The Centenary of the CPC: Leading the Times by Grasping the Laws and Trends of Historical Development

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Abstract: *Discussions on grasping the laws and trends of historical development take a fundamental theoretical position in the scientific system of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Xi Jinping's important statements have systematically answered such questions as what type of laws and trends of historical development should be followed, how did the Party follow the laws and trends of historical development in its centennial history, and how should the laws and trends of historical development be followed in a new era. The birth of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the victory of China's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the unveiling of a new era for reform and opening up and socialism with Chinese characteristics are all the results of grasping the laws and trends of historical development. Over the past century, the Party has followed the laws and trends of historical development and continuously advanced the sinicization of Marxism on the basis of adhering to the unification between truth and values. In pursuit of "putting people first," the Party has courageously been reforming itself and made relentless progress in the great endeavor of Party building. History shows that a keen appreciation of the laws and trends of historical development is an important sign of political maturity for a proletarian party. Only by applying Marxism according to current times and conditions will we keep abreast with the laws and trends of historical development. We should establish a broader concept of history and identify the laws and trends of historical development from the interactions and linkages between China and the rest of the world. We must recognize and promote the outstanding role of great leaders in steering the country in line with the laws and trends of historical development.*

Keywords: *Communist Party of China (CPC), centenary, development laws of history, trends*

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General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed that all Party officials should "further grasp the laws and trends of historical development and always take a historical initiative in the cause of the Party and country." "Over the past century of struggles, our Party has always applied the basic principles of Marxism in analyzing and grasping the trends of history, properly handling China's relationship with the rest of the world, and seizing and leveraging various historical opportunities" (Xi, 2021).

On the occasion of centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), a careful study and in-depth appreciation of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important statements on the patterns and trends of history will offer important guidance for China's socialist modernization and all-round development into a strong socialist modern country in all respects.

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1. Grasping the Laws and Trends of Historical Development

Discussions on the laws and trends of historical development take a fundamental theoretical position in the scientific system of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in a New Era. On June 25, 2013, Xi Jinping noted at the Seventh Collective Workshop of the Politburo of the 18th CPC Central Committee that "We must follow the trends of world development." He quoted Dr. Sun Yat-sen's well-known saying, "Global trends are vast and mighty; those following them will prosper, those going against them will perish," emphasizing that "properly balancing China's relationship with the rest of the world is a major question concerning the success or failure of the Party's cause." "The birth of the Communist Party of China", he said, "the founding of socialist China, and the implementation of reform and opening up are all the results of grasping the trends of world development" (Xi, 2021).

Xi Jinping's important statements on the laws and trends of historical development were made based on an extensive survey and in-depth review of history. After the Opium War, China was defeated once and again by countries that were much smaller in terms of economic size, population and land areas. "History tells us the truth that the strength of a country cannot be determined just by its economic aggregate and the prosperity of a nation cannot be determined just by its population and land areas" (Xi, 2014). "In retrospect of history in modern times, we may have a more profound appreciation of the extreme importance of seizing opportunities and catching up with the times. The 100 years from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century witnessed the emergence and spectacular development of the Industrial Revolution. Yet at that time, the Qing Dynasty's rulers missed opportunities from the Industrial Revolution through self-seclusion and arrogance, causing China to fall behind the rest of the world in economic and technological development. In about another 100 years from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, Western powers invaded China with warships and cannons, forcing it into a semicolonial and semifeudal country. Foreign invasion, government corruption, incessant wars, turmoil and destitution made it impossible for China to seek national development and keep abreast with the times. In the 1960s and 1970s, the world experienced another wave of technological and industrial revolutions. Some countries and regions in East Asia took this opportunity to develop themselves and prosper, but China again missed the boat due to the Cultural Revolution. Since the Third Plenum of the 11th CPC Central Committee, we have seized opportunities to achieve today's favorable situation and made it possible for our country and nation to catch up in big strides" (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2016).

Xi Jinping's important statements on grasping the laws and trends of historical development represent a creative application and development of the materialistic conception of history. "The materialistic conception of history is the fundamental methodology for us communists to interpret and grasp history." Proceeding from this fundamental methodology, Xi Jinping systematically answered such questions as what kind of laws and trends of historical development should be followed, how the Communist Party of China has followed those laws and trends in its century-long history, and how should we follow those laws and trends of history in the new era.

Marxism offers a scientific revelation of the basic laws and trends of human society's development. "Marx established the materialistic conception of history and the theory of surplus value. He revealed the general laws for the development of human society and the special patterns of capitalist operation, shedding light on the path for humanity to leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom and pointing the way to freedom and liberation for the people." The birth of Marxism "is like a splendid sunrise that illuminates the path of humanity for exploring the patterns of history and seeking self-liberation." As Xi Jinping revealed, the great efficacy of Marxism derives from Marx's "in-depth reflections" on the times and the world he lived in and a keen appreciation of the development laws of human society (Xi, 2018).

"In studying Marxism," said Xi Jinping, "we must study and practice the Marxist thought on the

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development laws of human society." The advanced nature of the Marxist party, the founding aspirations of communists and the ideals and convictions of Chinese communists are all based upon the scientific theory of Marxism, the development laws of human society revealed by Marxism, and the lofty ideals to benefit the vast majority of the people. "We stand firmly because we pursue the truth. We stand firmly because we follow the laws. We stand firmly because we represent the fundamental interests of the vast majority of people" (Xi, 2016).

Marxist thought on the development laws of human society is manifested in the theory of social evolution. Instead of a set of rigid facts or the illusion of a certain concept, the development of human society is a lively historical process and has historical laws independent of human will; the laws of history will naturally give rise to historical trends. The laws and trends of historical development have different manifestations across various stages. In the intricate relationship of social factors, there must be an ultimate factor with decisive effects. This ultimate factor is the regularity of the laws and trends of historical development. People's thoughts and perceptions change with the evolving laws and trends of historical development. As Carl Marx and Frederick Engels emphasized on various occasions, each historical transformation of social systems is associated with changing social concepts. That is to say, people's ways of thinking, values, knowledge system and ideologies will change with social relations, social activities, and social existence. As noted by Frederick Engels, "The theoretical thought of each era - including that of our times - is a product of history and takes completely different forms and substances in different times. Like other sciences, the science of thinking is a science of history and a science about the historical development of people's thoughts" (Marx and Engels, 2012d). An idea or theory will become the intellectual essence of a particular era only when it captures the actual conditions of the society in that historical stage.

However, human society is different from the natural world. "In the natural world - leaving aside the human effects on nature, all forces are unconscious and blind and interact with each other, and the general laws are reflected in the interactions of those forces. For anything that happens - no matter the numerous occasional events that can be perceived from the surface or the verified results of the intrinsic regularity of those occasional events, nothing happens as an expected conscious objective. In social and historical spheres, however, all activities are carried out by conscious people acting deliberately or passionately with certain intentions; nothing happens without a conscious intention or expected objectives" (Marx and Engels, 2012d). The question is how to discover the laws of human society with consciousness? As in the words of Marx, "My opinion is to interpret the development of economic and social forms as a process of natural history. No matter how an individual subjectively transcends various relationships, he is always the result of those relationships in the social sense" (Marx and Engels, 2012b) . Engels said that "Conflicts between numerous individual aspirations and actions lead to an identical situation that dominates the unconscious natural world" (Marx and Engels, 2012d). An obvious fact is that although the intentions of people's actions are expected, the results of those actions are not always expected. The subjective actions of humanity do not mean that no regularity as in the natural world exists in human society.

Over the past century, "Our Party has always analyzed and followed the trends of history according to the basic principles of Marxism" and led the Chinese people to march from victory to victory.

First, the birth of the Communist Party of China is a result of following the world trend of development. "Our Party came into existence from this world trend and stood at the forefront of the times."

"How did the Communist Party of China come into existence?" noted Xi, "It came into existence with the combination between Marxism-Leninism and workers' movement in China. The salvoes of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism, which was a great world trend. Our Party came into existence from this world trend and stood at the forefront of the times, becoming a forerunner of the times."

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This "world trend" has a profound background of the times. The eruption of the October Revolution marked the beginning of a new era. The World War I that led to the October Revolution was seen by many as the beginning of the collapse of Western capitalist civilization of the 19th century and the associated eurocentrism. (Hobsbawm, 2017) As Lenin pointed out in April 1919, "A new era of world history has dawned." The task of this new era is to end the last form of slavery, i.e. "capitalist slavery." In March 1919, the Communism International (Comintern) was founded. "The most prominent feature and mission of Comintern are to implement and realize Marxist admonishments and achieve the ideals of communism and workers' movements." Capitalist system, therefore, must be overthrown to establish a new proletarian country. Upon the Second World Congress of Comintern in July 1920, tens of thousands of enlightened workers around the world stood under the banner of communism. "The current issue is not just publicizing communist ideas. Now, the time has come to organize the proletarian class in support of communism and fight for the Communist Revolution" (Dai, 2012).

