillar for their pursuit of national independence and liberation, of a stronger and more prosperous country, and of their own happiness; and the mindset of the Chinese people has changed, from passivity to agency'. The idea of a 'pillar' 主心骨 comes from the Chinese traditional philosophy of the Learning of the Heart, which emphasises that the heart is the master of the body while the Way is the master of the heart. The term 'spirit' 精神 comes from the Western philosophy of mastery, which emphasises the command of spirit and thought over the body and material forces. That the Chinese people had a 'pillar' in their struggle, and that the spirit of the Chinese people has changed from passive to active means that the Chinese

people have finally completely made the transition to a master's personality, and have begun to firmly grasp their own historical fate.

The Spirit of Struggle: from the philosophy of subjectivity to the theory of contradiction

Faced with the global competitive landscape shaped by natural selection and the survival of the fittest, if the Chinese wanted to appear as masters, they had to have the courage to 'unsheathe their swords' 亮剑 to confront each nation and engage in a life or death struggle.[23] This 'daring to unsheathe one's sword' was what the report to the Nineteenth National Congress refers to repeatedly as the 'spirit of struggle'. In the face of changes in the world system unseen in a thousand years, if the Chinese people want to realise the great revival of the Chinese nation and change the Western model of modernisation through which the West has dominated the world, providing late-developing countries with the 'China solution' to modernisation, they must engage in uncompromising struggle.

In drafting the report to the Eighteenth Congress, Xi Jinping stressed that the following sentence should be included: 'The development of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics is a long and arduous historical task, and we must prepare to engage in great struggles with many historical particularities'. The reason that the five years between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Congresses have been seen as 'an extraordinary five years' is because, during these five years, faced with a complex and changing situation domestically and internationally, the Party has led the entire nation and people in its spirit of struggle to 'break through difficulties and forge ahead', achieving 'historical accomplishments'. One of the strongest points of the report to the Nineteenth Conference is that 'struggle' became one of its key terms, appearing twenty-three times. The report correctly points out that 'realising our great dream demands a great struggle'. This spirit of struggle is undoubtedly an expression of the master personality. The report to the Nineteenth Conference even used a literary expression to compare two phenomena in the flow of history: 'The wheels of history roll on; the tides of the times are vast and mighty. History looks kindly on those with resolve, with drive and ambition, and with courage; it won't

wait for the hesitant, the apathetic, or those who shy from a challenge.’ The former is the master who achieves victory through struggle, while the later lacks the courage to struggle, and will necessarily suffer the fate of a slave. The description and comparison of the two encourage the members of the CCP not to forget their original intention, and to fight for the great revival of the Chinese nation with the spirit and character of a master who struggles.

The ‘spirit of struggle’ of the CCP undoubtedly comes from the idea of class struggle in historical materialism. Struggle is the spirit and character that the people and laboring masses must possess if they are to act as masters of history and it was precisely the masses that bequeathed to the CCP its great capacity to act. The CCP does not represent globe-trotting capitalists or detached intellectuals but is consistently grounded in the great land of China, representing the Chinese people who are living and thriving in this great land, and particularly the basic laboring masses that make up the majority of the population. Although the CCP emphasises the guiding role of political leadership, the reason that a leader can become a leader is that he consistently relies on the Party organization and allows the Party organisation to be grounded in the masses in a relationship of ‘flesh and blood’ 血肉联系, so that people have evolved into a genuinely consolidated people instead of remaining a ‘loose sheet of sand’, [in Sun Yat-sen’s words]. By way of contrast, leaders who run roughshod over Party organisation or Party organisations who are out of touch with the masses wind up producing dictators and corruption. In the report to the Nineteenth Conference, the key word ‘people’ appears 201 times, the notion that the Party and the people have established a ‘flesh and blood relationship’ appears three times, the most throughout the history of such reports.

