

The Theory and Practice of Completing a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects

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Abstract

Moderate prosperity is a social ideal for which the Chinese people have been striving for thousands of years. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, and especially since the reform and opening-up policy was implemented in the late 1970s, the Communist Party of China deepened its understanding of the laws governing the building a moderate prosperous society in practice and wrought brilliant achievements in completing a moderate prosperous society in all respects. Completing such a society is a key step in realizing the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation, making scientific socialism radiate strong vitality in the 21st century and greatly expanding the way developing countries modernize. The great practice of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects has accumulated precious experience for building a modern socialist country in all respects.

Keywords: completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects, Chinese-style modernization, strengths of China's governance system

The completion of a moderately prosperous society in all respects is an important milestone on the road to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and a major contribution of the Chinese people to human civilization. China has just embarked on a journey to the second centenary goal of building a modern socialist country in all respects after attaining the first centenary goal of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects. In this context, reviewing and summarizing the theory and practice of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is of profound historical and great practical significance for upholding and improving the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, modernizing China's governance system and capacity, and embarking on the new journey of building a modern socialist country in all respects.

I. The Theoretical Origin and Meaning of Completing a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects

Moderate prosperity is a social ideal representing the aspiration and longing for a better life

for which the Chinese people have been striving for thousands of years. Throughout the ages, due to the constraints of backward forces of production and the historical conditions of private ownership, the aspirations of the Chinese working people for moderate prosperity were never able to be realized. After the founding of the PRC, and especially since the reform and opening-up policy was implemented in 1978, the Communist Party of China (CPC) led the Chinese people to maintain and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics and make historic achievements in reform and opening up and socialist modernization, ensuring that the goal of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects was attained as scheduled.

1. The idea of moderate prosperity in traditional Chinese culture

As a unique concept in China with a deep historical origin, moderate prosperity mainly refers to the living conditions of the common people and a society along the lines set out by Confucianism. It means that people can only enjoy a stable life if they have better economic and social development.

Moderate prosperity is about a specific stage of social development. In this stage, the economy develops steadily, political affairs are handled with integrity, society is relatively stable, culture is valued, and people can live and work in peace and content. The ancient concept of moderate prosperity also includes the idea of bringing security, protection, benefits and wealth to the people, and attaching importance to their livelihood. This has provided contemporary China with the valuable idea of keeping the people at the center and relying closely on them to complete a moderately prosperous society in all respects. However, due to the constraints of low productivity and private ownership, neither moderate prosperity nor great harmony had ever existed in China's history; rather, they more represent the people's aspirations for a better life.

2. The introduction of the concept of moderate prosperity and its connotations after the founding of the PRC

After the founding of the PRC, the CPC, faced with a situation in which the whole country was "poor and bare" and was in need of reconstruction, quickly shifted its focus to production and construction, and completed the agrarian revolution and the socialist transformation of the ownership of the means of production in a short period of time. As a result, China's economy recovered rapidly. At the First National People's Congress held in 1954, Comrade Mao Zedong put forward the goal of building a modern country. In 1964, in the government work report at the First Session of the Third National People's Congress, on the basis of Mao's proposal, Comrade Zhou Enlai formally and fully put forward the "four modernizations" and the "walking on two legs" strategy for realizing them: building China into a socialist power with modern agriculture, modern industry, modern national defense and modern science and technology in the 20th century.

After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978, the Party Central Committee, fully aware of the long-term and arduous nature of the task of modernization, based on scientific analysis of the international and domestic situation,

profound summary of positive and negative experiences, and full absorption of China's excellent traditional culture, creatively proposed the goal of moderate prosperity and started the journey of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. The 12th National Congress of the CPC (1982) formally set the goal of achieving moderate prosperity as the Party's action program. The 13th National Congress of the CPC (1987) established the three-step modernization strategy. The first step was to double GNP compared with 1980 and ensure that people's basic needs were met; the second step was to quadruple GNP by the end of the 20th century and bring people to a moderately prosperous level; and the third step was to bring the GNP per capita to the level of medium developed countries by the mid-21st century and ensure the people were relatively affluent and that modernization was basically realized.¹

By the end of 1990, on the basis of basically ensuring that people's basic needs were met, the Seventh Plenary Session of the 13th Party Central Committee gave a clearer definition of moderate prosperity. "Moderate prosperity means that on the basis of people's basic needs being met, their quality of life further improves to ensure those needs are lavishly met. This requirement includes both the improvement of material life and the enrichment of cultural life; it includes both a rise in consumer spending and the improvement of social welfare and the working environment."² This made the goal of building a moderate prosperous society better defined, the approach to doing so clearer, and the idea more operable. Under the leadership of the Party and under the guidance of the three-step modernization strategy, China exceeded the task of quadrupling per capita GNP in 2000 compared to 1980, and the people generally achieved moderate prosperity.