On the eve of China's May Fourth Movement in 1919, the number of industrial workers in China reached some two million. Urban artisanal and shop workers exceeded ten million. Despite the modest share of the working class in China's total population, they were the most progressive, revolutionary and ready to fight, which created conditions for Marxism-Leninism to be combined with workers' movements in China.

Back then, China was a semicolonial country under imperialist oppression. The basic characteristics of imperialism explained by Vladimir Lenin in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* were all reflected in China. In 1894, commercial capital owned by foreign countries in China stood at 92.84 million yuan, which increased by 11.9 times by 1936 while China's homegrown commercial capital only grew by 4.8 times. Before 1894, foreign countries established 8 bank head offices and 16 branches in China, which kept increasing afterwards. In 1895-1913, 6 banks were opened in China. In 1914-1926, 17 more banks were opened. By 1936, there were 69 head offices and 203 branches of foreign banks opened in China on a cumulative basis (Liu and Wu, 2010). The pervasiveness of foreign banks shows the extent to which China's economy was controlled by foreign forces around the founding of the Communist Party of China.

When Lenin wrote *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, another important work he referenced was the book *Imperialism* published by British economist John Atkinson Hobson in London in 1902. The book said that "China is the largest source of wealth the world has ever known," but imperialism was sucking her blood (Hobson, 2017). Yet Hobson also felt that this would lead to the parasitism, corruption and decline of the Europeans. From Hobson's message, Lenin revealed the truth that an important aspect of imperialism "is parasitism unique to imperialism"; "in the world's leading trading nations, incomes earned by rentiers were four times higher than incomes from foreign trade! That is the nature of imperialism and imperialistic parasitism"; "imperialism means carving up the world and not just exploiting China and means the very few richest countries monopolizing ultra-high profits"(Lenin, 2012). Imperialists not only controlled China's sovereignty, invaded China militarily and carved up China's territories, but were "*rentnerstaat"* that exacted usury from China. They were parasites sucking blood from the Chinese people.

Another basic national condition of China upon the founding of the Communist Party of China was the extreme severity of feudalistic oppression. During China's War of Resistance against the Japanese Aggression, "the society was dominated by feudal and semifeudal systems no matter in the Japanese-occupied or Kuomintang-controlled areas" (Mao, 1991b). In the 1930s, landlords and rich farmers accounting for 11.8% of China's total population monopolized 61.7% of China's arable land area; middle, poor and hired peasants who accounted for 88.2% of the total population only had 38.3% of arable land. Among them, 66% of poor and hired peasants only had 17.2% of land (Liu and Wu, 2010).

Under the dual oppressions of imperialism and feudalism, the level of China's economic development was very low. In 1920, the total output value of China's industry and agriculture was 15.928

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billion yuan, including 988 million yuan from new industries, accounting for 6.2% of total industrial and agricultural output value (Xu and Wu, 2005). Moreover, the regional distribution of China's capitalist industries was extremely uneven. Most modern industries concentrated in the coastal region, especially a few major cities. National industries focused on light industries such as textiles and food while heavy industry was extremely underdeveloped. Most enterprises were small and short on capital with obsolete equipment and technology.

In the face of the sobering national conditions, progressives made painstaking efforts to seek the truth and path to save the nation from subjugation and fight for its survival, but none of those efforts succeeded. The victory of the October Revolution shocked Chinese progressives with the power of Marxism-Leninism. "Chinese have found Marxism-Leninism as a universal truth applicable everywhere, and the landscapes of China started to change" (Mao, 1991d). Marxism-Leninism showed peoples of the world a clear picture of world trend and helped the Chinese people to see a clear picture of China's future. The ravages of the World War I awakened Chinese intellectuals who used to admire Western capitalism for its warships and cannons. In 1920, Liang Qichao exclaimed in his *Thoughts on Travel to Europe* that "It was like a traveler who lost his way in the desert. When he saw a giant shadow in the distance, he desperately caught up, hoping to follow him as a guide. Yet the shadow vanished, leaving him behind in immense disappointment. Who is this shadow? It is this 'Mr. Science.' Europeans had a big dream that science was omnipotent, but now bemoan a science bankruptcy" (Liang, 2014). This sentiment spread from the Western world to China and became a public opinion. In sharp contrast, Marxism-Leninism also became widely disseminated across the world, including in China. Around the May Fourth Movement, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu *et al.* became inspired by the October Revolution and enthusiastically studied and publicized Marxism-Leninism. Back then, Marxism-Leninism became prevalent in China's intellectual and cultural circles. As in the words of a liberal scholar, the "Three People's Principles are official Five Classics and Four Books, and communist publications are the forbidden romances of 'west chambers' and 'red mansions'." "Leftist tendencies among the youth, increasing red publications, schools serving as training ground for communist leaders, and bookstores as the medium of communist thoughts - these tendencies cannot be shaken by government airplanes, bombs, rifles and cannons" (Luo, 1930). Even Dai Jitao, a Kuomintang neo-rightist, acknowledged that Marxism "has established its leadership in the intellectual community of today's world."

At this moment, communist parties were established in many countries in Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Oceania, which converged into a world trend. As a result of the combination between Marxism and Leninism and Chinese workers' movement, the Communist Party of China was born amid the tide of world communist movement and in China's darkest hour as a semicolonial and semifeudal society. The founding of the Communist Party of China followed the world trend and China's basic national conditions and marked the biggest milestone in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in modern history. "The founding of the Communist Party in China is a transformative event" (Mao, 1991d). It created the condition for transforming the history of Old China as a semicolonial and semifeudal society, put an end to the situation of Old China as a platter of loose sand, abolished all unequal treaties imposed by imperialist powers upon China and all privileges of imperialists, and eradicated the political, economic, cultural and social systems and conditions in which the very few of the exploitative class ruled over the masses of working people. In this sense, the Communist Party of China "transformed the direction and process of the development of the Chinese nation after modern times, transformed the future and destiny of the Chinese people and nation, and transformed the trends and pattern of world development" (Xi, 2016b).

Second, during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Communist Party of China helped form the Chinese United Front against Japanese Aggression in the context of the world war against fascism and the desire of the Chinese people to fight Japanese aggressors and save the nation. In the end, the Communist Party of China led the nation to achieve the great victory of the war against

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Japanese aggression.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) played a pivotal role in the victory of the Chinese people in fighting Japanese aggression, which formed a basis for the Communist Party of China to transform the trend and pattern of world development.

On September 20, 1931, the third day of an armed invasion by Japanese imperialists to China's northeast, the CPC took the lead to raise the banner of armed resistance against the Japanese aggression, and published the Declaration of the Communist Party of China on the Forced Occupation of China's Northeastern Three Provinces by Japanese Imperialists, vowing to "oppose the forced occupation of the northeastern three provinces by Japanese imperialists!" (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2011). At the beginning of 1933, many anti-Japanese guerrillas were formed under the Party's leadership, which gradually became the main anti-Japanese armed forces in the northeast. During the Long March, the Party raised the high banner of national solidarity against the Japanese aggression, formed the Chinese United Front against Japanese Aggression, and sounded the clarion of national awakening and endeavors, and organized a powerful force of solidarity against Japanese aggression. On July 7, 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident broke out. The CPC showed a path of long-term resistance against Japanese aggression for the final victory.

The world trend was that the peoples of the world vowed to defeat fascism and the Chinese people vowed to defeat Japanese imperialism. Following this trend, the CPC enlivened the spirit of the Chinese people to fight for a just cause. As noted by Xi Jinping, "The Chinese people and the Chinese nation have always had the heroic courage to be not afraid of brutal oppression and override all enemies without being overwhelmed by those enemies. In the face of the extremely savage and brutal Japanese aggressors, the Chinese people with great spirit of patriotism did not give in and forged unprecedented will to fight the aggressors to the last drop of blood, and upon the CPC's call and leadership and with the joint actions of various forces of the whole nation, the Chinese people became united against the enemy and fought fearlessly against foreign aggressors, one stepping into the battlefield as another fell" (Xi, 2014b).