For this reason, the CCP is consistently grounded in this great native land, and its political nature, at base, is its indigenous, national nature, its authentic Chinese nature, rather than in the Party’s class nature. The fighting character of the CCP traces its origins not only to the spirit of mastery in Marxism, but even more to the Chinese cultural spirit, as reflected in sayings like ‘all are responsible for the rise and fall of the universe’ 天下兴亡，匹夫有责, and ‘the superior man tirelessly perfects himself’ 君子自强不息. The CCP’s willingness to struggle and its talent

for struggle have been bequeathed to it by the spiritual heritage of five thousand years of the history of Chinese civilisation and by the fighting spirit of the more than one billion Chinese people from throughout the country. The report to the Nineteenth Congress particularly emphasises that ‘our Party will remain the vanguard of the times, the backbone of the nation, and a Marxist governing Party’. And it is precisely this spirit of struggle that allows the Chinese people to display their spirit of ‘if you can improve yourself in a day, then do so each day’ 苟日新，日日新.

In the report to the Nineteenth Congress, the words ‘new’ and ‘renew’ were widely used in expressions like ‘new era’, ‘new situation’, ‘new ideas’, and ‘new undertakings’. The expression ‘to renew’ alone was used fifty-three times. The concept of ‘new’ illustrates the ever-changing state of the entire world in its contradictory movements. This is precisely the essence of Chinese traditional philosophy. The Book of Changes, one of China’s ‘Five Classics’, took change as the starting point for understanding the whole world. The world is driven by contradictory movements to produce developments and changes which in turn drive struggle and innovation. Marxism and Chinese traditional culture have a high degree of internal consistency on this point, which precisely constitutes the deep philosophical roots of the Sinification of Marxism. Therefore, it is easy for the Chinese to shift from the ideal of the ‘renewal’ in morality and spirit emphasised by traditional culture to the ‘renewal’ of science, technology and material power that Marxism emphasises. ‘Science and technology are the first means of production’. ‘Only development is hard truth’. These express the enduring political beliefs of the CCP, and what the CCP wants is to represent the ‘advanced productive forces’, and to strive to be in the front lines of the revolutions in science and technology, finally leading humanity’s scientific and technological development into the future.

In fact, the mutual absorption of Marxism and Chinese culture began with the process of the first Sinification of Marxism. Mao Zedong gave class struggle and the dialectics behind it a Chinese remake, which led to the mutual interpenetration of Marxism and Chinese traditional culture as can be seen in the ideas he expressed in ‘On Contradiction’ and ‘On Practice’. The basis of the CCP’s philosophy of struggle is grounded not only in the philosophy of mastery, but also in the theory of contradictions

according to which any antagonism in the world can be unified in practice. In the world-view of the theory of contradiction, 'conflict' does not have a necessarily absolute position and whether or not to engage in struggle, or what kind of struggle to engage in, is in the final analysis decided by a practice-based judgement of the contradiction and its nature, and by the greater contradictions and the lesser contradictions, by correctly grasping the greater and lesser aspects of the contradiction. In this sense, we can say that the theory of practice is higher than the theory of contradiction, because contradiction can only be judged from the perspective of practice. It was precisely on the basis of this theory of practice that Mao Zedong put forth his 'theory of two contradictions', pointing out the difference between the contradictions between the enemy and us, and contradictions among the people. In the case of contradictions among the people, struggle is not the most important thing; persuasion and education are the most important tools.

For this reason, in CCP theory, the accent is not on contradiction and struggle, but rather on how to grasp the nature of the contradiction from the perspective of practice. Whether it could begin from practice, and by seeking truth from facts, correctly analyse and judge the political and social contradictions of each period, and on that basis propose correct measures and policies, became the test of the political wisdom of the CCP. The reason that measures and policies are perceived as the lifeblood of the Party is that they determine if the Party has the wisdom to assess correctly the principal contradictions among the many complicated contradictions in actual social life, if it can clearly recognise the important aspect of the contradictions and hence truly grasp the pulse of the movement of history. Since the founding of New China, every CCP National Congress has issued a political judgement of the principal contradictions that the Party faced in its political life, and the success or failure of Party undertakings has been largely decided by whether they were able to render a scientifically correct judgement of social and political contradictions from the perspective of practice, and if they could then propose proper policies and measures. The reason that, in the period following the establishment of New China, Chinese socialism suffered setbacks and even declined into the tragedy of the 'Cultural Revolution' was to a great degree because the

Party Center strayed from the judgement of the principal social contradictions issued by the 8th National Congress and instead took class contradictions to be the principal social contradiction. And the reason that Reform and Opening succeeded was because the Party Center restored the principle of seeking truth from facts and recalibrated its judgement of the principal contradictions, thereby establishing its basic direction and policies around economic construction as the central consideration.