The 16th National Congress of the CPC (2002) put forward the goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, that is, securing the economic, political and cultural development of socialism with Chinese characteristics in all respects. The 17th National Congress of the CPC (2007) gave a new connotation to the goal of building a moderate prosperous society in all respects: By 2020, when such a society is completed, China "will have basically accomplished industrialization, with its overall strength significantly increased and its domestic market ranking as one of the largest in the world. It will be a country whose people are better off and enjoy markedly improved quality of life and a good environment."

3. New theories of completing a moderately prosperous society created since the 18th National Congress of the CPC

After the 18th National Congress of the CPC (2012), the Party Central Committee, with General Secretary Xi Jinping at the core, in response to China's new economic and social development and the new expectations of the masses of the people, and on the basis of the new achievements constantly attained in China's development, put forward the new target of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects, thus giving a higher standard and

1 Party Literature Research Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, ed., *Selected Important Documents Produced since the 13th CPC National Congress*, vol. 1, p. 16.

2 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 1401.

richer connotations to moderate prosperity. The political report of the 18th National Congress of the CPC clearly proposed “ensuring the achievement of the ambitious goal of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020.”³ The 19th National Congress of the CPC (2019) made further strategic plans for completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects in the new era. “The period between now and 2020 will be decisive in finishing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. We must follow the requirements for building this society set out at our 16th, 17th, and 18th Party national congresses, act in response to the evolution of the principal contradiction in Chinese society, and promote coordinated economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological advancement,” “so that the moderately prosperous society we build earns the people’s approval and stands the test of time.”

The difference between “building a moderately prosperous society in all respects” and “completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects” is a single word, but the change in meaning is profound. “Building” is a process, while “completing” is a result. Since the reform and opening-up policy was introduced, the living standard of the Chinese people has undergone dramatic changes. The 19th National Congress of the CPC made the major judgment that socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, stating that the goals of ensuring that people’s basic needs are met and that their lives have overall reached moderate prosperity have been accomplished ahead of time. The Congress added that, “The principal contradiction facing Chinese society has evolved. What we now face is the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life.” The Congress worked out a clear timetable and roadmap for completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects and building a strong modern socialist country: “Building on completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects, by the time we celebrate the CPC’s centenary, we will have developed our society into a moderately prosperous one with a stronger economy, greater democracy, more advanced science and education, thriving culture, greater social harmony, and a better quality of life. After this, with another 30 years of work, and by the time we celebrate the centenary of the PRC, we will have basically achieved modernization and turned China into a modern socialist country.” The Two Centenary Goals and the two-stage strategic plan for the period from 2020 to the middle of this century provide a clear direction for the development of the Party and the country after the completion of a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

The Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee proposed maintaining and improving the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and modernizing the governance system and capacity. In addition, it provided a strong institutional guarantee that gave the people a stronger sense of fulfillment and happiness at a higher level in terms of upholding and improving the systems whereby the people ran the country, the wellbeing of both urban and rural residents is integrated, and social governance is based on collaboration, participation, and common interests.

3 Hu Jintao, *Selected Works of Hu Jintao*, vol. 3, p. 625.

The Recommendations of the Central Committee of the CPC for Formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development and Long-Range Objectives through to the Year 2035, which were adopted at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee in October 2020, constitute a new blueprint for China's development in the next five years and beyond. The Recommendations actively respond to the demands and expectations of hundreds of millions of people, and for the first time propose to make more obvious and substantial progress in the common prosperity of all the people into a long-range goal. They put forward important requirements and major initiatives in terms of improving the income distribution structure, enhancing people's livelihood and wellbeing, and improving people's quality of life, providing an action guide for solid progress in promoting common prosperity.

The underlying message of a moderately prosperous society in all respects is found in "all respects," and the idea is to make all-around progress in promoting coordinated economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological advancement. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, "The moderately prosperous society in all respects we are seeking to build emphasizes not only 'moderate prosperity,' but rather moderate prosperity in 'all respects,' and it is the latter part that is more important and ultimately more difficult to achieve. ... While continuing to make economic development the central task, we also need to comprehensively advance progress in political, cultural, social, and ecological domains, so that all aspects of modernization can develop in a coordinated fashion and we can avoid a situation whereby major strengths and major weaknesses exist side by side." Moderate prosperity in all respects covers the entire population. No one should be left out from the completion of a moderately prosperous society in all respects; on the road to common prosperity, no one can fall behind. Moderate prosperity in all respects is moderate prosperity common to both urban and rural areas and to all regions.