Meanwhile, the CPC led the guerrilla war and created Anti-Japanese Democratic Bases to confront and distract numerous Japanese aggressors. On August 20, 1940, the Eight Route Army launched a massive attack on the Japanese army in China's northeast, with over 200,000 soldiers from 105 regiments involved, historically known as the "Hundred-Regiment Campaign." By early December 1940, guerilla soldiers and militias engaged in 1,824 combat operations, killed and wounded over 25,000 Japanese and puppet troops, captured 281 Japanese troops and 18,000 puppet troops, destroyed over 470 kilometers of railway and over 1,500 kilometers of highway, and tore down numerous enemy fortifications and strongholds(Drafting Group of A Brief History of the Communist Party of China, 2021). During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, numerous revolutionary martyrs emerged among the Chinese people including Chinese communists, whose heroic spirit whelmed the heaven and earth.

The victory of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression was won at the great sacrifice of the Chinese people. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the casualties of Chinese soldiers and civilians exceeded 35 million, including 31.2 million civilians and over 3.8 million soldiers, accounting for over a third of total casualties of all countries during the World War II (Editorial Review Committee of China Military Encyclopedia, 2014). In December 1937, Japanese aggressors massacred over 300,000 Chinese civilians in Nanjing. Japanese aggressors committed heinous germ and chemical warfare against Chinese people and carried out brutal experiments on living humans. Wartime damages and plunders of Chinese resources and wealth by Japanese aggressors led to China's direct economic losses worth over 100 billion US dollars and indirect economic losses in excess of 500 billion US dollars by the exchange rate of 1937 (Drafting Group of A Brief History of the Communist Party of China, 2021).

The great victory of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression re-established China's status

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as a world power. The War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression fought by the Chinese people was of great significance to salvaging human civilization and defending world peace. It was an important part of the World War against Fascism. As a war of unprecedented scale in human history, the World War against Fascism was fought in Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania, involving over two billion people from some 80 countries and regions. The War of Resistance against the Japanese Aggression fought by the Chinese people was the earliest and longest war against fascism. The Chinese battlefield distracted and withstood the majority of Japanese militarist forces and played a decisive role in the complete defeat of Japanese aggressors. The War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression supported combat operations of the Allied Nations at the European and Pacific theaters, thwarting the attempts of strategic coordination between Japanese fascism and German-Italian fascism. As an important rear base for the Allied forces to combat Japanese aggressors in the Asia-Pacific region, China provided the Allied Nations with bountiful strategic materials and military intelligence. The Chinese people have made great contributions to the World War against Fascism, which significantly raised China's international status. In April 1945, China jointly initiated the Los Angeles Conference with the United States, United Kingdom and the Soviet Union on the establishment of the United Nations. With the official enactment of the United Nations Charter, China became one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. "The Chinese people has won respect from peace-loving nations and a sublime national reputation" (Xi, 2014c).

Facts have proven that without the CPC's keen appreciation of world tendencies and the National United Front against Japanese Aggression, the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression would not have achieved a complete victory. Because of this victory, "no aggressor could ever rage across China's territories" (Xi, 2014c).

Third, the founding of the People's Republic of China is the second milestone in achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and coinciding with the trend of the times.

As Xi Jinping noted, "Looking at the world at that time, the socialist Soviet Union thrived, Eastern Europe became a socialist world, and the liberation movement of oppressed nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America was on the rise. There was indeed an atmosphere of 'east wind prevailing over west wind.' New China was born and stood on its feet in this east wind. Under the influence of complex international situations, deviations occurred in our assessment of the international situation, which led us to believe that a world war would be fought. With "taking class struggle as the key link" in domestic affairs, we missed important development opportunities. This lesson has been thoroughly reviewed in our Party's resolutions on historical issues since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

In 1949, China had a total population of 541.67 million people (Zhu, 2019). 80% of China's total population were illiterates, and school-age enrolment rate was only about 20% (Zhang and Pan, 2017). Average life expectancy was 35 years (Zhu, 2019). Urban unemployed population was 4.742 million, or 60% of China's total workforce at the time (Wang, 2014a). Back then, China's grain output was only 113.18 million tons(Wu, 2010b), or 208.9 kilograms per person (Wang, 2014b); urban household per capita disposable income was less than 100 yuan, and rural per capita net income was 44 yuan (Drafting Group of the Governance Concepts of the Communist Party of China , 2014). In 1952, China's GDP per capita was only 119 yuan, and foreign exchange reserves stood at a mere 139 million US dollars (Wu, 2010a).

On June 14, 1954, Mao Zedong made a vivid statement to describe China's backward productivity at the time. "What can we make now?" he sighed, "We can make tables and chairs. We can make teapots and teacups. We can grow grains, and we can grind them into flour. We can also make paper. However, we cannot make one car, one airplane, one tank or even a tractor" (Mao, 1999).

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, this situation started to change. By the end of 1957, China's urban jobless population decreased by 2.718 million people compared with 1949, and the urban unemployment rate fell from 23.6% to 5.9% (Zhu, 2019). From the end of 1957 to the end

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of 1978, China's total output value increased by 3.25 times, and industrial and agricultural total output value grew by 3.64 times, national income grew by 1.96 times, gross industrial output value increased by 5.99 times, and gross agricultural output value increased by 0.84 times (Wu, 2010a). By the end of 1978, China had "resolved food problem for close to 1 billion people" (Wu, 2010a). In the same year, China's GNP and GDP were both 365.02 billion yuan.

In just a few decades, the Chinese society underwent great transformations. China established a relatively complete industrial system and national economic system, independently developed the "Two Bombs and One Satellite," and became a major power with great influence on the world stage. As a major Oriental country, China gained important experience for socialist development.

Without a doubt, China's economy faced grave challenges due to the Cultural Revolution and other damaging factors. Yet the establishment of a relatively complete industrial system and national economic system laid the groundwork for reform and opening up, and the severe economic problems had motivated reform and opening up.

History shows that "At the dawn of New China, the Communist Party of China followed the trend by uniting various sides and started a new era of consultation for the founding of the People's Republic for a great cause" (Xi, 2019a). The establishment of the basic socialist system and the completion of the broadest, most profound and greatest social transformation in China's history laid the fundamental political premise and institutional foundation for the country's all development endeavors. Despite serious setbacks in the process of exploration, the CPC's great achievements in socialist revolution and development set the scene for national prosperity and strength and achieved a great leap of the Chinese nation from decline to prosperity and strength.

Fourth, reform and opening up and the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics are the third milestone in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, reflecting "our Party's insight of the trend of the times."

As in the words of Deng Xiaoping, "We must catch up with the times, and that is the purpose of reform" (Deng, 1993). Amid rapid advances of world economy, science and technology, China kept falling behind internationally advanced levels. The Party made a scientific assessment of the international situation and decided to shift the priority of the Party and the country, unveiling a grand chapter of reform and opening up. As pointed out by Xi Jinping, "How did reform and opening up happen? A key aspect is our Party's correct assessment of the world trend. As in the words of Comrade Deng Xiaoping, 'According to our analysis of the world trend and our surrounding environment, we have changed the previous view of an imminent war.' With a precise assessment of the world trend, our Party established an understanding that peace and development were the theme of the times, thus allowing the Party and country to shift the priority of work and unveil a new era of reform and opening."

The Communist Party of China united the Chinese people in a great revolution of reform and opening up, exploring a socialist path with Chinese characteristics, forming a theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and establishing a socialist system with Chinese characteristics. With those efforts, China has made big strides in catching up with the times. This scientific assessment of historical trend has far-reaching significance.

In the historical process of reform and opening up, the CPC has always followed the trend of the times to push forward the country's development and prosperity. Following the trend of economic globalization, the CPC fought for China's WTO entry, inaugurating a new chapter of reform and opening up; following the trend of the rapid development of developing countries and shifting balance of world power in favor of common development, the CPC advocated change in global economic governance and increased the representation and influence of emerging market economies and developing countries including China in international institutions for economic governance.

Xi Jinping spoke highly of Deng Xiaoping's assessment of the laws and trends of historical development. "Comrade Deng Xiaoping made great contributions to the motherland and people that

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shine throughout history because he saw the big trend for China and the world with a keen appreciation of the aspirations of the Chinese people and nation, grasped the historical trend of China's development, and established an unprecedented historical cause by relying closely on the Party and people" (Xi, 2014d).

