

Four Bases of Xi Jinping's Thoughts on the Government of China

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Abstract: Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee, led by General Secretary Xi Jinping, has unswervingly adhered to the continuing development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Through courageous practice and excellent innovation, the CPC Central Committee has shaped a series of new ideas, thoughts and strategies of state governing, which serve as scientific guidelines for the actions and theories on further deepening the Reform and Opening-up and accelerating the modernization of socialism in China. Compared with "new ideas and new strategies," the "new thoughts" are more extensive, inclusive and thorough. In fact, "new thoughts" include "new ideas" and "new strategies" and are demonstrated by the latter two. Presenting the new CPC Central Committee's achievements in both practical and theoretical innovations with Xi Jinping's governing thought as the guide can further promote and deepen the essence of General Secretary Xi Jinping's series of key speeches. Xi Jinping's governing thought has its historical basis, realistic basis, theoretical basis and political basis.

Keywords: Xi Jinping's governing thought; historical basis; realistic basis; theoretical basis; political basis

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1. The relationship between historical basis of Xi Jinping's governing thought and the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation

As Xi Jinping points out, China must integrate the basic principles of Marxism with its present reality, and approach the traditional culture of the Chinese nation in a scientific way. Such an excellent traditional culture contains abundant philosophies, humanities, educational thoughts, ethics, providing a source of inspiration for national governance. The Communist Party of China (CPC) has inspired the Chinese people to carry out long-term revolution, construction and reform. During this process, it has been a faithful inheritor and spreader of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. That virtually means Xi Jinping's governing thought has its historical basis.

Xi Jinping's governing thought inherits, carries forward and enriches the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. As part of this governing thought, the core socialist values inherit, carry forward and enrich the principles advocated by the excellent traditional Chinese culture such as "harmony," "patriotism" and "friendliness". At the opening ceremony of the International Conference in Commemorating the 2565th Anniversary of Confucius & the 5th Congress of the International Confucian Association, Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech, elaborating the relationship between the core socialist values and the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. According to Xi Jinping, the cultivation and promotion of core socialist values must be based on the excellent culture of the Chinese nation; China's advocacy of core socialist values fully demonstrates its inheritance and enrichment of the excellent culture of the Chinese nation and

the thoughts of ancient sages. Moreover, when talking about another important part of Xi Jinping's governing thought, advancing the modernization of national governance systems and governance capacity, Xi Jinping also interpreted the relationship between the modernization of national governance and the excellent culture of the Chinese nation. Xi pointed out that a country's choice of a governance system is based on its historical inheritance and cultural traditions, as well as its level of economic and social development. Based on our historical inheritance, cultural traditions, and economic and social development, the current national governance system of China is formed through long-term development, incremental improvements and endogenous evolution. To advance the modernization of the national governance system and its capacity, China should vigorously cultivate and promote core socialist values. To maintain our core socialist values, China must give full play to its culture, and work harder on the exploration and interpretation of the excellent culture of the Chinese nation.

For Xi Jinping's governing thought, the excellent traditional Chinese culture is both a "gene segment" and nourishment. Xi Jinping's governing thought contains a "gene segment" of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and is also greatly nourished by it. As Xi argued, the Chinese people are striving for the realization of Two Centenary Goals. One is to finish building a moderately prosperous society. In fact, the notion of being "moderately prosperous" originates from the chapter of *Conveyance of Rites in The Book of Rites* and it has been the ideal social status pursued by the Chinese nation since ancient times. Xi emphasized that the Chinese Dream, the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people in modern times. Xi excels at adopting the excellent culture

of the Chinese nation to address the challenges facing China today. In a world of increasing social instabilities and conflicts, Xi Jinping has called for drawing positive ideological resources, “harmonious integration,” “harmony in diversity,” “universal unity,” and coordination without borders, among others, from the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, and keeping to the path of peaceful development and win-win cooperation in a bid to resolve various contradictions and conflicts.

The excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation equips Xi Jinping’s governing thought with Chinese characteristics. First, such Chinese characteristics are reflected in its chapters on how to realize the Two Centenary Goals, the Chinese Dream and socialism with Chinese characteristics. Second, Chinese characteristics are also reflected in its language, particularly in the General Secretary’s important speeches. For example, many distinctive characteristics unique to Chinese can be found in Xi’s remarks, such as, “It takes a good blacksmith to make steel,” “Only when you try boots on can you figure out whether they fit you or not,” “Try as hard as you can to leave prints on the stones you step on and scratches on the iron you hold,” “Cultivate a nail-driving spirit,” “Adopt Guan Yu’s ‘scrape the poison off the bone therapy’ to enhance work-style construction, combat corruption and uphold integrity.”