Since the launching of the policy of Reform and Opening, the negation of the 'Cultural Revolution' has naturally entailed a conflict between the philosophy of contradiction and the spirit of struggle. Trying to adopt the Western model gave rise to a new political discourse led by economics and legal studies, characterised by advocacy of government neutrality and depoliticisation. This discourse gradually erased from memory China's history and practice, weakened the agency of Chinese politics, and increasingly became a new dogmatism that turned its back on the theory of contradiction and the theory of practice, forgetting the obvious truth that 'only the foot knows if the shoe fits' 鞋子合不合适只有脚知道. One might say that over the past thirty years, Chinese academics and thinkers have gradually forgotten the theory of contradiction, the theory of struggle and the theory of practice. While Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought appear as nouns in mainstream discourse, in practice they do not function as philosophical methods by which we understand, grasp, and solve problems, which has led to Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought becoming empty expressions without vivid meaning in practice. They are no longer philosophical tools for understanding problems, no longer have any internal connection with the construction of the people's political life, and thus cannot truly penetrate people's minds. As a principled political Party, if the CCP loses the philosophical analytical tools and methods provided by Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, it will lose the theoretical magic weapon 理论法宝 [24] pointing out the future direction of development and will necessarily lose the values supporting confidence in ideals and the theoretical weapon to consolidate the people's hearts, thus opening the door to a politics of convenience. Once this happens, the market economy's principles of profit and exchange will penetrate the inner realms of the Party, and various forces will 'stalk' '围猎' government officials and form interest

groups to seek political power. They will even attempt to seize the highest power of the Party and state and change the nature of the Party. China will face the danger of repeating the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

After taking up the post of General Secretary, Xi Jinping posed a question that caused deep reflection on the part of the entire Party: when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union dissolved, why was there no real man among the twenty thousand members to protest the event? At first glance, this seems to have started with Gorbachev's 'new thinking', but the deep roots go back to Khrushchev's revisionism and his criticism of Stalin. Whether in engaging in 'peaceful competition' with the United States or in transforming the Communist Party into the 'Party of the whole people', the Communist Party of the Soviet Union completely lost the philosophical weapon of Marxism, which led the Party not only to lose the ideals and beliefs of communism, but more importantly to lose as well political confidence, the ability to struggle and the courage to survive. The loss of a philosophical weapon necessarily leads to the loss of the spirit of struggle, and the loss of ideals and beliefs necessarily leads to the loss of the spirit of mastery.

From this perspective, the reason that China has been able to avoid following in the footsteps of the Soviet Union is precisely because from the very beginning Mao Zedong severely criticised Khrushchev's revisionist line and pushed China to thoroughly abandon the Soviet model. This criticism of the Soviet model led China to begin an independent search for the path to socialist modernity, and even if later on we fell for a time into the extremes of the 'Three Red Banners' [i.e., the Great Leap Forward] and the 'Great Cultural Revolution', nonetheless the revolutionary spirit of struggle to seek out an independent, autonomous path of development, and the exalted ideal of realising communism, in a political sense galvanised a new generation of Chinese elites. Not only did they temper their courageous struggles and innovative spirit in the context of the revolutionary movement, but also in the course of the rustification movement cultivated a deep sense of empathy from having lived among and shared the hardships of the people, ultimately producing a generation of political elites grounded in the great land of China. This generation has become the guiding force propelling China into the new era.