The rural areas, especially poverty-stricken areas, were China's most striking weakness in the completion of a moderately prosperous society. If moderate prosperity was not achieved in the rural areas, and especially in poverty-stricken areas, it could not be said that China has achieved moderate prosperity in all respects. Winning the battle against poverty is the most difficult and critical point of building a moderate prosperous society in all respects. To build a moderately prosperous society in all respects, China should transform its growth model and shore up areas of weakness. It should focus on solving the problem of development quality and efficacy, and form a growth model that adapts to the new normal of economic development as soon as possible. In addition, it should also do its best to eliminate the most striking weaknesses in ecological conservation and people's wellbeing. General Secretary Xi Jinping also stressed in particular that to complete a moderately prosperous society in all respects, China must try its best to prevent any major risks, and, should they occur, should be able to ward them off. In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, this point has a more immediate significance.

In short, since the inception of reform and opening up, the Party's understanding of the laws of building a moderate prosperous society has been constantly deepened and enriched through practice. Practice has proved that the idea of building a moderately prosperous society is in line with the actual changes in China's stage of economic and social development and with those interest claims that are of direct, immediate concern to the people. This idea profoundly embodies the political wisdom and foresight of the Chinese Communists and reflects the CPC's profound understanding and accurate grasp of the laws of socialist modernization. This idea is a major Chinese Communist contribution to scientific socialism.

II. The Brilliant Achievement of Completing a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects

Since the inception of reform and opening up, and especially since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Party Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping at the core has closely focused on the goal and task of completing a moderate prosperous society in all respects. It has implemented the Five-sphere Integrated Plan⁴ and the Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy.⁵ It has led high-quality development with a new development philosophy. It has taken tough steps to win the three major battles against major risks, poverty, and pollution. China has a stronger economy, greater democracy, more advanced science and education, a thriving culture, greater social harmony, and a better quality of life. All these are brilliant achievements made in completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

1. *Historic solution to the problem of extreme poverty*

The elimination of poverty is the basic symbol of completion of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and it is also the fundamental task of socialism. Measured by the prevailing rural poverty line in that year, China's rural poverty population was about 770 million at the end of 1978, with a poverty incidence rate as high as 97.5 percent, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the world's poor population at that time.⁶ Through large-scale poverty alleviation and development and targeted poverty alleviation, China's rural poverty population was reduced to 5.51 million people at the end of 2019, and the poverty incidence rate dropped to 0.6 percent. By November 23, 2020, poverty had been eliminated in all 832 poverty-stricken counties in China. From 1981 to 2012, the reduction in the number of poor people in China accounted for 71.82 percent of the global total of reductions in the number

4 The Five-sphere Integrated Plan is to promote coordinated economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological advancement.

5 The Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy is to make comprehensive moves to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, deepen reform, advance law-based governance, and strengthen Party self-governance.

6 In 1981, China's rural poverty population accounted for about 38.29 percent of the world's poor. See Wei Houkai and Pan Chenguang, eds., *China Rural Development Report: A Focus on Completing a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects in Rural Areas 2016*, p. 107.

of poor people.⁷ China was the first developing country to accomplish the UN Millennium Development Goals, thus making a great contribution to global poverty reduction.

The income of farmers in poor areas has increased significantly, but production and living conditions have improved significantly. From 2013 to 2019, the per capita disposable income of farmers in China's 832 poverty-stricken counties increased by 9.7 percent annually, from 6,079 yuan to 11,567 yuan. The per capita net income of the registered impoverished households in China increased by 30.2 percent, from 3,416 yuan in 2015 to 9,808 yuan in 2019. The income structure of the rural poor is increasingly being optimized, the proportion of work-based earnings has steadily increased, and the rural poor have become much better able to lift themselves out of poverty.

2. Economic and social development by leaps and bounds

China's overall national strength and international influence have been greatly enhanced. Since the inception of reform and opening up, China has kept economic development at the center and constantly released and developed the forces of production. It has achieved miraculous long-term rapid economic development, and its GDP has continuously broken new records. All this has laid a solid material foundation for completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

In 1978, China's GDP was about 367.9 billion yuan, accounting for about 1.8 percent of the world's total. In 2019, it was close to 100 trillion yuan, accounting for more than 16 percent of the world's total, and easily ranking second in the world.⁸ In 1978, China's per capita GDP was about US\$156,⁹ ranking 134th in the world, and China was one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2019, China's per capita GDP exceeded US\$10,000, easily ranking among upper-middle-income countries and taking great strides to catch up with the pace of world development.¹⁰

China's economic and social structure has undergone profound changes. Urbanization has surged, with the urbanization rate of the resident population increasing from 17.9 percent in 1978 to 60.6 percent in 2019, and hundreds of millions of farmers have been granted permanent urban residence.¹¹ A modern economic system has basically been constructed, and the structural ratio of primary, secondary and tertiary industry changed from 33.4: 44.8: 21.8

7 See Li Peilin and Wei Houkai, eds., *Blue Book on Poverty Alleviation: Report on Poverty Alleviation and Development in China (2016)*, p. 54.