2. The time and realistic bases of Xi Jinping’s governing thought and their relationships with the current world, current development of the CPC, national conditions, and the histories of the CPC and the PRC

Xi Jinping’s governing thought is based on the scientific analyses of the current world, the current development of the CPC, and the national

conditions.

First, “the current world” and “Xi Jinping’s diplomatic strategy”. The current world pattern and order are undergoing readjustments, which are accompanied with various contradictions and conflicts. Under such circumstances, “global governance is relatively backward.” Since China became the world’s second largest economy, the combined force of many key factors has triggered a global “shift of power” or “shift of strength.” Such a shift transforms the world pattern and order (e.g. the USA’s re-balance to the Asia-Pacific), and initiates readjustments or even a reshuffle of international relations, particularly relations between major players. During the readjustment process, there is bound to be numerous conflicts of interests and cultures, which subsequently result in global instability. In such a global context, Xi Jinping sets out clear objectives, takes precise actions to effectively deal with new challenges, and above all, outlines a diplomatic strategy for China. The essence of Xi’s diplomatic strategy can be summed up as “peaceful development,” “win-win cooperation,” “mutual learning,” the “principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness,” “a community of shared destiny” and “global governance.” Xi Jinping attaches equal importance to “keeping a low profile and biding the time,” “striving for real achievements,” and firmly keeping to the path of peaceful development. Meanwhile, he also calls for building new international relationships, a new diplomatic pattern and a community of common destiny, with global governance and win-win cooperation as the core concepts. To this end, the following efforts are made. First, for “peaceful development,” China prioritizes the maintaining of good relations with major players, i.e. the USA and Russia. Second, to make “win-win cooperation” and uphold the principle of “joint discussion, joint building and sharing,” China introduces the Belt and Road Initiative to facilitate strategic

cooperation in building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Third, to achieve “mutual learning,” China brings Asia closer to Europe through the above-mentioned Silk Road Economic Belt and its interconnection approach. Fourth, to keep the principle of “amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness,” China works hard on developing friendly diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. Currently, neighborhood diplomacy is placed at a crucial position in China’s layout of foreign relations. The “neighborhood” is the starting point for China to build new relations with major players, implement the Belt and Road Initiative, and bring Asia closer to Europe. Eventually, China is expected to solve the dilemma facing its neighborhood diplomacy, realize multi-polar restrictions, and make its voice heard in the international arena. In doing so, the “power of China” is highlighted.

Second, “current development of the CPC” and “Xi Jinping’s strengthening of the Party self-discipline.” The CPC is “not yet a good enough blacksmith but it is now faced with a tough challenge of making strong enough steel.” Indeed, the CPC today needs to tackle a variety of tough challenges. These challenges fall into three categories. The first category concerns numerous conflicts and problems accumulated during the process of Reform and Opening-up. The worst of these are the institutional malpractice and the solidification of the social stratum. The second category comprises new challenges in China’s bottle-neck period following previous rapid development. During this period, there are more appeals, more conflicts and more difficulties to be tackled. The third category refers to the fact that as the second largest economy China has been suppressed by major powers and other countries. Indeed, the CPC Central Committee, led by General Secretary Xi Jinping, is faced with a range of severe

challenges and risks. The masses, under the leadership of the CPC, form the major force of this “steel-forging” campaign. Now that they are supposed to forge the strongest possible “steel,” the CPC itself, as the leader of this “steel-forging” campaign, must be strong enough. That is why Xi Jinping reiterates that “A good blacksmith makes good steel.” Overall, the most CPC cadres exhibit a strong commitment to the socialist cause. Yet, there are some CPC members not dedicated enough and may encounter four risks; being “mentally slack, incompetent at work, alienated from the masses, and corrupt.”