Xi Jinping made a high-level summary of China's great achievements over the past four decades of reform and opening up: "Over the past four decades, we have always adhered to economic development as the central task and continuously liberated and developed productivity. Our GDP increased from 367.9 billion yuan to 82.7 trillion yuan by 2017 with an annual actual growth rate of 9.5%, which was far above the annual average world economic growth of around 2.9%. China's GDP as a share of world total increased from 1.8% at the beginning of reform and opening up in 1978 to 15.2%, and for many years, China contributed over 30% of world economic growth. China's total import and export of goods rose from 20.6 billion US dollars to over 4 trillion US dollars. On a cumulative basis, China utilized over 2 trillion US dollars of FDIs and made outbound investments totaling 1.9 trillion US dollars. China ranked high in the world in terms of the output of agricultural products and established the world's most complete modern industrial system. A succession of achievements was made in scientific and technological innovations and major projects. China made remarkable progress in its infrastructure construction in such areas as information technology, highway and railway network, water conservancy, natural gas transmission pipeline from western and eastern parts of China, diversion of water resources from southern to northern China, high-speed railway, ocean-going vessels, and aircraft technology. Today, China has become the world's second-largest economy and the largest manufacturing nation, ranking first in the world in terms of goods trade, second in terms of goods consumption, and second in terms of foreign capital inflow. For many straight years, China boasted the highest foreign exchange reserves in the world. The Chinese people have made decisive strides in becoming rich and strong!" (Xi, 2018b).

Fifth, since the 18th CPC National Congress, historical transformations and achievements have been made in the great causes of the Party and country. This is also a result of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core in leading the Chinese people in grasping the laws and trends of historical development.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core took the initiative amid the tides of the times to secure development based on insights on the changing international situation and global trends and the domestic and international situations, bringing socialism with Chinese characteristics and Marxist development in the 21st century to a new level. Their scientific answers to questions as what kind of and how socialism with Chinese characteristics should be adhered to and developed have underpinned the formation of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era has profound relevance to the 21st century. Globally, it represents a keen appreciation of profound changes on the world stage unseen in the past century and offers a vigorous response to the question as "Where should the world go?" The proposal to build a community of shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offer new directions, schemes and options for addressing global issues, and represent the well-intentioned voices and rational solutions based on China's development concepts, paths and modes. Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era was established in the process of following global development trends, addressing common global challenges, and preserving common human interests, and also experienced continuous enrichment and development. Such changes of times were not anticipated by classic writers of Marxism. Judging by China's historical position, it represents a keen appreciation of the overall situation for the strategy of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and a scientific response to "what should China do?" China today is in the best of the times since its modern history and is closer than ever and more confident and capable than ever to achieve the great

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rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Communist Party of China has continuously advanced its self-regulation for self-purification, self-improvement, and self-renewal. Scientific socialism has shown greater vitality and the vibrancy in China in the 21st century. Great achievements have been made in the course of socialism with Chinese characteristics on a broadening path. Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is a result of the sinicization of Marxism. It is Marxism for contemporary China and for the 21st century and represents a theoretical milestone in the creative development of Marxism by Chinese communists based on a scientific comprehension of the laws and trends of historical development in the new area.

Under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics, China has made unprecedented achievements. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has lifted 10 million people out of poverty on an annual average basis, which is equivalent to a mid-sized country. In February 2021, China declared a complete victory in its battle on absolute poverty with 98.99 million rural poor people, 832 poor counties and 128,000 poor villages by current standards lifted out of poverty. The eradication of region-wide poverty and absolute poverty that beleaguered the Chinese nation for thousands of years marks a miracle in the human history of poverty reduction. China has initially created the world's largest social protection system covering the most populations with a broad range of protection, including pension, healthcare, subsistence protection, housing, and education. By the end of 2018, China's basic pension insurance coverage exceeded 900 million people, and the basic healthcare insurance coverage surpassed 1.3 billion people, achieving health insurance for all. Seven decades ago, China's average life expectancy was 35 years. By 2018, this figure jumped to 77 years, which was far higher than the world average of 72 years. In 2019, China's GDP stood at 99.0865 trillion yuan, and for the first time, China's GDP per capita crossed the threshold of 10,000 US dollars.

To better advance the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Xi Jinping stressed the importance of both lofty ideals and a down-to-earth attitude. "Over 170 years ago, Marx and Engels revealed the historical law that socialism would inevitably replace capitalism. This is an irreversible trend in the development of human society, but takes a very long historical process to complete. In this process, we should grasp the historical trend of each stage based on the reality and accomplish current tasks."

The historical achievements and transformations since the dawn of the new era have once again proven that "only by grasping the laws of history will we succeed in all our endeavors" (Xi, 2013).

2. Grasping the Laws and Trends of Historical Development amid the Unification Between Truth and Values

To correctly grasp the development of laws and trends of history and take the historical initiative in a complex and volatile situation, we need the guidance of scientific and systematic theories and methodologies, as well as lofty, salient and reasonable values-based goals. Over the past century, the Party managed to lead the Chinese nation in accomplishing groundbreaking endeavors because of, in the final analysis, its keen appreciation of the laws and trends of historical development and the unification between truth and values. While adhering to the truth of development science and combining the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism with China's actual conditions, the Party committed itself to serving the masses and pursuing the realization, maintenance and development of the fundamental interests of the vast majority of the people as the ultimate goal of all its work. History and reality have proven that only by adhering to the unification between truth-based epistemology and values-based goals, i.e. "to proceed from actual facts in the objective existence and derive laws therefrom" while "proceeding from the needs of the masses rather than any well-intentioned personal aspirations" (Mao, 1991c), can we grasp the laws and trends, anchor at the right direction, take a firm stand, and earnestly shoulder the historical mission of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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2.1 Seeking Truth and Advancing the Sinicization of Marxism

As a theory of the general laws of development in the natural world, human society and people's thinking, a worldview and methodology for the working class, and a theoretical system for realizing communism and mankind's liberation, Marxism is a "theoretical summary of the conditions for liberalizing the proletarian class" (Marx and Engels, 2009a) and a powerful ideological weapon for the self-liberation of the proletarian class and the liberation of humanity. It "endowed humanity with an epistemological tool, especially the working class" (Lenin, 2009), and serves as the most effective ideological method and guide of action for the CPC in grasping the laws and trends of historical development.

In their long-term struggles, the Chinese people have chosen Marxism as the theoretical guidance for saving, prospering and strengthening the nation. Progressives represented by Hong Xiuquan, Kang Youwei, Yan Fu and Sun Yat-sen had attempted various ideological weapons from the West. For a time, China sent a staggering number of overseas students to Japan, Britain, the United States, France and Germany. After abolishing the imperial examination system and establishing modern schools, China saw an emergence of various theories, thoughts and -isms, becoming an experiment field for all sorts of ideological propositions. Numerous ideological trends appeared on China's political and intellectual scenes one after another, including anarchism, utopian socialism, reformism, liberalism, social Darwinism, pragmatism, populism, syndicalism, as well as advocates for saving the nation by science, industry and education, moral revolution and literary revolution. "All sorts of '-isms' spread across the society." There were over a dozen schools raising the banner of socialism. Over 300 parties were established, but none of them lasted long (Party History Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2011). "A prosperous and strong China rather than a poor and weak one ought to be independent and not colonial or semicolonial, liberal and democratic rather than semifeudal, and unified rather than divided. In a semicolonial, semifeudal and divided China, numerous people dreamed to develop industry, build defense, benefit the people, and seek national prosperity, but this dream became illusory" (Mao, 1991c). Even the Revolution of 1911 led by Sun Yat-sen only overthrew feudal dictatorship without changing China's nature as a semicolonial and semifeudal society, the tragic situation of the Chinese people, and the subjugation of the Chinese nation. Imperialist invasions disillusioned the Chinese people about blindly learning from the West. "Why does the teacher keep invading his students? The Chinese have learnt a great deal from the West, but it didn't work, and ideals could never be turned into reality. Numerous struggles - including the nationwide movement like the Revolution of 1911 - all failed. The country's situation is getting worse day by day, and the environment is forcing people into destitution" (Mao, 1991d).

Western capitalist civilization, capitalist democratism and bourgeois republic plan all collapsed in the eyes of the Chinese people, who believed that the capitalist path would not work in China. In hesitation, anguish and confusion, the Chinese people learned about the victory of the October Revolution in Russia, which brought China Marxism-Leninism. "Like a ray of sunlight, this brought Chinese progressives struggling to explore a path to save the country and people, and the Communist Party of China was born in response to the call of the times. Since coming to China's political scene, our Party has adhered to Marxist views and methodologies and unswervingly fought for the well-being of the Chinese people and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Since then, the mindset of the China's people has turned from passivity to proactivity, and the Chinese nation has, painstakingly yet unstoppably, embarked on a journey toward great rejuvenation."

Over the past 100 years, the CPC took the initiative to apply Marxism to keep pace with the laws and trends of historical development, combined the basic Marxist principles with China's reality, and continuously advanced the sinicization of Marxism. Under the guidance of Marxism, the CPC led the Chinese people in overthrowing the "three big mountains," i.e. imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, establishing the socialist New China, embarking upon socialist construction, carrying out

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reform and opening up, and thus blazing a trail of socialism with Chinese characteristics and opening up a new epoch in China's history. After trials and tribulations, the Chinese nation has embraced a bright future of great rejuvenation and composed a brand-new chapter of the Chinese civilization with a history of over 5,000 years in the 21st century. Without a doubt, the victories of the Chinese revolution, development, reform and socialism with Chinese characteristics were the victories of Marxism, which derived from the power of truth.