8 See the databank of the World Bank, www.databank.shihang.org.

9 See Lin Zhaomu, "Through the Storm, China Is More Confident (Oral History: China Has Grown More Wonderful over the Past 40 Years [12])," p. 3.

10 See Ning Jizhe, "Decisive Progress Has Been Made in Completing a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Areas of Weakness Must Be Shored Up More Quickly to Complete That Society," p. 11.

11 See "Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs: China's Urbanization Level Has Exceeded 60 Percent, and It's Time to Use More Land Value-Added Income on Agriculture, Rural Areas, and Farmers."

in 1981 to 7.1: 39.0: 53.9 in 2019.¹² This means China has shifted from a traditional agrarian society to a modern industrial society. The value-added of China's manufacturing industry easily ranks first in the world. China's science and technology capacity has been significantly improved. Since 2013, China has become the world's second-largest country in terms of investment in R&D, and China's total number of R&D personnel easily ranks first in the world.¹³ The number of China's patent applications and licenses has ranked first in the world for nine consecutive years, and the level of the contribution of scientific and technological advances to economic growth reached 59.5 percent in 2019.¹⁴ Infrastructure has gone ahead in leaps and bounds, and China has basically built a modern comprehensive transportation system, with its total mileage of high-speed rail and highways ranking first in the world.

People's lives have improved significantly and national financial strength has been greatly enhanced. General public budgetary revenue, which exceeded 100 billion yuan for the first time in 1978 and exceeded 19 trillion yuan in 2019, provides the funds needed to improve people's lives. The income of urban and rural residents has continued to grow rapidly, and national per capita disposable income reached 30,733 yuan in 2019, with more diversified sources of income.¹⁵ The quality of consumption has significantly improved for urban and rural residents. National per capita consumption expenditure reached 21,559 yuan in 2019, with the Engel coefficient dropping to 28.2 percent, and the consumption structure changed from meeting basic needs and moderate prosperity to affluence and enjoyment of life.¹⁶ The living conditions and housing quality of urban and rural residents have been significantly improved, with per capita floorage of housing reaching 39 square meters in urban areas and 47.3 square meters in rural areas in 2018.¹⁷ Cumulatively, more than 80 million items of different kinds of subsidized housing and rebuilt rundown urban areas have housed more than 200 million people.¹⁸

3. Significant improvement in quality of the people and in social civilization

Well-rounded popular development has improved significantly. The main national health indicators are better than the world average, and per capita life expectancy has increased from 67.8 years in 1981 to 77.3 years in 2019. In 2019, the national maternal mortality rate dropped

12 See National Bureau of Statistics of China, *National Data*, <https://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm>.

13 See National Bureau of Statistics of China, "A Great Leap in Science and Technology Development and a New Chapter of Innovation-Led Development: Report on the Achievements of Economic and Social Development in Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the PRC (7)."

14 See Zhao Yongxin, "China's Innovation Index Ranks 14th in the World," p. 12

15 See National Bureau of Statistics of China, *National Data*, <https://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm>.

16 National Bureau of Statistics of China, "Income and Consumer Expenditures in 2019."

17 See National Bureau of Statistics of China, "People's Lives Achieve Historic Leaps and Stride toward a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects: Report on the Achievements of Economic and Social Development in Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of People's Republic of China (14)."

18 See Chu Zirui, "Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development: More Than 200 Million People Have Been Helped to Solve Their Housing Difficulties."

to 17.8 per 100,000, the infant mortality rate dropped to 5.6 per 1,000, and the mortality rate of children under five dropped to 7.8 per 1,000, all of which are ahead of the UN Millennium Development Goals.¹⁹ National literacy has continued to improve, with the illiteracy rate falling from over 80 percent at the beginning of the PRC to less than 4 percent. In 2018, the proportion of the population with college education or above reached 13 percent, and the average number of years of education for people aged 6 and above reached 9.26 years.²⁰ China's human development index (HDI) jumped from 0.501 in 1990 to 0.758 in 2018. This increase of more than 51 percent made it the only country in the world that jumped from "a low human development level" to "a high human development level" over this period.²¹

Social civilization has improved across the board. The core socialist values are deeply rooted in people's hearts, and the nation's cultural soft power and the influence of Chinese culture have been greatly enhanced. The system of public cultural services and service facilities is getting better and better. From 1978 to 2019, the number of public libraries increased from 1,218 to 3,196, up 1.6 times; the number of visitors increased from 77.87 million²² to 901 million, an increase of 10.6 times; the number of public cultural institutions increased from 6,893 to 44,073, a rise of 5.5 times; and the number of museums increased from 349 to 5,132, an increase of 13.7 times.²³ The number of internet users in China increased from 23 million in 2000 to 940 million in June 2020, an increase of nearly 40 times, with the people fully enjoying the convenience brought by the internet.²⁴

4. Steady improvement in the level of basic public services

China has achieved the preliminary building of the world's largest and most populous social security system, covering multiple aspects of life such as aged care, medical care, subsistence allowances, housing and education. The level of basic public services has improved significantly.