To avoid the four risks and tackle all related problems, it is imperative to immediately set out corresponding objectives, take precise actions, comprehensively govern the Party with strict discipline, and enhance the Party-building. Only by doing so can the CPC expect to grow strong enough to deal with the challenges. Before national governance comes power governance is the foundation of national governance; official governance is the foundation of power governance; before official governance comes the introduction of strict measures. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping has directly confronted the “four risks” facing the CPC, tackling the “four risks” and strengthening “Party self-discipline” high on his governing agenda. First, to guard against “being mentally slack,” a lack of ideal, faith, self-confidence, consensus, cohesion and ambition, Xi Jinping highlights the importance of being “mentally strong.” As Xi Jinping stresses, communist faith is “calcium” for the CPC members. The CPC should enhance its confidence in the socialist path, theories and system; seek consensus and joint force of reform; attract positive social elements; and take the initiative to launch more campaigns with historical significance. Second, on “incompetence,” he highlights “real strength.”

Xi Jinping calls for less social occasions and more learning activities to build the CPC into a learning-based party/organization; he also requires the CPC members to overcome their skill-learning panic, enhance governing capacity, and actively push forward the modernization of governing capacity. Third, concerning the alienation from the masses, Xi attaches great importance to the cultivation of a “rigid work style.” According to Xi Jinping, the CPC should further improve its work style; carry out mass line-based education practice to advocate the principles of serving the people, being practical and keeping away from corruption; initiate a thorough cleanup campaign to rectify malpractices and bad work style; and urge its cadres to observe the Three Guidelines for Ethical Behavior and the Three Basic Rules of Conduct. Work-style construction must be truly practiced in talent selection. Talent selection determines the work style of an organization, and subsequently determines its individuals’ way of life and the overall social morality. Fourth, to fight against corruption, Xi argues “being clean” is the key. Xi Jinping places particular emphasis on maintaining the advancement and enhancing the purity of the CPC, calling for serious actions to combat corruption, and to keep power reined within the cage of regulations. To this end, it is imperative to enhance and improve the “great project” of the CPC’s work-style construction to equip the Party with excellent spirit, capacity, work style and integrity. As Xi Jinping points out, the CPC has the obligation to practice self-discipline, be strict with its members, and rectify its own pressing problems. When it comes to solve the above problems, the CPC should impose high standard requirements on cadres while respecting their due rights and benefits.

Third, “national conditions” and “Xi Jinping’s modernization of national governance and other thoughts.” Overall, China is now at a crucial stage in

which it is busy with restructuring, power shifting, interests gaming, intellectual diversification, economic transformation and upgrading, as well as moderately prosperous society building. In this context, the biggest problem tormenting this country is its “inability to catch up with the latest developments in modern national governance.” Based on such national conditions and a thorough analysis of relevant problems and disadvantages, Xi Jinping sets out objectives for the CPC and leads the CPC to take precise actions. On the one hand, he advocates the “modernization of national governance.” On the other hand, he proposes the Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy and Five Major Development Concepts. For the tasks of restructuring and power shifting, he proposes to get adjusted to the “new normal” of economic development. Regarding interests gaming and intellectual diversification, he presents the Chinese Dream concept – a maximal common divisor capable of building consensus.

Therefore, it can be concluded that a thorough analysis of the current world, current development of the CPC and national conditions enable the new CPC Central Committee to shape its own governing thought, which is problem targeted, objective oriented, and capable of overcoming disadvantages and taking precise actions.

3. Theoretical basis of Xi Jinping’s governing thought and its relationship with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics

Xi Jinping’s governing thought has a “source-river” relationship with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and the theoretical system of

socialism with Chinese characteristics, with the latter theoretical systems being the “source” and Xi Jinping’s governing thought being the “river.” Alternatively, such a source-river relationship can be presented in the following way. Xi Jinping’s governing thought is the latest theoretical achievement made during the localization of Marxism in China; it is an upgrade and leap based on the integration of Mao Zedong Thought and the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. And this source-river relationship is mainly reflected in the aspects below.

First, Xi Jinping’s advocacy of “comprehensively govern the Party with strict discipline” is an integration and upgrade of Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Three Represents Theory and the Scientific Outlook on Development. When it comes to the CPC’s governing, the defining feature of Mao Zedong’s practice was “being strict;” Deng Xiaoping attached more importance to enhancing and improving the CPC’s development; the Three Represents Theory focuses on improving the CPC’s advancement and governing capacity; the Scientific Outlook on Development highlights the CPC’s exercise of self-discipline, the strengthening of the CPC’s governing, as well as the comprehensive improvement of the CPC’s ideology, organization, work style, anti-corruption capacity, integrity and institutional building. Xi Jinping attaches equal importance to “being strict” and “being comprehensive.” He advocates “comprehensively govern the Party with strict discipline” by focusing on “finishing building a moderately prosperous society,” “deepening reform” and “advancing the law-based governance of China.” He starts this Party self-discipline enhancement campaign with tackling the “four risks” facing the CPC at present. Such a move is in nature an integration and upgrade.

