

〈研究論文〉

## Remodeling the Ideal: The Political Choices of the Communist Party of China since the 18th CPC National Congress

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**Abstract** Faced with people's doubts of the socialist system due to unfair social distribution, and the fact that many Party cadres' communist ideals and beliefs are weakened, following the 18th National Congress the Communist Party of China (CPC for short) must remake Party ideals that can adapt to current realities. Only by doing so can the CPC continue consolidating its leadership in the face of growing conflicts between ideals and realities. The CPC first reconfirmed that it would insist on the ultimate ideal of scientific socialism put forward by Lenin, while recognizing more abstract universal values like democracy, freedom, equality, fairness and the rule of law, in addition to assimilating communist and nationalist ideals. However, in practice, the CPC has adopted a pragmatic approach when publicizing its ideals, highlighting different aspects on different occasions, without considering the conflicts between communist ideals, universal values, and nationalism. It uses communist ideals to educate Party members, the "Chinese Dream" ideal to educate the vast public, and recognizes universal values on the world stage. However, the more idyllic, concrete, and tangible these ideals are depicted, the greater the pressure will be on CPC leaders to realize them. In this situation even the smallest mistake will lead to intense public dissatisfaction, which will prove to be a great test of the CPC.

Since its 18th National Congress, the CPC has put forward some publicity trends worth noticing—"500 years of socialism", realizing the "Chinese Dream", clearly explaining the details of "core socialist values", and vigorously "promoting the excellence of traditional Chinese culture". Behind this series of publicity activities is the CPC's anxiety over the lack of communist beliefs both within and outside the Party. This paper will discuss the background of the above publicity activities by the CPC, the contents and aims of such publicity activities, and possible impacts of such trends on the domestic and foreign policies of the CPC.

Socialism is an idealistic concept that emerged in

the modern world together with capitalism, and at its core is an ideal society that overcomes the disadvantages of capitalism. Of course, Marxists claim such ideals to be science, while opponents say it is more of a religion.<sup>1</sup> But no matter whether science or religion, socialist concepts can motivate revolutions only when they are transfused to the proletariat. Publicity is therefore very important to socialism. Afterwards, all activities in pursuit of such an ideal society came to constitute part of a world socialist movement, the primary motive for which is the pursuit of socialist ideals. All descriptions of such an ideal society—from the generalizations of Marx and Engels like "the free

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development of each is the condition for the free development of all”, “abolition of privatization”, “to each according to his need”, etc., to the unfettered idealism of Mao Zedong, like “having meals free of charge”, “eliminating the three differences (namely the difference between rural and urban areas, the difference between workers and peasants and the difference between mental labor and manual labor)—help common people get a basic understanding of the ideals of such a society, like equality, freedom, kindness and prosperity. However, such beautiful ideals are often contradictory to the social realities of socialist movements.

In China’s experience of socialist movements, the contradiction between ideals and reality first appeared around the issue of “equality”. Before the People’s Republic of China was founded, the privileges within the revolutionary ranks often caused the masses to complain. In the formative years of the Red Army, inner democracy was the fundamental guarantee for keeping up morale. However, when soldiers called for complete equality in the face of discriminatory privileges, leaders condemned this as absolute equalitarianism. During the War of Resistance against Japan, many young Chinese went to Yan’an, a sacred place of the revolution, only to be disappointed by the then growing hierarchical differences (the system of “three levels of food standards”, the system for protecting the leaders and providing health services for the leaders, etc.) in the revolutionary ranks, which finally lead to the “Wang Shiwei incident”. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, peasants’ anger over cadres’ corruption during the “Four Clean-ups” movement, and the rebellious behavior of young students during the Cultural Revolution, all demonstrated the great dissatisfaction of people who believed in the equality of communism to the inequality and privileges of the

socialist regime. Since the reform and opening up, China has implemented a market economy, developed a mixed ownership economy, and carried out distribution according to the factors of production, which led to a growing gap between the rich and poor and extremely unfair social distribution, finally causing social opposition. In 2013, China’s income Gini Coefficient reached 0.473. According to international standards, a Gini Coefficient over 0.4 is considered to be excessive income inequality.<sup>2</sup> The popularity of the stage play *Che Guevara* in Beijing since 2000 reflects people’s dissatisfaction. The playwright of *Che Guevara* believed: Although the socialist system failed, the values of socialism were eternal. Utopia had its own value. He believed that an ideal society should be humane and practice equality, with no exploitation or fierce competition.. The play was a great sensation when it debuted in small theatres in Beijing. When the hero condemned social injustices and shouted, “Can we not rise up?” people (mostly young) welcomed it with applause and cheers. In a socialist country advocating common prosperity, critically unfair social distribution and reductions in the proportion of distribution according to labor causes popular dissatisfaction and even leads to labor strikes. This has also caused the public to doubt if CPC-led modern China is capable of ever implementing a socialist system of equality.