In the interest of disseminating Marxism around the CPC's founding, the earliest Chinese communists including Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and Li Da refuted the following view that "China's national conditions are so unique that Marxism and especially the materialistic conception of history, the socialist theory, and the theories of class struggle and revolution are inapplicable." Using Marxism, Chinese communists have vigorously refuted the argument that "Marxism is not applicable to China's national conditions" by revealing the laws of historical development and the situation of world development. The subsequent polemics between Science and Metaphysics and polemics about the nature of the Chinese society supercharged Marxism's dissemination in China. As a brand-new political force to steer China from darkness to brightness, the Party received great attention from people across the country.

Yet China's national conditions were unique in its own ways. In observing China and addressing problems facing China, Chinese communists must pay full attention to such uniqueness, keenly appreciate China's reality and apply basic Marxist principles independently to find a path of revolution and development suitable to China. They could not simply copy a few arguments and statements by classical Marxist writers. As pointed out by the founders of Marxism, our theory is an evolving theory rather than a rigid dogma without change. Since practice is a developmental process, Marxism must also evolve with practice. In this world of great diversity, countries must adapt Marxism to their respective national conditions in order to successfully apply Marxism. Hence, Marxist theories will develop in various countries in their respective ways. In this sense, whether and how should the basic principles of Marxism be applied according to the actual conditions of various countries represent a question of paramount importance for communists in various countries. Judging by the development of international communist movements, the CPC is the only one that has persistently adhered to and successfully realized such a combination. Of course, the Party has made this achievement after painstaking explorations.

In its infancy, the CPC had the "wrong tendency of dogmatizing Marxism and deifying Comintern's resolutions and the Soviet Union's experience, which brought the Chinese revolution to the brink of despair" (Mao, 1991a). In the name of Comintern's "imperial envoy," Wang Ming delivered speeches and reports full of quotes from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. He openly described Marxism-Leninism as "consummate and impeccable with nothing to be added." In effect, he called for copying Marxism-Leninism. As early as in 1930, Mao Zedong suggested and insisted that "the victory of China's revolutionary struggles should rely on Chinese comrades familiar with China's conditions" (Mao, 1991c). He stressed that the laws of China's revolution should be explored from practice to shoot the "arrow" of Marxism-Leninism at the "target" of China's revolution (Mao, 1991b), firmly opposing the tendency of Wang Ming *et al.* to dogmatize Marxism-Leninism. At the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth CPC Central Committee in 1938, Mao Zedong clearly put forth the proposition of the "sinicization" of Marxism, emphasizing that "we should learn to apply the Marxist-Leninist theory to China's specific environment," reflecting Chinese characteristics in each of its manifestations. "How to apply it according to China's characteristics has become a question to be resolved for the whole Party." Deng Xiaoping noted that "we believe in Marxism, but Marxism must be combined with China's reality" (Deng, 1993c). Entering the new era, Xi Jinping repeatedly stressed that "We should proceed from China's reality, focus on our ongoing tasks, listen to people's voices, respond to their actual needs, summarize the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and further combine the basic principles of Marxism with China's contemporary reality. Meanwhile, we should also broaden our horizon and draw upon all the merits of

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human civilization to innovate and develop Marxism continuously" (Xi, 2017b).

Based on the historical mission and responsibility to innovate and develop Marxism, the CPC has persistently combined the basic principles of Marxism with the characteristics of the times and China's reality in leading the Chinese people in revolutionary, development and reform endeavors over the past century, creatively applied Marxism to China's practice, steadily advanced the sinicization of Marxism, and developed a series of theoretical achievements from Mao Zedong Thought to Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Important Thought of "Three Represents," and the Scientific Outlook on Development. These achievements have greatly enriched and developed the treasure house of Marxist theory.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has deepened understanding of the laws of the communist party governance and development in socialism and human society with a brand-new horizon and formed Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era based on the new historical orientation of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the conditions and practical requirements of the new era. It marks a new height in our Party's sinicization of Marxism, the exploration of a new realm, and a new leap forward, demonstrating the power of Marxism that holds true for the 21st century.

As proven by China's centennial practice, Marxism has profoundly transformed China, and China has greatly enriched Marxism. Over the past century, "the destiny of Marxism has been linked with the destinies of the CPC, the Chinese people and the Chinese nation. Its scientificity and truthfulness have been fully tested in China. Its people-oriented and practical nature have been fully implemented in China. Its openness and contemporaneity have been fulfilled in China." "Our Party's history is a history of advancing the sinicization of Marxism and a history of theoretical innovation and creation." The key reason for the CPC's achievements of arduous historical tasks that no other political force could in China's modern history and unite and lead the Chinese people in the great victories of revolution, development, reform and the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics lies in the Party's commitment to combine the basic principles of Marxism with the characteristics of the times and China's reality. In over 170 years after the birth of Marxism, many political parties armed with Marxist theory had appeared on the world stage. For instance, Lenin as a great successor of Carl Marx led the Russian Bolshevik Party to establish the world's first socialist country, bringing the development of Marxism to a new stage, i.e. Leninism. Unfortunately, socialism failed to be preserved after the Soviet Union's disintegration. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Marxism faced unprecedented challenges with the political disturbance in eastern Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the setbacks of socialist movement. Yet on the Oriental land of China, Marxism and socialism have not only stood the test of various storms, but have shown increasing vitality. For the past century, Chinese communists have been steadfastly following and developing Marxism. With rich and vibrant development and achievements in contemporary China, Marxism has derived great power as a truth by empowering China's 1.4 billion people and exerted a profound influence across the world far beyond many people - including the founders of Marxism - could anticipate. This is a fact that must be noticed in observing contemporary China and the world and the future destinies of Marxism and socialism in the 21st century.

2.2 Stay True to Founding Aspirations and Following the Pursuit of "Putting People First"

Marxism became widely recognized and disseminated around the world and influenced the process of world history in profound ways because of its unification between truth and values and the commitment to lofty ideals for the common good of humanity. As Xi Jinping noted, "For the first time, Marxism explored the path towards human freedom and liberation from the people's stance, shedding light on the direction towards an ideal society free from oppression and exploitation with equality and freedom for all. Marxism exerts its influence across the boundary of countries and times because it is rooted in the people and shows the path of moving history forward by relying on the people."

Marx and Engels pointed out that "Historical activities are the activities of the masses. With

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the deepening of historical activities, the masses will naturally expand" (Marx and Engels, 2012a). Historical inevitability always finds expression in social activities through which people change the environment while also changing themselves under specific historical conditions. Historical inevitability and historical laws, therefore, cannot be free from a certain values-based orientation. As the saying goes, one cannot resist historical trends or go against people's will. That is to say, historical trends reflecting historical inevitability and laws must serve people's fundamental interests and meet people's will and in the end, become reflected in the historical activities of the masses and the values-based choice of the vast majority of people. This is vividly manifested in the broadening acceptance of socialism, which turned from an aspiration of a few intellectuals into a choice of hundreds of millions of people. To correctly grasp the laws and trends of historical development, therefore, we must follow the principle of unifying truth with values and maintaining the intrinsic consistency between following the laws and trends of historical development and respecting the people as the mainstay and realizing the fundamental interests and requirements of the people.

According to the materialistic conception of history, the masses are masters of history and the decisive force that creates history. Marx and Engels made a scientific definition of the relationship between a proletarian party and the masses: "Proletarian movement is a movement of the vast majority of people to serve their interests," and communists "have no other interests that are different from those of the entire proletarian class" (Marx and Engels, 2012a). For a political party, its political stance and view of the masses determine its values. At the fundamental level, "to trust whom, rely on whom and for whom and whether the stance of the vast majority of people is consistently maintained are the watershed between the materialistic conception of history and the idealistic conception of history and the touchstone of Marxist political parties" (Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, 2005). Any political party that divorces from the people or domineers over the people is destined to be abandoned by the people. This is an inexorable law of historical development applicable to all countries including China in history and at contemporary times.

Whether a political party is committed to the people's stance and adopts principles and policies that represent the people's interests and reflect the people's will marks the fundamental difference between the proletarian party from other political parties and organizations. In China's anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism struggles from peasant revolutionary wars led by the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Boxer Rebellion to the self-strengthening and prosperity-seeking movements, capitalist political reforms, and democratic revolutions led by the Hundred Days' Reform and the Revolution of 1911, none of those political organizations and movements succeeded because they had no intention to mobilize the masses or were afraid of doing so or were not guided by an advanced theory of class and political parties to mobilize the masses, represent their fundamental interests, and reflect their wills and propositions. Without the support of the masses, their failures were inevitable.