The overall development level of education has jumped to the middle-to-upper ranks of the world. The universalization of compulsory education has reached the level of high-income countries, and the consolidation rate of nine-year compulsory education reached 94.8 percent in 2019. The world's largest higher education system has been built; from 1978 to 2019, the

19 See National Health Commission of the PRC, "Statistical Bulletin on China's Health Development in 2019."

20 See National Bureau of Statistics of China, "Steady Growth in Total Population and Significant Improvement in Well-Rounded Quality of the People: Report on the Achievements of Economic and Social Development in Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of People's Republic of China (20)."

21 United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2019: Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century*.

22 Data for 1979.

23 See Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC, "2019 Statistical Bulletin of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC on Cultural and Tourism Development."

24 See China Internet Network Information Center, "The 46th Statistical Report on the Development of the Internet in China."

gross enrollment rate of higher education in China increased from 2.7 percent to 51.6 percent, and the number of students enrolled in general undergraduate and specialist courses increased 35.4 times to 30,315,300. Vocational education has seen significant development. In 1978, the number of students enrolled in secondary vocational education nationwide was only 2.12 million, accounting for about 12 percent of the total number of students enrolled in senior secondary school level education. In 2019, the number of students enrolled in secondary vocational education reached 15,764,700, accounting for 39.46 percent of the total number of students enrolled in senior secondary school level education.²⁵

A modern medical and public health service system has been initially put in place, and state investment in healthcare has continued to increase. From 1978 to 2019, the proportion of healthcare expenditure to GDP jumped from 3 percent to 6.6 percent, and the total number of healthcare institutions nationwide increased from 170,000 to 1,080,000. In 1986, there were 3,516 sanitary and epidemic prevention stations nationwide. In 2019, the country had 34,997 community health service centers (stations), and has set up a preliminary public health system covering urban and rural areas.²⁶

The development of a diversified and multilevel national health insurance and social security system has been accelerated. By the end of 2019, 1.35 billion people had basic medical insurance, and the coverage rate has remained steady at over 95 percent in recent years.²⁷ The serious illness insurance system for rural and non-working urban residents covers 1.05 billion people.²⁸ The coverage of basic old-age insurance has grown from only 100 million urban workers in 2000 to over 900 million urban and rural residents at present, and China has built the world's largest universal system of basic medical insurance and social security network.

5. Obvious improvement in eco-environmental quality

Putting into practice the idea that “green mountains are gold mountains,” China has constantly promoted the development of eco-friendly growth models and ways of life, winning the battle against pollution and making remarkable achievements in ecological conservation.

Resource and energy use efficiency has continued to improve. Since the late 1980s, China's forest area and forest accumulation have grown for thirty consecutive years, giving the country the highest growth of forest resources in the world. In 2019, China's water

25 See Ministry of Education of the PRC, ed., *China Education Statistical Yearbook* for the relevant years; 2019 data come from the “2019 Statistical Bulletin on National Education Development.”

26 The 1978 data come from Bai Jianfeng, “Ensuring People's Access to Medical Services: From Having Access to Medical Services to Maintaining Good Health,” p. 11; the 1986 data come from Yan Qiaoru, “CDC Being ‘Integrated,’” p. 10; and the 2019 data come from National Health Commission of the PRC, “Statistical Bulletin on China's Health Development in 2019.”

27 See National Healthcare Security Administration, “2019 Statistical Report on Healthcare Security Development.”

28 See He Yuxin, “Major Illness Insurance Covers 1.05 Billion Urban and Rural Residents: Close to Full Coverage.”

consumption per 10,000 yuan of GDP and 10,000 yuan of industrial value-added decreased by 23.8 percent and 27.5 percent respectively compared with 2015.²⁹ The proportion of clean energy has rapidly increased, and the scale of the industry easily ranks first in the world. In 2019, clean energy accounted for 23.4 percent of China's total energy consumption; coal consumption decreased to 57.7 percent of the total; and carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP were 48.1 percent lower than in 2005.³⁰

Water and soil resources and air quality have improved significantly. China implemented a “double zero growth” action plan for the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. From 2015 to 2018, China's agricultural fertilizer use was reduced from 60,226,000 tons to 56,534,200 tons, and pesticide use was cut from 1,783,000 tons to 1,503,600 tons, achieving the goal of zero growth in fertilizer and pesticide use for 2020 ahead of schedule.³¹ In 2019, the annual average concentration of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in cities at the prefectural level and above that do not meet the standard dropped by 23.1 percent, and the ratio of days with good air quality of 337 cities at and above the prefectural level nationwide averaged 82 percent.³²

III. The Significance of Completing a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects

Completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is of great significance for the history of the Chinese nation, the history of socialism and the history of humanity.