Moreover, the national construction guidelines followed by the CPC embody a contradiction between idealistic and pragmatic policies. In the Maoist era, idealism was upheld and people were encouraged to live plainly and work hard on short rations for lofty ideals. Accumulation was encouraged over consumption, but after a while the practice of egalitarianism caused people to rebel. Therefore, class struggle was adopted to label all the discourse and acts that diverged from the

idealistic policies as taking the capitalist road. This led to long-term stagnation of the social economy. In the era of Deng Xiaoping, developing the productive forces and improving people's livelihood were made the fundamental ways of consolidating the socialist system; and in accordance with the "the primary stage of socialism" theory the idealistic Maoist practices were abandoned. However, despite the rapid social and economic development in China since the reform and opening up, the Marxist theoretical training of the Party cadres has declined, and their lofty ideals of communism have become increasingly weakened, along with the communist ideology of the entire society. According to a questionnaire of 2,270 leading cadres administered by the Organization Department of the Shanxi Provincial Party Committee, 1/3 of them found it urgent to strengthen the study of basic Marxist theories.<sup>3</sup> Most of the corrupt government officials that were exposed nationwide were found to be divorced from communism and superstitious.<sup>4</sup> In particular, only 44.4% of Chinese university students expressed that they believed in communism.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, according to a survey of the political stance of Chinese cybercitizens, only 6.2% of them were leftists, 38.7% of them were rightists and 55.1% of them were in the middle,<sup>6</sup> indicating that the leading position of the communist ideology is being challenged.

The CPC is now in a plight. If it abandons the socialist ideals, it means a total denial of the rationality of the communist revolution in China and the ruling position of Marxist ideology; if it upholds idealism and restores the idealistic practices of the Maoist era, it would definitely lead to contradictions with practical policies, and cause great turbulence and setbacks of social and economic development, which would also threaten the leading system of the CPC. Under such

circumstances, rebuilding socialist ideals that can both push forward continuous development of the market economy and protect the ideology of the CPC has become an urgent problem of the new generation of CPC leaders since the 18th CPC National Congress. In January 2013, in his speech at the seminar for new members and candidates of the Party Central Committee studying the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping said that the belief in the socialist road with Chinese characteristics must be further consolidated and the lofty ideals of communism must be always kept in mind; that revolutionary ideals were even loftier; that a Party member without lofty ideals was not qualified, and so was a Party member who talked about lofty ideals without doing concrete work. This speech was an attempt to mediate the above plight and rebuild an ideal that adapts to present realities. Only in so doing can the leadership of the CPC be consolidated in the face of the current contradictions between ideals and realities.

## I. The Rebuilding of Socialist Ideals

To rebuild the socialist ideals, the CPC proposed the "three confidences" at its 18th national congress. A report to the 18th CPC National Congress held in November 2012 described China's achievements in following the socialist road with Chinese characteristics in a lengthy chapter and stressed, "The whole Party should be confident of the socialist road, in the theories on socialism and in the socialist system", confirming the policies since Deng Xiaoping. In January 2013, Xi Jinping said in his speech at the seminar for new members and candidates of the Party Central Committee studying the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress that the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress was, in the final

analysis, upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics. He also mentioned the “three confidences” again. In November 2013, it was proposed at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 18th CPC National Congress to deepen reforms in an all-round manner, in order to set a new historical starting point and constantly strengthen the “three confidences”. This stance is consistent with Deng Xiaoping’s belief that the reform and opening up was the prime means of consolidating the governance of the CPC.

It was then proposed to explicitly include socialism with Chinese characteristics into the system of modern socialist movements worldwide and advocated that socialism with Chinese characteristics was both the result of and the most successful demonstration of the rational development of the world socialist movement. The CPC holds that, although socialism failed in the Soviet Union, it has succeeded in China, and that China represents the correct direction of modern socialist movements worldwide. If the past interpretation of socialism with Chinese characteristics focused on highlighting its “Chinese characteristics” and its bold breakthrough of traditional socialist concepts; now it intends to highlight its “socialist” nature and confirm that China is still socialist. The phrase, “five hundred years of socialism” has also emerged. In his speech at the seminar for new members and candidates of the Party Central Committee studying the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping summarized the history of “five hundred years of socialism”. He divided the history of world socialist movements from the publication of *Utopia* by Thomas Moore in 1516 to socialism with Chinese characteristics today into six stages covering a total of 500 years, and stressed that it was a direct succession.<sup>7</sup>

After Xi Jinping put forward the idea of “five

hundred years of socialism”, the Chinese Government began the large scale promotion and education of this idea. In May 2013, Beijing TV broadcast a 50 episode-TV series named *Vicissitudes along the Road—Five Hundred Years of Socialism*. Since it was broadcast, it was very influential and its ratings on Beijing TV topped the charts. At the same time, there were sync videos at Xinhua.com, ifeng.com, sina.com, and sohu.com. By early July, more than 200 million people had clicked the videos and there had been over 100,000 posts of related comments.