The people-oriented view of the CPC was formed and constantly enriched and improved through the historical process of China's revolution, development and reform under the guidance of the materialistic conception of history. Upon its birth, the Party inscribed "people" on its banner. Mao Zedong drew a vivid analogy of communists to "seeds" and the people to "soil", demanding communists to merge with the people and "take root and blossom among the people" (Mao, 1991d); he advocated that "people and only the people are the forces that create world history" and that the whole party must "wholeheartedly serve the people and never divorce from the people; proceed in all cases from people's interests," emphasizing that "what communists say and do must follow the highest standards of serving the best interests of the masses and getting the support of the vast majority of people" (Mao, 1991c). As in the words of Deng Xiaoping, "whether the people are happy, whether the people are satisfied, whether the people approve, and whether the people agree" at the criterion for measuring the correctness of the Party's guidelines and policies. As Xi Jinping noted, "forming close ties with the masses is a reflection of the Party's nature and tenet, a hallmark of the Communist Party of China different from other political

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parties, and a key reason of the Party's development from strength to strength" (Xi, 2018d). He laid emphasis on the development concept that "puts the people at the center," claiming that "The nation is composed of the people, and the people are all that matter to the nation." "The people are our Party's greatest strength in governance. They are the solid base of our People's Republic, and the foundation of a well-built Party and a prosperous nation. Our Party is from the people, for the people, and successful because of the people. It must always be close to the people, and work vigorously by their side through thick and thin" (Xi, 2020).

Entering the new era, our Party has enacted a wide range of policy initiatives to improve people's welfare, such as leading the people to win the battle against poverty and building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, reflecting the governance concept of "putting people first." People's sense of gain, happiness and security has significantly increased, bringing innovation and development to the Party's mass line and people-centered approach on theoretical and practical levels. This historical process is a manifestation of the consistent and evolving pursuit of people-centered philosophy by Chinese communists. It is fair to say that "the century-old history of the CPC is a history of fulfilling the Party's founding mission, a history of breathing the same breath as do the people, sharing the same future, and staying truly connected with them."

History has proven that the laws and trends of historical development must be highly consistent with the activities and the fundamental interests of the masses. The rise or fall of a political power depends on whether it accommodates the people's will. Winning people's hearts depends on not only the fundamental stance and tenet of a political party, but also its real actions and achievements in promoting national and social development and seeking interests for the people. Over the past century, the CPC succeeded in its endeavors because of its commitment to the fundamental principle of serving the people wholeheartedly and maintaining flesh-and-blood ties with the people. During the Revolutionary War, the Party proactively explored the unique laws of the Chinese revolution at the service of the People's liberation cause; in the era of peaceful development, the Party promptly initiated the historical process of reform and opening up to lift people out of poverty; in the new era, the Party is advancing reform and development to share the benefits to all the people under the goal of meeting people's needs for a better life in the context of China's changing primary social contradiction, giving more prominence to realizing common prosperity for all the people.

2.3 Taking Courage to Reform Itself and Advancing the Great Project of Party Building

From the CPC's founding to the founding of the People's Republic of China, the groundbreaking reform and opening up, and the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the CPC has taken the historical initiative by grasping the laws and trends of historical development and led the people in creating one miracle after another because it remained committed to its founding aspirations, courageously faced various risks, challenges and its own problems, and continuously refined itself with the spirit of self-reform.

Self-reform is an essential requirement for Marxist political parties. As stressed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, "Communist revolution is the most complete break from traditional ownership relationships" (Marx and Engels, 2012a). Engels also noted that "Only social revolution is real revolution, and political and philosophical revolutions are destined to lead to a social revolution" (Marx and Engels, 2012a). No matter they lead political or social revolution, communists must undergo self-reform.

The resolute spirit of self-reform is a hallmark of Marxist political parties different from other political parties. From the Opium War to the eve of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), there emerged hundreds of political parties and organizations in China, but none of them found a fundamental solution to "saving the country and saving the people." The reason was that although they probably reflected some progressive aspects of history under certain historical conditions, none of them

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was guided by a scientific theory to break through the narrow interests of their class or group, not to mention to conduct self-reform. That was why they would not receive sincere support from the masses. This could be best illustrated when the children of the landlord class and the bureaucrat-comprador class from Kuomintang pointed their butcher's knife at innocent people.

The CPC has adhered to and developed the Marxist theory of founding a political party. In its long-term struggles of revolution, development and reform, the CPC has been committed to enhancing Party governance and development with the spirit of self-reform. "To have the courage to carry out self-reform and conduct strict self-governance: this is the most distinctive part of our Party's character. We must uphold the Party Constitution as our fundamental rules, give top priority to the political work of the Party, combine efforts on ideological work and institution building, and strengthen Party competence in all respects. The Party is great not because it never makes mistakes, but because it always owns up to its errors, actively engages in criticism and self-criticism, and has the courage to confront problems and reform itself" (CPC Central Committee Party History and Documentation Research Institute, 2018). In its century-long endeavors and struggles, the CPC carried out a succession of self-reforms to ensure the Marxist nature of the Party, correct various rightist or "leftist" mistakes, purify the Party's team, and increase the Party's solidarity, leadership, cohesion and capacity. For instance, the Yan'an Rectification Movement eradicated the ideological influence of the "leftist" dogmatism within the Party and established Mao Zedong Thought as guidance for the whole party. It brought unprecedented ideological, political and organizational solidarity and unification for the whole party and laid a solid foundation for the victory of China's revolution. On the eve of the founding of New China, Mao Zedong keenly recognized the risks and challenges facing the Party in the new situation and environment and put forth the "two musts" requirement to the whole party. After the Third Plenum of the 11th CPC Central Committee, Chinese communists led by Deng Xiaoping launched a self-rectification to restore order under the principle of liberating thought and seeking truth from facts. They made a historical decision to shift the focus of the whole party's work to socialist modernization and initiate reform and opening up, re-established Marxist ideological, political and organizational lines, realized the great transition of far-reaching significance in the Party's history, and unveiled a splendid chapter of reform, opening up and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics.

In response to the call and requirement of new era since the 18th CPC National Congress, Chinese communists led by Xi Jinping have persistently advanced great struggles with the spirit of complete self-reform to develop great projects, lead great causes and realize grand dreams. The CPC Central Committee has emphasized the importance to govern the Party and strengthen Party self-discipline and has initiated the Party's great self-reform in the new era. Incorporating Party self-discipline into the strategic arrangements of the Party and country's cause, this self-reform featured the mass-line, the Three Guidelines for Ethical Behavior and Three Basic Rules of Conduct, "Two Studies, One Action" and "staying true to the Party's original aspiration and founding mission" educational and Party history learning campaigns. With those efforts, the Party has greatly improved its creativity, cohesion and strengthen and enhanced its capabilities for self-purification, self-improvement and self-reform. Great achievements and transformations have been made in Party building. The Party's leadership has been undergirded across the board. The Party has greatly deepened its understanding of the laws of governance and explored a new realm of Marxist theory on Party building.

In its century-long history, the Party has achieved numerous results of self-reform.

Firm ideals and convictions: the CPC's courage for self-reform derives from the ideals of communism and the common aspiration of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The belief that "revolutionary ideals are paramount" has served as the ideological foundation for the Party's solidarity and unification. In the Party's century-long journey, the ideals of communism have inspired generations of communists to sacrifice and fight bravely. "Ideal and belief serve as calcium for the spirit of members of the Communist Party, so we must strengthen ideological and political construction and solve any

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problem concerning our outlook on the world and outlook on life and values, which is the master switch" (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2014). Over the years, the Party has always taken the education of ideals and convictions as the central task of ideological development, maintained political sobriety and steadfastness, and steadily strengthened the Marxist faith, communist ideals and the common aspiration of socialism with Chinese characteristics; and taken ideological firmness as the first criterion for the cultivation and selection of good officials for the Party and people.