1. *The significance for the history of the Chinese nation*

The Chinese nation has created a splendid and brilliant civilization and made significant contributions to the progress of human civilization. Under some historical Chinese dynasties, there appeared “a well-governed age” or “prosperous era,” as in the reign of Emperors Wen and Jing in the Han dynasty, Taizong and Xuanzong in the Tang dynasty, and Kangxi and Qianlong in the Qing dynasty. However, these well-governed or prosperous eras, when the country was stronger, the economy was more prosperous, and life more stable, were only so in comparison with times of chaos; they were one-sided developments. In fact, during these eras, the broad mass of the people did not really have their basic needs met, and could only dream of a modest prosperity in which individuals would have plentiful food and clothing; a moderately prosperous society could not even be broached. The overall backwardness

29 See Yu Lu, “China's Water Efficiency Has Improved Significantly since the 13th Five-Year Plan Period,” p. 15.

30 See Leading Party Members' Group of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, “Leading the Building of Beautiful China with Xi Jinping's Thinking on Ecological Civilization: An In-Depth Study of the Third Volume of Xi Jinping's *The Governance of China*,” p. 9.

31 See National Bureau of Statistics of China, “Agricultural Production at a New Level and a New Blueprint for Modern Agriculture: Report on the Achievements of Economic and Social Development in Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of People's Republic of China (12).”

32 *Ibid.*

of China's historical "feudal" society in terms of politics, institutions, thought and social governance doomed the moderately prosperous society to remaining unattainable.

From the 19th century on, it was clear that the rigid and backward feudal system was unable to adapt to the developing trends of the times. Coupled with the invasion and oppression of the imperialist powers, China was reduced to a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. Although people of vision such as Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen explored the ideal of great harmony and the idea of a moderately prosperous society, they were unsuccessful.

Since its birth, the CPC has taken on itself the historical responsibility of seeking the happiness of the Chinese people and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It led the Chinese people to the victory of the New Democratic Revolution after a long revolutionary struggle. After the founding of the PRC, the Party led the people to formally start the great journey toward national prosperity and happiness, completing the socialist revolution, establishing socialism as the country's fundamental system, and eliminating the system of exploitation. This completed the most extensive and profound social transformation in the history of the Chinese nation, and laid a solid foundation for building a moderately prosperous society.

Since 1978, the Party leaders have led the people to carry out the great new revolution of reform and opening up, successfully blazing the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and greatly freeing up and developing the productive forces. People's lives have thus improved considerably, and China's overall national strength has significantly increased. China has made great strides to catch up with the times and has made a flying leap from having stood up to growing rich.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Party Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping at the core has led the Chinese people to make all-around and groundbreaking historical achievements in the cause of the Party and the country. As a result, China has undertaken profound and fundamental historic changes; socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era; and the Chinese nation has achieved a tremendous transformation in that it has grown rich and is becoming strong.

The world today faces profound changes unseen in a century. China's future development will have more opportunities, but it will also face greater challenges. Completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is the first of the Two Centenary Goals. The achievement of this goal will store up valuable experience for the second centenary goal of building China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful by the centenary of the PRC in 2049. And it will lay the most solid foundation for China to cope with crises and changes and resist risks and challenges, all of which is of great significance for the smooth start of the new journey toward a modern socialist country in all respects.

2. Significance for the history of socialism

The Chinese idea of moderate prosperity and the Western idea of utopia both contain the ideal of people living and working in peace and common prosperity. Marxism reveals

the general law of the development of human society; the objective law of the demise of capitalism and the triumph of communism; and the historical conditions and realistic basis for achieving common prosperity for the people. However, due to the limitations of the times, Marx and Engels failed to put the ideal of common prosperity into practice.

The October Revolution turned socialism from an ideal to a reality, after which it spread from one country to many countries. The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and other countries actively developed socialism. However, due to difficult external conditions, while giving priority to the development of heavy industry, they failed to deal with the relationship between agriculture, light industry and heavy industry, and the shares of accumulation and consumption. As a result, people's living standards rose slowly, so that they gradually lost confidence in their countries. This eventually led to the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the demise of the Soviet Union. The world socialist movement suffered a major setback.