Later, an authoritative reader was launched in the educational activities for “five hundred years of socialism”, namely *Five Hundred Years of World Socialism (For Leading Party Cadres)* (Hereinafter referred to as *Five Hundred Years*); Gu Hailiang, the former president of National Academy of Education Administration and Marxist economist, was the leading expert of this book.<sup>8</sup> Mainly written by Yan Zhimin (professor from Peking University), Jiang Hui (CASS researcher), Xin Xiangyang (CASS researcher), Sun Laibin (professor from Wuhan University), etc., under the leadership of the Marxist Theory Studies and Construction Program Committee<sup>9</sup>, the reader received support from the Central Discipline Inspection Committee of the CPC, the Organization Department of the Central Committee of the CPC and the Policy Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, and solicited the opinions and suggestions of leading Party cadres. After the publication of *Five Hundred Years*, the Central Propaganda Department of the CPC and the Organization Department of the Central Committee of the CPC jointly issued a notice nationwide, requesting careful organization and study of the reader. In the notice, Party schools, administrative colleges and cadre colleges at all levels were required to incorporate *Five*

*Hundred Years* into their training and teaching; and universities were required to use *Five Hundred Years* as supporting material in the theoretical learning of their faculty and students. The lecturers' group of each Party committee was required to promote *Five Hundred Years* among leading Party cadres and the grassroots masses.

The presentation of the "China Dream" shapes the ideal in a more concrete way. The CPC put forward the goal of "two centennials" (namely completing the building of an all-around prosperous society by the time the Communist Party of China celebrates its centenary in 2020, and turning China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by the time the People's Republic of China marks its centennial) at its 18th national congress. On November 15, 2012, at the meeting of the members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee with Chinese and foreign reporters, Xi Jinping said that the Chinese people loved life, expected better education, more stable jobs, more satisfactory incomes and more reliable social insurances, etc.; and that people's expectation for a better life was the goal for which the CPC would always work for, making the goal of the CPC more concrete and closer to the masses. On November 29, 2012, at the exhibition of "The Road to Revival" with the other newly appointed members of the Standing Committee of the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping said that the "China Dream" is the greatest dream of the modern Chinese nation, namely to achieve the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. At the first plenary session of the 12th National People's Congress, Xi Jinping mentioned the China Dream once again and generalized it as "national prosperity, national rejuvenation and people's happiness". In December 2013, at the symposium to commemorate the 120th

anniversary of the birthday of Mao Zedong, Xi Jinping said that, with the remarkable achievements made by China since the reform and opening up, China was closer than any other time in history to the goal of rejuvenating the Chinese nation. In order to boost morale, he highlighted that China was not far away from achieving the China Dream. Since May 26, 2014, an influential political TV series *Centennial Tide, Chinese Dream* was broadcast during prime time on CCTV. The series comes to the conclusion from China's history of struggling for national independence and prosperity in the modern centennial that socialism is the only way to realize the China Dream. It is mentioned in this TV series that the proposal of the China Dream enriches the theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics with a new connotation, that is, it combines the ideal of communism with China's recent desire for nationalism.

## **II. Rebuilt Ideals and Their Characteristics**

According to the elaborations on the future of China and the socialist ideals put forward by Xi Jinping and other CPC leaders, as well as the propaganda of the CPC theorists, we can see that the ideals rebuilt by the CPC have the following characteristics:

First, they reconfirm the ultimate ideal of scientific socialism.

After the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC first confirmed the necessity to stick to orthodox scientific socialism as the ultimate goal. The history of international communist movements proves that, without a clear, pleasant and ultimate ideal goal, people's enthusiasm for revolution cannot be stimulated. Scientific socialism, from Marx to Lenin, advocates making a communist society the ultimate goal. However, this ultimate goal once seriously affected socialist

movements. Gu Zhun, the most outstanding thinker in modern China, held that “revolutionaries were in themselves democrats at the beginning. However, if a revolutionary sets an ultimate goal and deeply believes in it, he will sacrifice democracy and adopt dictatorship in order to achieve the ultimate goal.” Stalin is an example of this.<sup>10</sup> One of the reasons why Mao Zedong launched the Great Cultural Revolution was to build a “purest of the pure” socialist country, but instead it caused chaos.<sup>11</sup> Since the 1980s, China began to absorb the Western concept of “democratic socialism” and reflect upon the theory of an ultimate goal. The Western “democratic socialism” gave up the ultimate ideal of socialism and advocated a morality-based route of progressive reforms. After China adopted the policy of reform and opening up, the CPC theorist Wu Jiang was among the first to subscribe to and study the issue of democratic socialism in Europe. He proposed, “The core of democratic socialism is democracy. In terms of ideology, it is ideological democracy or a diversification of ideology”.<sup>12</sup> Later Wu said, “Now it looks like the two roads to socialism have their respective historical necessity and legitimacy.”<sup>13</sup>

From 2007, China witnessed a debate over “changing banners”. Xie Tao, the former vice president of China People’s University, reputed as the second Party School of the CPC, wrote an article entitled *The Model of Democratic Socialism and China’s Future*<sup>14</sup>, which started the debate. In his article, Mr. Xie held that in the reform and opening up of China, “a series of new policies of democratic socialism which, to avoid the suspicion of ‘revisionism’, were called by us as the socialist road with Chinese characteristics.” Xie Tao clearly advocated the abandoning of the ultimate goal of communism and claimed it to be a derivation of the cultural traditions of Christianity. Both Hegel and Marx

violated dialectics. The idea of building a kingdom of heaven expressed the future hopes of uncivilized people. He believed in Bernstein’s idea to concretely reform the world and the saying that “the ultimate goal is nothing and movements are everything.”