Enhancing intra-Party supervision: The CPC attaches great importance to exploring the theory and practice of intra-Party supervision. First, the principle of building the Party for the public good and exercising power for the people is the fundamental requirement of the CPC for Party officials at leadership positions; the trust and support of the masses are the foundation for the CPC's governance. No matter during the revolutionary war or socialist development and reform, anti-corruption has always been a salient political stance that our Party has adhered to. In the Central Soviet Area, Party organizations executed corrupt officials in accordance with anti-corruption regulations. During the Yan'an era, the Government of Border Region introduced the fiscal budget system, corrected wrong ideas, and cracked down on corruption. Since reform and opening up and especially the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core faced up to the problem of corruption within the Party and addressed risks to clean government. With the spirit of "leaving a mark in the iron tools we clutch and footprints in the stones we tread" and the phenomenal resolve and courage "to scrape the toxins off the bones and act with the bravery to cut off one's own wrist," the Party has been committed to preventing and fighting corruption with a zero-tolerance attitude and tough stance. "We should enhance the Party's leadership and development across the board, and resolutely transform lax and weak governance over the Party." Second, intra-Party supervision has been continuously improved. In 2003, the intra-Party regulations were enacted. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party has further improved Party and nation-wide supervision, strengthened the Party's political supervision, and formed a new paradigm of intra-Party supervision encompassing disciplinary supervision, inspection, dispatched supervision, and itinerate supervision; drafted an outline of the five-year plan for central intra-Party legislative work, amended and enacted over 90 intra-Party regulations, and established a framework for intra-Party regulatory system for strict Party governance.

Criticism and self-criticism: Criticism and self-criticism are a regular and institutionalized form of intra-party education for Marxist political parties. To reflect, grow and thrive amid criticism and self-criticism is a unique attribute of proletarian political parties different from other political parties. The CPC has succeeded the fine tradition of criticism and self-criticism for Marxist political parties. "Through criticism and self-criticism, one should review his mistakes and drawbacks at work, educate his fellow Party members and officials, and promptly correct his mistakes" (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee and the Central Archives, 2011). During the Yan'an Rectification Movement, the Party followed the approach of criticism and self-criticism towards Party officials who made mistakes and urged them to correct their mistakes and avoid future ones. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping called upon the whole party to pick up the weapon of criticism and self-criticism to help Party members and officials to address their own problems, stressing that "criticism and self-criticism are forceful weapons to remove political dusts and micro-organisms within the Party" (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 2016); criticism and self-criticism should become a detergent for the intra-Party political environment, and Party members and officials should get used to making progress by reminding and supervising each other. Meanwhile, Party officials should attend organizational and democratic life meetings in the capacity of ordinary Party members and set examples for the whole party. Party officials at various levels of leadership positions, especially senior officials, should take the lead to criticize and self-criticize, frequently "watch from the mirror, groom themselves, take a bath and seek remedies," and ensure that criticisms are acute to achieve the effects of revealing problems, giving encouragement and educating each other for common improvement.

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Adhering to the mass line: People are the foundation of the Party's governance and source of the Party's strength and victory. The CPC's biggest political advantage lies in its close ties to the masses and putting people's interests above everything else. "Our Party has the courage of self-reform because it harbors no special self-interest other than the interests of our country, nation and people" (CPC Central Party History and Party Literature Research Institute, 2018). "Some prominent issues within the Party are often seen by the masses the most clearly. Whether the founding aspirations of Party members and officials remain the same and whether their missions are remembered firmly should be judged by the masses and tested by practice. We cannot engage in self-reform with doors closed. Instead, we should listen more to opinions and accept supervision from the masses" (Xi, 2019b). In this spirit, Xi Jinping stressed that "We should give top priority to ensuring compliance with Party discipline, and tackle the prominent problems that prompt the strongest public reaction and that threaten to erode the very foundation of the Party's governance." On one hand, we should promote regular and institutionalized theoretical study and education of the Party through a series of campaigns such as the "Three Guidelines for Ethical Behavior and Three Basic Rules of Conduct" and "Two Studies, One Action" to improve the work style of the Party and government. On the other hand, we should further combine the promotion of self-reform with the further improvement of people's livelihoods in the spirit of putting people first, meeting people's needs for a better life as much as possible, and addressing issues to the people's concern. By increasing the sense of trust of the masses, we should strengthen the governance foundation and status of the Party.

In its century-long history of endeavors, the CPC courageously and aptly reformed itself and pushed forward great social revolutions for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is fair to say that self-reform is an important recipe for the CPC to advance social reforms successfully.

3. Exploring the Future in Line with the Laws and Trends of Historical Development

In its century-long endeavors, the CPC has correctly followed the laws and trends of historical development and won initiative by leading the Chinese people to create history, becoming the world's largest Marxist ruling party. It has developed valuable experience and offered profound implications for moving ahead in the new era.

First, a keen appreciation of the laws and trends of historical development is a hallmark of political maturity for a proletarian party.

As in the words of Xi Jinping, "Historical development has its laws, but people are not completely passive in it. As long as we grasp the historical development trend, seize the opportunity of historical change, work hard, and forge ahead, human society can make better progress" (Xi, 2021b). "For a country and nation to revitalize itself, it must forge ahead along the logic of historical progress and the trend of the times" (Xi, 2018c). For a Marxist ruling party, it will take the historical initiative in the development of its cause only by following the trend of historical development. The CPC took initiatives following the laws and trends of historical development and elevated its keen appreciation of those laws and trends to the height of historical materialism and dialectics. This practice not only coincides with the basic principles of Marxism, but reflects the unique experience of Chinese communists. It brims with the CPC's distinctive political and theoretical wisdoms and marks an important development of Marxist philosophical principles.

Before Marxism emerged, humanity did not have a correct understanding about social and historical development goals. Primitive society evolved into slavery society, and revolutions occurred to turn slavery society into feudal society and more recently, capitalist society. Most of those transformations in the process of human history were spontaneous. Science-based understanding on the development of human history did not occur until the emergence of Marxism. Marxism has revealed the laws of

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development in human history and the overall trend that socialism and communism will inevitably replace capitalist society. This revelation has identified the goal and direction and provided ideological basis for the proletarian class and working people around the world to liberate themselves and take back control of their destinies and for proletarian political parties to lead revolutionary masses. Yet as Marx and Engels noted in the Preface to the German edition of *Communist Manifesto* in 1872, "The actual application of these principles... are subject to change according to the current historical conditions anytime and anywhere" (Marx and Engels, 2012a). The basic laws and trends of development in human history have different characteristics and manifestations across various periods, regions and historical conditions and are not spontaneously and automatically shown in front of people. This is also an important element in the laws and trends of historical development. It is naive to regard Marxist principles on the basic laws and trends of development in human history as mathematical equations that apply ubiquitously, which happens to violate the very principles of Marxism, as the CPC has learned to its cost in its history of twists and turns.

The CPC was born during China's semicolonial and semifeudal era. The basic national conditions of modern China determined the uniqueness, complexity and arduousness of China's revolution: It could not copy the model and path of revolutions in Western Europe and Russia. Anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism revolutions to be carried out in the first stage fell into the category of bourgeois democratic revolution but were essentially different from its old fashion because they were led by the CPC and relied on the Chinese working class and its broad ally, i.e. the peasant class that accounted for the vast majority of people. Instead of establishing a bourgeois government, the goal of reform was to establish a joint government based on an alliance of workers and peasants led by the working class before establishing a socialist system in the second stage of socialist revolution. The two stages are linked with each other but cannot be confused or substituted with each other. The unique trajectory of the Chinese revolution was unexpected by classical Marxist writers and Comintern leaders and described by Mao Zedong as the "new democratic theory," in which he elaborated a host of theoretical and policy propositions on the political, economic and cultural aspects of the new democracy that guided the Chinese revolution to a complete victory.

Yet this keen perception of the uniqueness of the Chinese revolution by Mao Zedong and other Chinese communists did not come by easily. Back then, the CPC was encircled and persecuted by imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism and the proxy - the Chiang Kai-shek group, which in particular was bent on exterminating the CPC. When imperialist invasion and oppression became unscrupulous and especially when different imperialist forces fiercely fought with one another in China, however, the Chiang Kai-shek Group would show a duality, for which our Party adopted a principle to fight but try to co-opt the Chiang Kai-shek Group. Moreover, the Party must also overcome the "leftist" (led by Wang Ming *et al.*) and rightist (led by Chen Duxiu *et al.*) mistakes within the Party, both of which used to hold sway. The "leftist" mistake by Wang Ming *et al.* forced the Chinese revolution to the brink of despair. As such, a keen perception of the laws and trends of historical development was hard to come by and can be seen as an important symbol of the maturity of a proletarian party. Over the past century, the CPC has grasped the laws and trends of historical development across various stages and led the Chinese working class and the working people to shift from spontaneity to self-initiative. To some extent, the CPC's century-long history is also a history of grasping the laws and trends of historical development and taking the initiative of history for brilliant achievements. This marks a major contribution of the CPC to the international communist movement and socialist development.

Second, living Marxism holds the key to unravelling the laws and trends of historical development.