Throughout socialism's developmental history of more than five hundred years, from the early idealistic socialist ideas to the later socialist practices of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, no socialist country had successfully completed a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Since the reform and opening-up policy was implemented, the CPC has explored a socialist path with Chinese characteristics by integrating the general principles of the socialist system with China's specific conditions on the basis of both positive and negative experience in developing socialism. This has provided a great stimulus to the vitality of China's socialist system and a strong institutional guarantee for completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Over the past forty plus years of reform and opening up, the Party has withstood the serious impact of the demise of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and various other risks and tests. It has led the Chinese people to successfully maintain and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics. As the world's largest socialist country, China's completion of a moderately prosperous society in all respects fully demonstrates that scientific socialism has emerged with enormous vitality in China in the 21st century, and this will certainly have the effect of offering a model for the development of other socialist countries.

3. Significance for the history of human society

The concept of moderate prosperity is closely related to modernization. The developed countries in the West went through a long process of modernization. They successively developed industrialization, urbanization, agricultural modernization and information-oriented society. It took more than two hundred years for them to be where they are today. After the founding of the PRC, especially since the inception of reform and opening up, it took only a few decades to complete the process of modernization that took developed countries one or more centuries to complete by developing industrialization, urbanization, agricultural modernization and information-oriented society in parallel.

Poverty has been a global problem throughout the history of human society, and the

elimination of poverty is the common mission of humankind. Against the backdrop of the global Covid-19 pandemic and the return of more countries and regions to the poverty line, China has completed the historic task of eradicating extreme poverty as a whole on schedule and has achieved the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ten years ahead of schedule. Not only are these tremendous achievements in poverty eradication and reduction unprecedented in the history of China, they are also rare in the history of the world. For China, which accounts for nearly one fifth of the world's population, completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is a miraculous event in the history of human poverty reduction, and has made a significant contribution to the overall improvement of global human welfare.

Completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects also provides insights for achieving the all round development of individuals. It reflects people-centered development thought, the respect for the people's principal position and pioneering spirit and takes the well-rounded development of individuals as an important goal of social development. It emphasizes that such development should not only focus on the economic level, but also includes the pursuit of political, social, cultural, ecological and environmental progress and focuses on the development of each individual. Completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects has laid an important foundation for the all round development of individuals and provided Chinese inspiration for the full and free development of humanity.

IV. Practical Experience in Completing a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects

In the great practice of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects, the CPC has led the people in deepening their understanding of the laws governing the Party rule and to develop socialism and human society, on all of which it has accumulated precious experience.

1. Uphold CPC leadership and give full play to the superiority of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics

Always upholding the centralized and unified Party leadership is the fundamental political guarantee for completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects. General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that China's success hinges on the Party: the essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the leadership of the Party and the greatest strength of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the leadership of the Party.³³

Always upholding the centralized and unified Party leadership ensures that efforts to complete a moderately prosperous society in all respects are on the right course, and it is completed on schedule and with high quality, and that the strengths of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics are fully exploited. A moderately prosperous society in all

33 Xi Jinping, "Leadership of Communist Party of China Defines Socialism with Chinese Characteristics."

respects means integrated moderate prosperity with coordinated development of various fields such as the economy, politics, culture, society and ecological civilization. It is a huge systemic project and all parties must be mobilized to participate. Only under the centralized and unified leadership of the Party can concerted efforts be made across the country and the socialist system's efficiency in pooling resources to accomplish major undertakings be fully exploited. This will guarantee that the battle to secure a decisive victory in completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is won.

2. Adhere to the people-centered development philosophy, and constantly meet the people's ever-growing needs for a better life

Seeking happiness for the people and rejuvenation for the nation is the original aspiration and founding mission of the Party, and achieving common prosperity is the fundamental task of socialism. One of the valuable lessons learned from the achievement of the goal of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is that the Party has always adhered to the people-centered development philosophy, ensured that development is for the people, reliant on the people, and that its fruits are shared by the people, and been committed to achieving common prosperity.

The Party comes from the people, has its roots among the people, and works for the benefit of the people. Serving the people wholeheartedly is the fundamental purpose of the Party. It always takes meeting the fundamental interests of all the people as the starting point and ultimate goal of all its work. It is committed to taking the support, approval, and satisfaction of the people as the basis of policy-making. The Party works to make sure that the people continue to enhance their sense of betterment, their happiness and their security in the practice of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects. It encourages the people to participate more consciously in the current of the times to create a better life. To build a modern socialist country in all respects, the Party must always adhere to the people-centered development philosophy and make the aspirations of the people to live a better life the focus of its efforts.

3. Comprehensively deepen the reform of institutions and mechanisms, and constantly strengthen the foundations of social development

The achievement of the goal of completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is attributable to the continuous and comprehensive deepening of the reform of institutions and mechanisms, the continuous improvement and development of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the efforts to modernize the national governance system and capacity.