Once his article was published, it caused a widespread sensation and stirred up debates. In April 2007, the “Research Group of Mao Zedong’s Historical Views on the People” of the Chinese Society of Historical Materialism and the website maoflag.org jointly held a “Seminar on Refuting Xie Tao’s ‘Democratic Socialism Is the Only Way to Save China’” in China People’s University. At the seminar, some said, “Xie Tao subverts the Party’s leadership and the leading position of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought with so-called ‘political reform’.”<sup>15</sup>

The then top CPC leadership “did not criticize” nor did not pull any “publicity stunts” over the debates of democratic socialism, but responded to it in a low profile. The editorial of *People’s Daily* published an article in the form of a Q&A column in which it stressed the differences between socialism with Chinese characteristics and democratic socialism. *Guangming Daily* also published an article with basically the same contents, but mentioned at the conclusion of the article that the experience of democratic socialism, in some respects like advocating social insurance, promoting social justice and accelerating harmonious development between man and nature, is of certain referential significance to building socialism with Chinese characteristics.<sup>16</sup> Since the Third International, the top CPC leadership to some extent changed the attitude of complete denial of democratic socialism.

However, in the report to the 18th CPC National Congress, it was explicitly put forward that the CPC “... rejected both the old and rigid closed-door policy and

any attempt to abandon socialism.” After elaborating on the basic principles of communism set by Marx and Engels, *Five Hundred Years* quoted Deng Xiaoping, “In carrying out the reform and opening up policy and in shifting the focus of our work to economic development, we are not abandoning Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong. We cannot forget our forefathers, or we will lose our roots.”<sup>17</sup> *Five Hundred Years* basically denies democratic socialism. In the reader, it recalls the anti-Lassalle and anti-Duhring debates;<sup>18</sup> stresses that Engels did not give up his belief in socialism in his late years;<sup>19</sup> criticizes the harms of Bernstein’s revisionism to the labor movements in Western Europe; and gives an account of Lenin’s criticism of Kautsky’s “premature” delivery of the Russian revolution. When summarizing the direct reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union, *Five Hundred Years* mentions that partly because it abandoned the guidance of Marxism; advocated “humanistic democratic socialism”; and caused a severe ideological chaos and fundamental collapse of socialist ideology. The reader holds that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union collapsed because it took the road of democratic socialism.<sup>20</sup>

In his speech at the seminar for newly appointed members of the Party Central Committee and candidates studying the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping stressed, “The choice of roads is the prime issue that determines if the Party’s cause can succeed or not. A correct road is the life of the Party.” He said, “Socialism with Chinese characteristics is socialism, not any other kind of-ism. The basic principles of scientific socialism cannot be abandoned, or it will not be socialism at all.” This is a clear denial of the Western road of democratic socialism. As we can see, after the 18th CPC National Congress the CPC has continued upholding Lenin’s scientific socialism and denying the

road of democratic socialism.

Second, they make the ultimate goal of communism popular.

After Stalin, the world’s socialist movements, including in China under the leadership of Mao Zedong, have adopted dictatorship of the proletariat and widespread class struggle, which has colored socialism with autocracy, violence and intensified class antagonisms. Even now, some Marxist theorists in China, from the concept of class struggle, deny that human society has universal values that go beyond class. Since its 18th national congress, however, the CPC has tried to depict socialism as a universal human pursuit of morality and justice. “Five hundred years of Socialism”, as mentioned by Xi Jinping, traces the origin of socialist ideals and explains that such ideals are the result of a long-term pursuit of justice and fairness by man, trying to weaken its class nature and strengthen its universality.

To start with, they speak highly of Utopian socialism. In previous propaganda of international communist movements in China, the existence of Utopian socialism before the emergence of Marxism was stated as an idea and theoretical background to highlight the scientific nature of Marxism, but it was not included in the history of socialist movements. However, in *Five Hundred Years*, Utopian socialism becomes one of the six development stages of socialism (namely Utopian socialism, the establishment of scientific socialism, socialism led by Lenin, the Soviet model, Mao Zedong’s socialism and socialism with Chinese characteristics proposed by Deng Xiaoping) and is called the “hope of a better future society”. In the reader, Marx is quoted as saying that Utopian socialism is the “symbol, presentation and herald” of an early stage proletarian class and “the instinctive yearning for a general social



reform.” The reader also makes a detailed description of the ideals and achievements of Thomas Moore, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen; traces people’s desire for a better future society back to people’s desire for a society of “great harmony” in *The Book of Rites*, a Confucian classic in ancient China, and Plato’s *Republic*;<sup>21</sup> and stresses that the great ideal of socialism is long standing and well established in human history.

The moral propositions advocated by Utopian socialists, like all men being equal, solidarity, reasonable distribution, the elimination of differences, women’s liberation, free marriage, the elimination of social barriers, hatred, deceit and hypocrisy are universal, while implementing public ownership, eliminating the exchange of commodities, carrying out planned production, respecting labor, etc. advocated by them are nothing but the means to realize an ideal society. However, past expositions of socialism focused on these means. *Five Hundred Years* describes these moral yearnings of Utopian socialists, and mentions in the concluding part, “Socialism, as an advanced concept that goes beyond capitalism, will always be the highest of human morals with such ideals and values as eliminating exploitation; realizing social equality; achieving free and all-round development of each individual; thoroughly liberating human beings; and leaping from the realm of necessity to that of freedom. This is the root reason why socialism will always be attractive.”<sup>22</sup> It therefore demonstrates that socialism does not violate the universal values of human beings, but represents the highest moral standard of all human beings.