Marxism is the theoretical weapon and guidance of action for grasping the laws and trends of historical development, the use of which requires Marxism to be applied according to actual and evolving conditions rather than used as an omnipotent equation. Otherwise, the use of rigid Marxist principles will achieve the opposite effects. As Xi Jinping noted," Marxism is an open theoretical

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system that evolves with the times, practice and scientific development. It is not the end of the truth, but explores a path to the truth" (Xi, 2016c), "Just as there are no bounds to practice, there is no end to theoretical exploration. The world is changing with every second, every moment; and China, too, is changing with every second, every moment. We must ensure our theory evolves with the times, deepen our appreciation of objective laws, and advance our theoretical, practical, institutional, cultural, and other explorations." The CPC has laid such great emphasis on the intrinsic unification between adherence to and development of Marxism and relentlessly advanced the sinicization of Marxism and attached great importance to Marxist theoretical innovation, which derived from an in-depth understanding of Marxism and the historical practice of creatively applying Marxism to keep abreast with the laws and trends of historical development.

In the history of Marxism and the CPC, the scientific attitude towards Marxism has posed a question for many years. Founders of Marxism reiterated that Marxism should not be applied as dogma. Engels said that "If materialism is not used as a guide to historical research but as a ready equation to cut historical facts, it will turn into its own antagonism", "Materialistic conception of history also has many friends now, but these friends take it as an excuse not to study history. As Marx said about French 'Marxists' in the late 1970s, 'I only know that I am not a Marxist'" (Marx and Engels, 2012d). Yet the dogmatic interpretation of Marxism did not disappear and once held great currency. When Mao Zedong unequivocally opposed bookishness in 1930, he met a backlash from some Party members. In their eyes, Mao Zedong's thoughts and propositions were unorthodoxy, empiricist or "Marxism from the mountains." In his political report delivered verbally at the Seventh CPC National Congress in April 1945, he said purposefully that "In our history, Marxism came in various forms. There was fragrant Marxism, and there was odorous Marxism. There was living Marxism, and there was dead Marxism. These sorts of Marxism were numerous. What we need is fragrant Marxism and not odorous Marxism; living Marxism and not dead Marxism" (Mao, 1996). In the eyes of dogmatists, Mao Zedong's interpretation of Marxism was heresy, but it chimed with the principles and spirit stated by the founders of Marxism. Over the past century, Chinese communists persevered in combining the basic principles of Marxism with the traits of the times and China's actual conditions and led the people in grasping the laws and trends of historical development across various stages, achieving a series of major practical and theoretical results, including Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important thought of "Three Represents," the scientific outlook on development, and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. With brilliant achievements, Chinese communists have lived up to their status as outstanding successors of Marxism.

Third, establishing a grand conception of history and grasping the laws and trends of historical development based on the interactions and ties between China and the world.

Xi Jinping noted that "One will look far only when he knows history and go far only when he understands history. We should educate and lead the whole Party to bear in mind the strategic broad picture of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the profound changes of the world unseen in a century, establish a grand conception of history, put forth corresponding strategic response based on the analysis of the evolving mechanisms and laws from the long course of history, the tide of the times and the global situation to make our work more systematic, predictive and creative." The CPC's century-long history proves that the correct handling of China's relationship with the world or in other words, the relationship between China's development trend and global development trend, is a question of great importance to the success of the Party's cause.

According to the general principles of Marxism and the theory of world history, the rise of capitalism and industrial civilization and the emergence of a global division of labor system have led to frequent exchanges between nations, whose self-enclosed regionality and existence came to an end, thus unveiling a "historical transition to the history of the world" (Marx and Engels, 2012a). Under the unique historical conditions, China's self-seclusion was ended by imperialist warships and cannons and

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thus forced into the history of the world. For a rather long period, therefore, the Chinese nation perceived the world, world history and world affairs with a sense of humiliation, pain and enslavement. Such situation did not change until the birth of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese working class pioneer armed with Marxism. Since then, the Chinese people started to have the backbone, turn from passive to proactive, and take the initiative and observe China's relationship with the world. The Chinese nation escaped the verge of being "expelled from world-membership" and made big strides to keep pace with the times. From standing up to getting rich and strong, China is approaching the center of world stage. One cannot help but marvel at the great transformations over the past century.

Today, the world is experiencing profound changes unseen in a century. A new round of technological and industrial revolutions is sweeping across the world. Economic globalization is making headway amid twists and turns. Reform of the global governance system is accelerating. New forms of hegemonism and power politics have emerged. Those changes are not confined to a certain period of time, a certain issue or a certain region or country, but represent a global and historical trend. The most distinctive feature amid those changes is the "rise of the East and the decline of the West" driven by China's rapid development and continuing and irreversible progress in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The profound changes of the world unseen in a century are intertwined and interact with the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Such interplay is unprecedented in both Chinese and world history and will exert profound and lasting effects on China and the world over. From the grand conception of history, we should properly handle China's relationship with the world, analyze the mechanisms and laws of historical development, adopt strategies accordingly, avoid disruptive mistakes, and take the initiative of historical development.

Fourth, grasping the laws and trends of historical development from the evolving primary social contradiction.

To grasp the laws and trends of historical development, the Party must have a correct assessment of the basic social contradiction and its manifestations across various stages and adopt strategic objectives and policy initiatives accordingly. Over the past century, the Party has adopted wise strategies based on its keen appreciation of China's evolving primary social contradiction and the historical orientation of the Chinese society across various stages.

Modern China opposed imperialism to solve national contradiction and opposed feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism to solve class contradiction. After arduous explorations, the CPC has applied Marxism for a correct analysis of China's national conditions, believing that the national contradiction between imperialism and the Chinese nation was the primary social contradiction at the time. In the face of Japanese imperialist aggression, in particular, national contradiction was of overriding importance. The correct assessment of primary social contradiction and its change made possible the two rounds of CPC-Kuomintang cooperation, the forming of the National United Front against Japanese Aggression, and the great victory of the War against the Japanese Aggression. After the Third Plenum of the 11th CPC Central Committee, the Party took stock of the lessons and experiences of China's socialist development since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, made a correct assessment of the nature of China's primary social contradiction and its change, resolutely ceased to "take class struggle as the key link,, and shifted the priorities of the work to reform and opening up that unleashed rapid economic development. As stated at the 19th CPC National Congress, "As socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, the principal contradiction facing Chinese society has evolved into one between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life" (Mao, 1996). This is a historical change of overall importance. This assessment of China's changing primary social contradiction marks a new level in the CPC's understanding of the laws and trends of historical development in the new era.

Fifth, giving play to the outstanding role of great leaders in steering the country towards the right direction of historical development.

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Marxism believes that people create history, but the important role of a few great leaders in catalyzing social change and historical progress is never overlooked. With superior practical and theoretical experiences and especially strategic vision and foresight, great leaders see a clearer picture of the laws and trends of historical development with more in-depth thinking. This has been fully demonstrated throughout the CPC's century-long history.

"What is leadership?" asked Mao Zedong, "What is the relationship between leadership and foresight? Foresight means to see beforehand future trends. Is it still leadership without foresight? I do not think so." "Sitting on the top of the command platform, you cannot be called a leader if there is anything you cannot see. Sitting on top of the command platform, you cannot be called a leader either if you can only see large numbers of ordinary things which appear on the horizon, for that is too ordinary. Only if, when the top of the masts has just appeared and nothing can be clearly seen, you are able to predict that these are the things that will develop into large numbers of ordinary things, and, moreover, you are able to control them, only then can you be called a leader." The CPC is blessed with great leaders such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping during its revolutionary, development and reform eras. Entering the new era, General Secretary Xi Jinping has correctly grasped the laws and trends of historical development with this foresight and extraordinary courage and resourcefulness as a Marxist politician, thinker and strategist. He has charted the profound changes of the world unseen in a century and mapped out a strategic blueprint for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. He has led the whole Party, army and people of all ethnic groups in seeking new opportunities amid crisis, exploring a new situation through change, and achieving an all-round victory in fighting absolute poverty. Under his leadership, China completed building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and made strategic results in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic while advancing socio-economic development. It has set out on a new journey for building a socialist modern country in all respects and created an economic growth miracle with long-term social stability. With their outstanding contributions, the Party's great leaders have drastically enhanced the CPC's leadership and global influence and are the pride of the CPC and the Chinese nation.

The CPC is committed to the great cause of the Chinese civilization, and its centenary marks a new beginning. Over the past century, the Party has led the Chinese nation in exploring a great path in line with the laws and trends of historical development, embarked on a great cause, and founded a great theory with an unyielding spirit. At the new beginning from its centenary, the Chinese people are bound to embrace a more splendid future in keeping with the trend of the times under the leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core.

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