For this reason, after becoming General Secretary, Xi Jinping ‘planted his flag’ on the core issue of ‘Party leadership’, earnestly raising the great banners of Marxist theory and Communist ideals and beliefs, and resolutely taking the road of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. This means that the Chinese Communist Party has once again grasped the philosophical weapon of dialectical materialism, understanding the world through the worldview and methodology of the theory of contradiction and the theory of practice. Once again having done this, the fighting character will necessarily return yet again to the construction of the political thought of the CCP, becoming the political soul of the CCP. In other words, the nature of the struggle of the CCP derives from a philosophical consciousness of Marxism-Leninism. The philosophy of struggle in the philosophy of mastery and the philosophy of contradiction and practice are organically integrated. That there are contradictions means that conflict and struggle exist, and that struggle must engage real problems in practice, which in turn resolves the existing contradiction and propels practice forward. For this reason, the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress correctly points out that ‘the Chinese Communist Party is a great political Party that dares to struggle and dares to win’, and that ‘to realise a great dream, we must engage in great struggle’. The roots of struggle lie in the necessary truth that contradictions propel society forward: ‘It is in the movement of contradictions that a society advances; where there is contradiction there is struggle. If our Party is to unite and lead the people to effectively respond to major challenges, withstand major risks, overcome major obstacles, and address major conflicts, it must undertake a great struggle with many new contemporary features. All thinking and behavior in the vein of pleasure-seeking, inaction and sloth, and problem-avoidance are unacceptable.’

It was precisely on the philosophical foundation of the theory of contradiction and the theory of practice that the report to the Nineteenth Party Congress for the first time identifies the principal contradiction in Chinese society as ‘the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life’. As early as 1956, the report to the Eighth National Congress correctly indicated that the principle contradiction was that between the people’s ever-growing material and cultural needs and the backwardness of the productive

forces. After the ‘Cultural Revolution’, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee returned to the analysis and judgement of the principle social contradiction rendered by the report to the Eighth National Congress. We can say that after more than seventy years of effort, China has accomplished the historical great leap from the Mao Zedong era, to the Deng Xiaoping era, to the Xi Jinping era. New social contradictions propel China into a new era, and a new era obviously needs a new thought to solve the problems it confronts. For this reason, when Xi Jinping once again proposes the theory of contradiction and the philosophy of struggle, he is absolutely not suggesting some simplistic return to the Mao Zedong era. Instead he has taken the Chinese socialism created by Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping to a higher historical stage. This undoubtedly is what constitutes the historical origin of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

The Sinification of Marxism: The new Party-state system and the construction of core values

The grand blueprint of the Xi Jinping era unfolds through history. In the narrative tradition in which classics and history are undivided, a philosophical thought system is contained in the historical narrative. Like Mao Zedong Thought, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is not solely the thought of Xi Jinping, but is rather the crystallisation of the wisdom of the entire Party. It is yet another renewal, effected on the basis of the inheritance of Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Important Thought of the ‘Three Represents’ and Scientific Developmentalism.[25] It is not only the product of the integration of Marxism with the practice of contemporary China, but even more the product of the merging of Marxism with Chinese traditional culture.

The process of the Sinification of Marxism has always been the process of merging Marxism with Chinese traditional culture, a process that began in the Mao Zedong era. If there are differences between Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the new Xi Jinping era and Mao Zedong Thought or Deng Xiaoping Theory, this is first because the primary social

contradictions encountered are not the same, and the questions to be resolved in terms of thought and theory are also different. In the first Sinification of Marxism, what was to be resolved was how to carry out a proletarian revolution in a half-feudal, half-colonial society, which is why Mao Zedong Thought is basically a set of theories concerning revolution and nation-building. The second Sinification of Marxism sought to resolve the question of how to shake off the influence of the Soviet model and seek out a path toward the construction of socialist modernisation grounded in Chinese realities, which became the 'Four Modernisations', which solved the primary contradictions facing Chinese society. The search for this path was begun by Mao Zedong, and finally completed under Deng Xiaoping, and constituted the theory of 'building socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It was primarily a theory of economic construction. Subsequently, given the changes in the primary contradictions faced by Chinese society, Xi Jinping sought to further modernise the superstructure, on the foundation of modernisation of the economic base launched by Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping (the 'Four Modernisations'), which took the form of Xi Jinping's national governance system and the modernisation of governance capacity. We can see this as the third Sinification of Marxism. The report to the Nineteenth Congress summarizes the basic content and strategy of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as the 'eight make clears' and the 'fourteen ensures',[26] but its core thought lies in determining how the Party can lead the country, thoroughly establishing the rule of law, advancing the national governance system and the modernisation of governance capacity, ensuring that the institutions of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics become all the more mature and definitive. For this reason, the modernisation of national governance cannot be simply understood as a 'fifth modernisation' accomplished on the basis of the 'Four Modernizations',[27] but instead should be understood as the construction of the appropriate superstructure to accompany the base of the market economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics accomplished by the 'Four Modernisations'.