In the first thirty years of the PRC, China established socialism as its fundamental system and economic and other institutions conformed to it. This has served as the fundamental political premise and the institutional foundation for the development and progress of China today. Over the past forty plus years since the inception of reform and opening up, proceeding from China's basic national condition of being in the primary stage of socialism,

the CPC has kept reform oriented toward establishing and developing the socialist market economy and promoted profound and significant changes in China's economic system. It has formed and established the basic economic system of socialism with Chinese characteristics in practice and greatly freed up and developed the productive forces. All this provided an important institutional guarantee for the creation of the rarely seen Chinese miracle, and laid a solid foundation for completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Party Central Committee, with General Secretary Xi Jinping at the core, has adhered to and improved the basic socialist economic system. At its Third Plenary Session, the 18th Party Central Committee made overall plans for deepening reform across the board. At its Fourth Plenary Session, the 19th CPC Central Committee presented a new overview of the basic socialist economic system and decided to promote reform to develop the socialist market economy in breadth and depth in order to continuously stimulate developmental dynamism so as to complete a moderately prosperous society in all respects and build a modern socialist country in all respects.

4. Continuing to balance material and cultural-ethical progress and enhance the cultural confidence of the Chinese people

Completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects requires both a strong material foundation and a high degree of cultural-ethical progress. The successful completion of a moderately prosperous society in all respects proves that completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is not only a historical process in which the material life of the people is significantly improved, but also a process in which the cultural life of the people is significantly enhanced and a process in which the Chinese people's confidence in the socialist path, socialist theory, socialist system, and especially socialist culture is significantly enhanced. General Secretary Xi Jinping has stressed that to enhance the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, China must promote material, cultural and ethical progress, strengthen the nation materially, culturally and ethically, and improve the material, cultural and ethical lives of all the people.³⁴

The Party's 18th National Congress for the first time included "strengthen the core socialist values" in its political report as the primary task of developing Chinese culture. The Congress clarified the content of the core socialist values, and stated that the active cultivation and practice of core socialist values is an important element in completing a moderate prosperous society in all respects. General Secretary Xi Jinping repeatedly stressed that, "Our confidence in our path, in our theory and in our system of socialism with Chinese characteristics all boil down to our confidence in our culture."³⁵ He also noted that, "Confidence in culture is basic, deep-rooted, and reaches far and wide; it is a force that is more fundamental, stable and

34 Nian Guanghui, "At the National Conference on Public Communication, Xi Jinping Emphasized the Need to Bear the Big Picture in Mind, Keep in Line with Trends, Focus on Priorities, and Strive to Do a Better Job of Public Communication Work," p. 1.

35 Xi Jinping, *The Governance of China*, vol. II, p. 339.

persistent.”³⁶

5. *Adhere to the concept that “green mountains are gold mountains,” and ensure solid progress in ecological civilization*

The success of completing a moderately prosperous society proves that promoting economic development, protecting and improving the environment and raising people’s living standards are complementary and mutually reinforcing; none of them can be stressed at the expense of the others. Since the inception of reform and opening up, China has deepened its understanding of the relationship between eco-environmental protection and economic and social development, and has scientifically abandoned the traditional development model of “polluting first and cleaning up later; sacrificing the environment for economic growth; and focusing on end-of-pipe treatment,” and established environmental protection and resource conservation as a basic national strategy. The 16th National Congress of the CPC put forward the Scientific Outlook on Development and stressed harmony between man and nature. The 17th National Congress of the CPC made ecological civilization a strategic task for the first time.

Since the 18th National Congress, the CPC Central Committee, with General Secretary Xi Jinping at the core, has incorporated ecological civilization into the Five-sphere Integrated Plan, established the environmental concept of harmony between man and nature, adhered to the concept that “green mountains are gold mountains,” and formed Xi Jinping thinking on ecological civilization. The Party’s 18th National Congress set “beautiful China” as the grand goal of ecological civilization for the first time. With Xi Jinping’s thinking on ecological civilization as a guide, China’s eco-environmental protection has undergone a historical turning point involving overall changes. A good ecological environment is the most equitable public good and the most widely beneficial.

V. Conclusion

Completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects is a key step in realizing the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Party Central Committee, with General Secretary Xi Jinping at the core, has rallied and led all the Chinese people to achieve brilliant achievements in completing a moderately prosperous society in all respects. This fully demonstrates the great political strengths of the CPC leadership and the remarkable superiority of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and China’s national governance system. It has also greatly enhanced the self-confidence and pride, cohesion and centripetal force of the Chinese people.

The completion of a moderately prosperous society in all respects has laid a solid material foundation for the realization of national rejuvenation. More importantly, this great practice

36 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

proves that only by thoroughly implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and keeping to and developing the socialist path with Chinese characteristics can China truly achieve national rejuvenation. As a guide to action enabling the entire Party and the whole nation to strive for the realization of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era must be maintained for a long time and continuously developed.

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—Translated by Shao Ya’nan from
Social Sciences in China (Chinese Edition), 2020, no. 12
Revised by Sally Borthwick