Then they further apply this universality to socialism with Chinese characteristics, which demonstrates the open philosophy of Xi Jinping’s government. On February 12, 2014, the *People’s Daily* published “The Basic Concept of Core Socialist Values”

in large, red type on its front page, namely “Prosperity, Democracy, Civilization, Harmony, Freedom, Equality, Fairness, Rule of Law, Patriotism, Professionalism, Honesty and Kindness”. It stated that these words generalize the core socialist values, and are the mainstream values popularly accepted by all social sectors of China. As a matter of fact, “democracy, freedom, equality, fairness, and rule of law” belong to the basic contents of universal values.

This marks an important breakthrough, because before this CPC theorists had been entangled with words like “democracy, freedom, equality, fairness, constitutionality”. Each time they mentioned democracy some people would just reiterate that there is no pure democracy in the world, only class-based democracy.<sup>23</sup> There were also people who believed that “the issue of democracy is always connected to eliminating classes and rendering countries to doom, while the Western democratic system will surely stop there,”<sup>24</sup> denying the universality of democracy and stressing class-based democracy. As early as the great debate between China and the Soviet Union in the 1960s, following Mao Zedong, the CPC then regarded the proletariat democracy and the capitalist democracy as being absolutely opposite and claimed “If there is democracy for the bourgeoisie, there is no democracy for the proletariat, and vice versa.”<sup>25</sup> As regards “freedom”, someone even said that in a society with conflicting classes, so-called “freedom is the freedom of the exploiting class to exploit the vast working people.”<sup>26</sup>

As regards “fairness” and “equality”, CPC theorists in the past said, “There is no eternally unchanged fairness that goes beyond social and economic relations. Under different social systems, the standards of fairness are different.”<sup>27</sup> There were also people who said that “Marxism holds that equality essentially means to



eliminate classes and class differences, that equality going beyond this will be absolutely absurd and develop into egalitarianism.”<sup>28</sup>

In the second half of 2008, some government research agencies began to hold forums, at which it was put forward that “universal values” were completely confrontational with the core socialist values. On July 10, the Research Institute of Marxism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences held a symposium on the “System of Core Socialist Values and ‘Universal Values’”. Attendees there concluded that, “Domestic and foreign hostile forces have always plotted to differentiate and Westernize China. They preach on abstract humanism; suggest abandoning class theories and class-based analytical methods; and actively propose the so-called ‘universal values’ in the West where freedom, democracy, equality and universal love are the main contents. We have to keep a sober head over this.”<sup>29</sup>

The CPC now still denies such concepts as “universal values”, “constitutional democracy” and “civil society”. On July 20, 2014, the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee issued a notice to warn Party members not to lose their direction under the influence of the above remarks. To the CPC, these remarks were only Western capitalist values and political concepts, not truly universal values. In particular, the CPC was on guard against such Western views because the Western media and Chinese dissidents have used such views to criticize the CPC. However, the CPC now holds that abstract democracy, freedom, equality, fairness and the rule of law are not patents of the West, but can be advocated by the CPC. Instead of shying away like in the past, the CPC has begun to struggle with the West and Chinese dissidents for the right to interpret such values. It stresses that the existing political system in China is closer to these value

concepts and demonstrates them more than the Western system. That is to say, China’s political system is more universal. The CPC attaches particular emphasis to the following three points: the system of people’s congresses can avoid the Western money politics and inefficient parliamentary talks; some developing countries introduced Western democracy without a second thought, only to cause social turbulence; and only the socialist system can help China to maintain medium- and high-speed growth in this worldwide financial crisis. Therefore, the propaganda leader of the CPC Liu Yunshan said in his speech at the Copenhagen Business School on June 11, 2014, “Pew global polls in 2013 show that 85% of the Chinese are ‘very satisfied’ with the development direction of their country. It is rare in the world. Isn’t such satisfaction the best expression of the Chinese people’s support for the CPC?” This is a promotion of the superiority of China’s political system to the world.

Since Sun Yat-sen, China has been exploring a road of modernization different from that of the West. Mao Zedong copied the Soviet model to build socialist power which, although it started new explorations in the late 1950s, took a detour. Deng Xiaoping introduced the capitalist practice, and it was called socialism with Chinese characteristics. Xi Jinping puts forward with confidence that socialism in China originated from the exploration of an ideal society by the West 500 years ago. China represents the highest stage of development of an ideal society to be found in the world today. Since it is a socialism of universal moral significance, it will not refuse such abstract universal values as democracy and freedom. Therefore, the CPC recognizes the general abstract contents of universal values along with its reinterpretation of socialism. However, because it pledges to insist on scientific socialism, following Lenin

and Stalin, and totally denies the Western democratic socialism of Engels, its recognition of abstract universal values like democracy and freedom stays only on the level of propaganda.

But now *Five Hundred Years* associates socialism with pleasant ideals and universal values that have existed in human society since ancient times; and claims that socialism embodies the highest of human morals. The core socialist values proposed after the 18th CPC National Congress comprise “democracy, freedom, equality, fairness, and rule of law”, which helps to greatly weaken the color of past socialism’s classes, revolution, autocracy and violence; and indicates in a certain sense that the CPC will respect the universal principles of the international community more and adopt more open policies. This is also undeniable.