Beginning in 1949, New China, in accordance with the basic principles of Marxism, emulated the Soviet model, and began to construct the national regime of the people's democratic dictatorship, including the

leadership of the Party, the political consultative system, the people's congresses, and so on. Because the Russian revolution depended on the success of the cities, in the former Soviet regime, the Party leadership strongly relied on a heavily top-down system of control. China's revolution was different in that it took the path of the villages surrounding the cities, and for this reason our Party was directly grounded in society and was relatively independent of the state structure. After the establishment of New China, the process of the search for a Chinese path to modernity consistently faced the question of how to manage the relationship between the Party and the state. For a time during the Cultural Revolution there appeared the chaotic notion of destroying the state, 'replacing the government with the Party'. In the early period of Reform and Opening, faced with the Cultural Revolution abuses of 'no division between Party and government', 'replacing the government with the Party' and 'rule by man [rather than law]', Deng Xiaoping advocated the rule of law, and also proposed to reform the Party-state leadership system on the basis of a division of labor between Party and state. The report to the Thirteenth National Party Congress (1987) took this a step further, proposing a reformist thinking, based on the division between Party and state, producing a political system with democratic politics. The political firestorms in the late 1980s prompted Deng Xiaoping to rethink the system and organs of Party leadership of the state, in which he initiated the notion of a thorough-going strengthening of Party leadership, not only weakening the Central Committee Advisory committees, but also returning anew to the 'three in one' leadership system created by Mao Zedong, including leadership of the Party, of the state and of the military.[28] At this point Party and state began to move toward integration.

Following the introduction of the rule of law, a latent tension appeared between it and Party leadership. Some people argued that strengthening the rule of law meant strengthening the absolute authority of the state system in constitutional and legal terms, and hence advocated the so-called 'realisation of the People's Congress as the highest power', bringing out 'judicial independence' and the judicialisation of the Constitution. They further proposed a debate on the so-called question of 'Party domination' versus 'legal domination', implicitly calling into question the Party's

leadership of the state. In addition, the development of the rule of law led to calls for the protection of human rights, and some movements with political demands used the formal development of ‘human rights’ and ‘rule of law’ and the notion that the ‘rule of law’ would lead to ‘democracy’ to put forth a new strategy leading to ‘political democratisation’. We might say that the market economy base of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, constructed since the institution of Reform and Opening, has become disconnected from the superstructure of the state-led Party in some areas. The system of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era must resolve this problem, by constructing a superstructure that matches the market economy of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. It was in the precise context of this problem, a solution for which long had been sought without success in either theory or practice, that Xi Jinping, at the Third Plenum of the Eighteenth Party Congress, proposed the theory of the modernization of the state governance system and governance capacity. And as a companion piece to the report of Third Plenum of the Eighteenth CCP Central Committee, the report of the Fourth Plenum of the Eighteenth CCP Central Committee further proposed the theory of building a socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics, in which it was correctly noted that ‘Party leadership is the most basic feature of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, and the most basic guarantee of socialist rule of law’. On this basis, the report to the Nineteenth National Congress further emphasizes that ‘The Party leads everything: Party, government, army, people, and scholars’. ‘The Party is the most exalted force of political leadership’.

One might say that the core of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is the new system for comprehensive Party leadership of the state on the theoretical and institutional level that it proposes. This new Party-state system is undoubtedly an important organisational part of the ‘Chinese solution’, different both from the liberal democratic systems of Western capitalism, and from the old Party-state system of the Soviet model, and has become a new system that fits the economic base of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. This new system must necessarily signify the organic blending of Party leadership as emphasized by Marxism and the political tradition of traditional Chinese culture. For example, the Fourth Plenum of the Eighteenth Central

Committee clearly called for the ‘integration of the rule of law and the rule of virtue’ 依法治国和以德治国相结合, and incorporated the Party rules and discipline system that had been legislated in the Party constitution into the state legal system, so that Party rules and state law became a modern version of the relationship between ritual and law in the Confucian system. The establishment of a state supervisory system is undoubtedly an important organisational aspect of the modernisation of Chinese traditional political culture. The Nineteenth CCP Congress proclaimed that the Central Committee would establish a ‘Leadership Small Group on Governing the Country According to the Rule of Law’, not only to further improve the new system of the Party leading the country, but also to absorb the beneficial elements of the Western legal tradition on the basis of the Chinese legal system, seeking to establish a new Chinese legal system.

The state superstructure includes not only the political and legal system, but also culture and ideology. All governmental systems need the support of corresponding core values, thus becoming a political education system in which politics and culture are mutually reinforcing. The Western capitalist system is supported by the core values of liberalism, which upholds the liberal democratic system, thus constituting the core of Western civilisation. The core values supporting the new party-state system must necessarily be the core values of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Since Reform and Opening, the market economy and social divisions have given rise to many different value systems, and it would appear that China has entered an era of pluralistic values. The report of the Eighteenth Party Congress listed, one after the other, the core values of Chinese traditional culture, the core values of the socialism of the Mao Zedong era, and the core values of Western liberalism, brought in through reform and opening, producing a sprawling value system. In the absence of coherent core values, values pluralism can lead not only to political confusion, but can also bring about a conflict between values and social interests. The report of the Nineteenth Congress does not repeat the formula for core values employed by the Eighteenth, meaning that the construction of core values that are more coherent and better able to represent Socialism with Chinese Characteristics will become an important mission in the wake of the

Nineteenth Congress.[29] This task undoubtedly is the most important in the third Sinification of Marxism.

In fact, since the Eighteenth Congress, the Party Center, with Comrade Xi Jinping as its core, has already begun the process of merging Marxism with Chinese traditional culture. An example would be the above discussion of merging Marxism's communist beliefs with the 'Learning of the Heart' from China's tradition, merging the Western philosophy of subjectivity with the traditional Chinese ideal of the 'superior man' who seeks constant self-improvement, merging Western dialectics with the theory of contradictions and the theory of practice, such vitality finally changing and renewing Chinese traditional philosophy and thought. This means that the core values of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics must be the blending of the core values of Marxism as represented by communism and the core values defined by China's traditional Confucian culture. Only in this way can we bring forth core values in accord with the spirit and character of the Chinese people and with the objective needs of modern society.

From this perspective, the great revival of the Chinese nation is not only an economic and political revival. It is also the revival of a new tradition of political education supported by a political system and by core values, that will result in the great revival of Chinese civilisation. If we say that Chinese civilisation, when confronted with the challenge of Buddhism, engineered a great revival through the efforts of Song-Ming Neo Confucians, which then spread Chinese civilisation from China proper throughout East Asia, then we should also say that when confronted in more recent times with the challenge of the modern West—Protestantism and liberalism—the Chinese nation is today again undergoing a great revival. The present great revival surely means that Chinese civilisation is spreading and extending itself into even more parts of the world. This undoubtedly constitutes the greatest historical mission of the Chinese people in the Xi Jinping era.

Translator's Notes

[1] 强世功, ‘哲学与历史—从党的十九大报告解读”习近平时代”’, 开放时代, 2018年第1期。

[2] Jiang's Beijing University web site is available at <http://www.law.pku.edu.cn/sz/zzjs/hl/1910.htm>

[3] Published by Singapore: Springer. In all about a half-dozen articles by Jiang have been translated and published in English scholarly journals.

[4] Gan Yang 甘阳, Unify the three traditions 通三统, (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2007).

[5] See ‘Ma Ya interviews Wang Shaoguang: Chinese governing principles and traditional moral thought’ 玛雅专访王绍光: 中国的治国理念与政道思维传统, originally available on the Utopia website at <http://www.wywxwk.com/Article/sichao/2014/05/320592.html>.