Third, they assimilate communist ideals and nationalist goals.

The ideals of communism should be transnational; pursue the liberation of all human beings; and stress the solidarity of the proletariat worldwide. However, the communist revolution in modern China emerged against the background of nationalism and was primarily for the national independence of China. Chen Yongfa once said, “At root, the CPC is undoubtedly a product of modern nationalism in China. Most Party members started with nationalism and then took the road of Marxism.”<sup>30</sup> Modern nationalist elites in China first accepted socialism as a means of achieving national independence and liberation. Nationalism has been appealing in China. In December 2013, at the symposium to commemorate the 120th anniversary of Mao Zedong, Xi Jinping stated that it has been the greatest dream of the modern Chinese people to achieve the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. For many years, countless people with lofty ideals advanced wave upon wave; explored

unremittingly; and sought the road to save the nation and the people, only to die disappointed. Marxism-Leninism provided a new light for the Chinese people to move toward. The founding of the Communist Party of China in 1921 lent strong support to the Chinese people on their road forward. Of course, the communist ideals of equality and prosperity were also very effective when mobilizing the poor laboring people. That’s why the CPC has always taken socialism as the only correct road to achieve national rejuvenation and a happy life. In the report to the 18th CPC National Congress, socialism with Chinese characteristics is regarded as the lifeline of the Party, the future of the country, the destiny of the people and their happiness. It is stressed in the same report to resolutely take the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics so as to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation; and to combine the ideals of communism and the CPC Party system with national destiny and individuals’ futures.

The CPC began by combining communist ideals with the nationalist goal of the “China Dream”. At the meeting between the members of the Standing Committee of the 18th CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and both Chinese and foreign reporters, Xi Jinping said, “Our responsibility is to continue taking painstaking efforts for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, so that it may stand tall and strong amidst the peoples of the world and make new and greater contributions to all humanity.” In November 2012, Xi Jinping brought forward the “China Dream” for the first time, before making it the goal of the CPC at the present stage. In March 2013, at the first plenary session of the 12th National People’s Congress, Xi Jinping further associated the “China Dream” with traditional Chinese civilization and patriotism. He even considered the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics as a

result of the historical heritage and development of China in its long history. According to him, this road was the natural outcome of the past 170 or more years of the Chinese nation's historical development, and carries forward the more than 5,000 years of lasting history of the Chinese nation. Xi Jinping believes that the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics is a necessary result of the historical development of the Chinese nation. Thus the ideals of communism are converted into the "China Dream" at the present stage, and combine socialism with nationalism.

Chinese people have the historical tradition of tracing back to golden ages in the past. Despite numerous struggles, different dynasties in China all claimed themselves to be the inheritance of times of peace and prosperity. As the Chinese economy keeps developing, the CPC has begun to understand and publicize the historical position of China from an even grander historical angle. In the history of socialist movements around the world, the wording of "500 years of socialism" places China at the highest stage of the socialist movement. Now, the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics is also associated with the 5,000-year-long history of the Chinese nation. In his speech at Copenhagen Business School, Liu Yunshan said, "The Chinese nation has a long civilization of over 5,000 years. The CPC has been able to take root, grow, develop and take power in China because of the nourishment of China's grand traditional culture." That is to say, China today is at a historical peak in both the East and the West. It will reproduce not only the peace and prosperity of China's past, but the highest stage of socialism in the West. After determining such a historical position, China of course will universalize traditional Chinese culture. In his speech to commemorate the "May Fourth Movement" at Peking

University, Xi Jinping proposed to let the Chinese nation stand amidst the world's nations with a more confident and self-reliant posture. He said that the 24-Chinese character core socialist values "carry forward the gene of China's great traditional culture." It is very important to carry forward Chinese culture, because part of the history of China's Han nationality proves that military conquerors of the civilization of the central plains more often than not became conquered by the culture of the central plains. The Chinese culture is inclusive. To return to the world center, China has to first win cultural respect.

Next, the CPC plans to make up for the defects of socialist ideology with traditional Chinese culture. The CPC makes the traditional national culture one of the sources of socialist values. On February 24, 2014, when members of the Political Bureau were taking a class together, Xi Jinping proposed to clearly explain China's great cultural traditions; and to strengthen the Chinese people's confidence in Chinese culture and socialist values. China must be rooted in its great traditional culture to cultivate and carry forward the core socialist values. On May 4th this year, in his speech at Peking University, Xi Jinping kept highlighting China's great traditional culture. It is generally believed that the "May 4th" Movement is an important turning point when the Chinese people got rid of traditional thinking; introduced Western culture; and accepted Marxism. However, Xi Jinping emphasized traditional Chinese culture in his speech to commemorate the "May 4th" Movement. He said that Chinese civilization has lasted for thousands of years and has established its own value system. Today, to advocate and carry forward the core socialist values, China must absorb their energy to gain vitality and influence. He suggested China absorb the achievements of all human civilizations while at the same time

remembering the forefathers of China, not copying the development models of other countries or accepting any country's dictatorial preaching. Here, he is highlighting the necessity of the "three confidences" from the perspective of upholding national traditions.