[6] Chen Ming 陈明, Zhao Guangming 赵广明, Liu Haibo 刘海波, Tang Wenming 唐文明, ‘Transcend left and right, unify the three traditions, renew the party-state—A Confucian reading of the China Dream 超左右、通三统、新党国——中国梦的儒家解读, transcription of a round-table held on 17 March 2015, available online at <http://www.rujiazg.com/article/id/4939/>.

[7] See Xu Jilin 许纪霖, ‘The New Tianxia: Rebuilding China's Internal and External Order’ 新天下主义与中国的内外秩序, in Xu Jilin and Liu Qing 刘擎, eds., *The New Tianxia 新天下主义* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2014): 3-25.

[8] Gao Quanxi 高全喜, ‘The Political Maturity of Chinese Liberalism’ 中国自由主义的政治成熟 available online at <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/56518.html>.

[9] See Chang Chun-ch'iao [Zhang Chunqiao], *On Exercising the All-Round Dictatorship over the Bourgeoisie* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975).

[10] See for example Taisu Zhang, ‘China's Coming Ideological Wars’, *Foreign Policy*, 1 March 2016, online

edition, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/01/chinas-coming-ideological-wars-new-left-confucius-mao-xi/> .

[11] Xi Jinping's work report delivered to the Nineteenth Party Congress in November 2017 can be found at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2017-11/03/c_136725942.htm (accessed, Feb. 15, 2018). I have followed the official translation when Jiang cites Xi's report.

[12] The canonical expression of this 'practice-theory-practice' is found in the 1943 Central Committee resolution that appears as 'Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership' in Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, available online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_13.htm.

[13] Jiang cites two well-known Confucian sayings, the first being the opening line of The Analects of Confucius and the second widely associated with the great sixteenth century Neo-Confucian philosopher, Wang Yangming (1472-1529).

[14] Jiang is here referring to a series of scholarly debates with clear political implications that have occurred in recent decades.

[15] Jiang is here offering a gloss of part two of Xi Jinping's report on the historical mission of the Party in which each of the three stages of the revolution is introduced by the phrase 'Our Party was deeply aware'

[16] This authoritative assessment appears in the 1981 Central Committee resolution, 'On Some Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the Nation'. It still defines the parameters of orthodox Party historiography today. See <http://en.people.cn/dengxp/vol2/text/b1420.html>.

[17] The 'California school' of China scholarship is associated with the work of Bin Wong (UCLA) and Kenneth Pomeranz (University of Chicago), among others, and has emphasised premodern China's role in the world economy. See Edward Q. Wang, ed., 'The 'California School' in China' for details and translations of Chinese responses, *Chinese Studies in History*, 45:1 (2011).

[18] The concept of the Thucydides trap was coined by the American political scientist Graham Tillet Allison and refers to a situation when a rising power causes fear in an established power that escalates toward war.

[19] Theorists of geopolitics and sea power. Sir Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) was an English geographer considered one of the founders of geopolitics. Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914) was a United States naval officer and historian, who held that national power derived from sea power.

[20] Jiang's references here are to Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, both of which have had immense impacts in the Chinese intellectual world.

[21] Jiang uses the term 主体性, which in formal philosophical analysis means 'subjectivity' in the sense of autonomous action. However, since this English term can also mean 'not objective', 主体性 has been translated variously as 'agency' and 'mastery' in the text below, as best conveys Jiang's meaning in context.

[22] Jiang's phrasing invokes the well-known adage from Confucius: 'The noble man is not a utensil' (*Analects*: 2.12).

[23] 'Dare to grasp, control and unsheathe the sword' 敢抓敢管敢于亮剑 was a key slogan of Xi Jinping's in 2013. 'Unsheathe the sword' was the name of a hit TV series based on a 2001 novel (of the same name) by Du Liang 都梁. For more on the Party's use of this expression, see Gloria Davies, 'Destiny's Mixed Metaphors' in Geremie Barmé, Jeremy Goldkorn and Linda Jaivin, eds. *China Story Yearbook 2014: Shared Destiny* (ANU Press).

[24] Jiang here invokes Mao's 1938 announcement of the 'three magic weapons of the Chinese revolution' (the army, Party building and the united front) by using Mao's term for these, 法宝 (originally a Buddhist term for sacred scripture). 法宝 has been widely used by Party leaders since Mao to refer to the Party's key policies and programs.

[25] This ‘crystallisation’ of the collective leadership is the orthodox Party assessment of Mao Zedong Thought given in the 1981 ‘Historical Resolution’, see note 16, above.

[26] The eight ‘make clear’ 明确 refer to a process for building a system with Chinese characteristics, and the fourteen ‘ensuring’ or « upholding » 坚持, are guidelines upholding the definition and basic policy of the new era respectively. See Jean Christopher Mittelstaedt, http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/chinas_new_era_with_xi_jinping_characteristics7243.

[27] This is an oblique reference to the 1979 Democracy Wall advocate, Wei Jingsheng, who claimed democracy was the “Fifth Modernisation.”

[28] This is Jiang’s, and Xi Jinping’s, sanitized version of the contentious history of the 1980s in which China’s leaders around General Secretaries Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang struggled to implement these liberalizations in the face of stiff resistance from Party elders, culminating in the huge demonstrations of spring 1989 in Tiananmen and in several cities across China and then the fateful military crackdown of June 4th. The consolidation by top Party elder, Deng Xiaoping, ultimately produced the re-integration of Party and state that Jiang notes here.

[29] These core socialist values include: the national values of prosperity, democracy, civility; the social values of freedom, equality, justice and the rule of law; and the individual values of patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendship.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Thinking China

Key Intellectuals more

Sima Nan (司马南)

Steven NS Cheung 张五常

Wu Jiexiang 吴稼祥

Currents of Thought 思潮 [more](#)

Jiang Shigong on 'Philosophy and History: Interpreting the "Xi Jinping Era" through Xi's Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP'

Ai Weiwei on Art, Activism and Human Rights

Rong Jian 荣剑 on Thought and Scholarship in China

Reading into the Past [more](#)

Chow Cheong-ling (Zhou Changling) 周長齡

Li Po-kwai (Li Baokui) 李葆葵

Sze Sao-tseng (Shi Zhaozeng) 施肇曾

Our Publications

East Asian History

Made in China

The China Journal

About The China Story

The China Story Project is a web-based account of contemporary China created by the Australian Centre on China in the World (ACIWW) at the Australian National University in Canberra, which has the most significant concentration of dedicated Chinese Studies expertise and is the publisher of the leading Chinese Studies journals in Australia.

A guide to the major parts of the website is at [right](#). For more about The China Story, and the people behind it, please see [this page](#).

[Site Map](#)

[Yearbooks](#)

[Thinking China](#)

[Reading into the Past](#)

The Australia-China Story

Keywords

Dossier

Recommended Reading

Style Guide for The China Story

Copyright

This website and the China Story Yearbook are open-access materials published under a Creative Commons 3.0 Unported license.

We encourage the widespread circulation of the material published on this website. While all content may be used and copied, we request that you credit The China Story Project and provide a link to: www.TheChinaStory.org.

We occasionally publish images from other websites; we do this under the terms of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act; if you are a rights owner and object to our use of an image, please let us know via our contact page.

中国的故事

本网站为澳大利亚国立大学的中华全球研究中心主办。其宗旨为：瞭解、蒐罗、分析和传播关于中国种种有份量的叙述。凡是有建树和研究价值的资讯和阐述，此网站将对之力求兼容并包。无论源于党政官方的、大众媒体的、民间大众的、思想知识界的、网民微博族的、甚至不入主流的叙述，均可在我们《中国的故事》适当地亮相。我们的视野概不分地缘，既不限于中华人民共和国、港澳台抑或华侨界，亦不排除在华外籍人员之见地。万象的‘中国故事’构成当今重振的中华文化错综复杂之面相以及令人揣摩不已的底蘊，迫切需要更多人士探讨、剖析并求甚解。

 Australian Centre on China in the World 中华全球研究中心/中華全球研究中心