The CPC has realized that Marxist ideology alone cannot totally solve the contradictions between communist ideals and reality, and it needs to find new solutions from traditional Chinese culture. As a matter of fact, a number of scholars have pointed out the commonalities between Marxism and traditional Chinese culture.<sup>31</sup> In his speech at Peking University, Xi Jinping quoted the classics a lot. From the main contents of such quotations, they may be divided into the following several aspects: the political philosophy of integrating individuals with the country, such as cultivating one's character, governing one's family, administering the country and pacifying the land; idealism that advocates morality and values justice above material gains, like the gentleman who knows what is right; the ideal of altruism which stresses "when the great way is followed, all under heaven will be equal"; helping the poor, like "the trouble lies not in scarcity but in uneven distribution"; and the ethics of harmony that advocates helping people and being kind to others. These are the concepts of common prosperity that are very similar to socialist ideals, and the concepts like those in traditional Chinese culture that advocate moral ideals, personal obedience, and overall political order through following rites.<sup>32</sup> They therefore require people to hold lofty ideals; follow the overall situation of the country instead of being preoccupied by material gains; and harmoniously get along with one another. Traditional Chinese culture has thus become an important resource for consolidating communist beliefs.

As a matter of fact, in principle nationalism is totally

different from communism; and universal values are quite different from traditional Chinese culture. In communist theory, class interests are more important than national interests, while in the traditional Confucianism of China, the central concept "ritual" requires people to accept hierarchy and repress personal passion.<sup>33</sup> However, in order to gloss over the negative side of 20th century scientific socialism, the CPC must make use of universal values and nationalism to make up for its deficiencies. So the CPC adopts the pragmatic approach when publicizing its ideals, highlighting different aspects for different occasions, without considering the conflicts between the communist ideals, universal values and nationalism. It uses the communist ideals to educate Party members, the Chinese Dream to educate the vast public, and recognizes universal values on the international stage. On June 7, 2013, at a press conference together with American President Obama in the United States, Xi Jinping even said that the Chinese Dream is interlinked with the dreams of all the world's peoples, including that of the American people.

However, to rebuild the socialist ideals, the CPC must respond to some pressing issues in today's Chinese society. These issues include the corruption of leading cadres, conflicts over public ownership, unfair income and the environment, etc. These issues directly affect people's confidence in socialism.

Corruption by leading cadres is now one of the greatest public concerns. After the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC has paid great attention to dealing with the issue of corruption, investigating a large number of corrupt government officials. However, when cracking down on the issue of corruption, they must be careful to avoid connecting the issue of corruption with the socialist system. Under conditions of public ownership and the centralization of political power, a

market economy could easily give birth to a privileged class, according to Zhao Ziyang, a CPC leader that stepped down after the Tian'anmen incident of 4th June 1989.<sup>34</sup> However, after the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC does not mention a "privileged class" anymore, but controls the rectification of corruption within the scope of Party building.

The concept of a "privileged class" originates from the CPC's criticism of the Soviet social system during the 1960s. The CPC claimed that the Soviet Union degenerated because of the emergence of a so-called "privileged class". Legend has it that the CPC thought about using a "high-salaried stratum" at the beginning, but gave it up considering that the principle of the Paris Commune had been applied in the early days following the October Revolution. It also considered using "bureaucratic bourgeoisie", but this was also improper because at the time the Soviet Union was still implementing public ownership and had not turned to privatization. Therefore, it decided to use the term, "privileged class".<sup>35</sup> In 2000, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences set up an important research group on "The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Union" and designated its vice president Li Shenming to lead the group. One of the group's most important achievements was the large-scale historical feature film, *Be Prepared—Historical Lessons of the Collapse of the Soviet Communist Party*, shot in 2006 by the group in cooperation with the National Party Building Research and China Fangzheng Publishing House of the Central Discipline Inspection Committee of the CPC. The film summarizes the lessons to be learned from the collapse of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Union and educates members of the CPC. In this film it is claimed that one of the most important factors for the collapse of the Soviet Communist Party was the

formation of a "privileged class" in the Soviet Union. However, in *Five Hundred Years*, when analyzing the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union, it does not mention the issue of a "privileged class" of the Soviet Communist Party, but mentions such issues as special treatment for party cadres and bureaucracy during the building of the ruling party. In *Five Hundred Years*, solving the problem of the "four fashions (namely formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism and extravagance)" is included as an integral part of Party building; and statistics are cited to show that increasing numbers of cases are put on record and increasing numbers of Party members nationwide are being punished by the discipline inspection and supervision departments.<sup>36</sup>

Public ownership and distribution according to labor are originally the dominant institutions to ensure social fairness in a socialist country. In *Five Hundred Years*, a distribution system in which public ownership is predominant and multiple forms of ownership develop concurrently, i.e. in which distribution according to labor is the mainstay and diverse forms of distribution co-exist, is said to be one of the prime feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics.<sup>37</sup> However, according to the official data of the State Statistics Bureau of China, of Chinese persons employed in 2012, 74.28 million were employed by state-owned units or collective units in towns and counties, and 97.72 million were employed by privately-run enterprises, enterprises with foreign investments and enterprises with investments from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. Furthermore, the total investment in fixed assets of the latter three was higher than that of the state-owned and collective sectors of the economy.<sup>38</sup> In other words, more people were employed in enterprises in the non-public sector of the economy than in state-owned or collectively-owned enterprises. Marxism holds that privatization is the root of all

problems, including the sins of capitalism and social unfairness, and socialism must eliminate privatization. How can we explain this contradiction? The government currently explains that the rate of contribution of the state-owned sector of the economy to national finance and the proportion of the state-owned sector of the economy in industries play important roles in the national economic lifelines and national security.<sup>39</sup> So the mainstay position of the public ownership does not manifest itself in public employment or income. The socialist ideals should involve common prosperity, but the CPC admitted in the report to the 18th CPC National Congress that the Chinese peoples' income gap remains large. In reality, the proportion of income of the Chinese government and capital income of China in the total national income of China have been continually growing, but income from labor has been continually declining. Since this trend has not changed, the income gap continues to grow. Despite its claim to have always taken distribution according to labor as the mainstay, the proportion of remuneration for labor in China has been dropping. Based on a survey done by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in May 2010, the ratio of labor remuneration to GDP in China has dropped for 22 years in a row, by about 20% overall. From 1978 to 2005, the ratio of capital remuneration to GDP increased by 20% in China, forming a sharp contrast with the constant drop of the ratio of labor remuneration to GDP.<sup>40</sup> The CPC proposed at its 18th national congress that common prosperity is the fundamental principle of socialism with Chinese characteristics; and that it will intensify the adjustment of distribution. At the 3rd Plenary Session of the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC mentioned that it will pay more attention to protecting income from labor and to improve the ratio of labor remuneration to primary distribution. As for the growing gap between

the rich and the poor, it was first noticed in the era of Hu Jintao, who then advocated social harmony. In the era of Xi Jinping, if China tries to intensify the socialist ideology, but fails to solve the problem of uneven distribution of social wealth, this will further sharpen the contradiction between ideals and reality. To demonstrate the superiority of socialism, it is necessary to solve the problem of an excessive gap between the rich and the poor. However, it is not easy to increase the proportion of labor remuneration in a largely market economy with mixed ownership. It was proposed at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 18th CPC National Congress that the key to launching holistic reform is to effectively manage economic efficiency and fairness for the entire society.

In recent years, environmental problems have also become increasingly prominent in China, raising a lot of public concern. Therefore, the CPC makes it an important symbol of socialism to resolve environmental problems, claiming that to solve environmental problems is an essential requirement of socialism. In *Five Hundred Years*, when summarizing the basic principles of scientific socialism set by Marx and Engels, especially when mentioning the concept of "transforming and using nature in line with the natural order", it quotes Engels's remarks in *Dialects of Nature*, "Man is stronger than other living creatures because we 'can understand and correctly apply the laws of nature.'" Then it states that, in a socialist society, achieving harmony between man and nature should be made an important goal of social development in a more conscious manner, in order to follow the laws of nature and keep a dynamic balance between man and nature.<sup>41</sup> Later, it mentions, "the construction of an eco-civilization is related to the overall plan of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and concerns the welfare of the masses and later



generations.”<sup>42</sup> In this way, *Five Hundred Years* makes solving environmental problems an integral part of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.

## Conclusion

From the “ideals” reshaped by the CPC since its 18th National Congress, we can see some basic policy orientations of the CPC. Xi Jinping brings up communist ideals again in a way that is different from the class struggles or radical socialist policies of the Mao era; and also different from the pragmatic practices of the Deng Xiaoping era, but more ideological. Now it is necessary to uphold the ideals of communism so as to make the CPC ruling system more reasonable and proper. The key is that Xi Jinping reshapes the ideals of communism. To stick to the communist ideology in the days to come, the CPC will become more internationalized, universal and open, and show more nationalism. Xi Jinping has tactfully integrated communist ideals with nationalist goals, because upholding the banner of nationalism will be more appealing in case of any contradictions between communist ideals and reality. Furthermore, idealism and the concept of harmony between individuals, the state and the society are also an important resource to make up for any inadequacies of the communist ideology. It has become necessary to promote democracy and traditional Chinese culture in order to consolidate the leadership of the CPC. Yet the more idyllic, concrete, and tangible these ideals are depicted, the greater the pressure will be on CPC leaders to realize them. In this situation even the smallest mistake will lead to intense public dissatisfaction. History has taught us that, when idealism is held high, we must be even more careful not to allow idealized propaganda to become implemented as real policies.

## NOTE

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- development of socialism in the Soviet Union during the period from the October Revolution to the “May 4th” Movement, as well as the spread of socialism in China in the early days. In 2011, Yu Youjun published the third volume of the same book, in which he told the history of socialist development in China between 1949 and 1965. Now Yu Youjun took the advice of Gao Fang and renamed his book as *Shehuizhuyi Wubai Nian* [Five Hundred Years of Socialism] Gao Fang, “Shehuizhuyi wubai nian zongheng tan-Cong < Zhengdao Cangsang> dianshi zhenglun pian yichu de huati” [Political Comments on Five Hundred Years of Socialism– A Topic from the TV Series, Vicissitudes along the Road] *Shehui Kexue Yanjiu* [Social Science Research], Issue 6, (2013).
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