Second, Xi Jinping’s ambition to realize

the Two Centenary Goals, the Chinese Dream and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, is an integration and upgrade of Deng Xiaoping’s “three-step development” strategy. In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping first proposed to implement this “three-step development” strategy to boost the Chinese economy. In the 1990s, in response to the new situation, the “three-step development” vision for the Chinese economy in the 21st century was introduced at the 15th CPC National Congress. Based on Deng Xiaoping’s “three-step development” strategy, Xi Jinping thoroughly analyzes the strategic issues of present and explores the long-term development route for China. At present, China’s primary strategic concern is how to achieve the strategic objective, i.e. finishing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Concerning long-term strategic development, the most important of all is to realize socialist modernization and the Chinese Dream. The two aspects integrate into an organic whole in the realization of the Two Centenary Goals and the Chinese Dream. The Two Centenary Goals and the Chinese Dream have inherited and developed Deng Xiaoping’s “three-step development” strategy, becoming an integration and upgrade.

Third, Xi Jinping’s proposal and emphasis of “socialist core values” is an integration and upgrade of the “core value system of socialism.” In October 2006, Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Some Major Issues Concerning the Establishment of a Harmonious Society was passed at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee. For the first time, the Decision specified the strategic task of “building the core value system of socialism.” In his speech delivered on June 25, 2007, Hu Jintao advocated vigorously building the core value system of socialism and consolidating the common ideological basis for all CPC members and all Chinese people to unite

for the socialist cause. The core value system of socialism mainly comprises four aspects, which respectively are Marxism (guiding ideology); socialism with Chinese characteristics (common ideal); national spirit (with patriotism being the core) and spirit of the time (with reform and innovation being the core); and the socialist concept of honor and disgrace. At the 18th CPC National Congress, the following concepts were newly advocated; prosperity, democracy, civilization, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, legality, patriotism, professionalism, integrity and friendliness. Xi Jinping further highlights the active cultivation and exercise of socialist core values. The above-mentioned 12 concepts demonstrate the essence of the “core value system of socialism” and are the “core concepts” in this “core value system.”

Fourth, Xi Jinping’s Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy is an integration and upgrade of the following ideas contained in the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics; “finishing building a moderately prosperous society,” “deepening reform,” “advancing the law-based governance of China,” “strengthening Party self-discipline,” “realizing comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development” and “holistic approach.” Prior to the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC mainly focused on finishing building a moderately prosperous society, deepening reform, advancing the law-based governance of China, strengthening Party self-discipline, etc. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the new CPC Central Committee, based on the inherent development law of China, has been mainly engaged in “four major causes” in practice, which respectively are finishing building a moderately prosperous society, deepening reform, advancing the law-based governance of China and strengthening Party self-discipline. These four aspects integrate into a rigorous organic whole, namely, the Four-pronged Comprehensive

Strategy. Through theoretical generalization and upgrading, it can be discovered that there is an inherent connection among the four aspects in this organic whole. Such a connection is an ends-means relation, with finishing building a moderately prosperous society being the “strategic objective” and deepening reform, advancing the law-based governance of China and strengthening Party self-discipline being the three strategic means. Based on such a consideration, in December 2014, on a visit to Jiangsu province, Xi Jinping officially introduced the Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy. The introduction of the Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy has historical basis and practical basis, and is in line with the historical development route of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Moreover, this strategy is also an integration and upgrade of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Fifth, Xi Jinping’s Five Major Development Concepts is an integration and upgrade of the Scientific Outlook on Development. The Scientific Outlook on Development facilitates the Chinese economy’s transition from a factor-driven and investment-driven type to an innovation-driven type. Also, it contains the concepts of “comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development,” “holistic approach,” “building an environment-friendly society,” “coordinating the internal and external situations,” “sharing social development fruits,” etc. Through integration and upgrading, these concepts are summarized into the Five Major Development Concepts of “innovation, coordination, green development, opening up and sharing.” As an organic whole, these Five Major Development Concepts are the five defining factors concerning finishing building a moderately prosperous society. Yet, at the same time they also reflect China’s five deficiencies in building this moderately prosperous society.

4. The political basis of Xi Jinping's governing thought and its relationship with the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress

The path determines the destiny. The first collective learning session attended by all members of the 18th Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee was themed by “Thoroughly studying, promoting and implementing the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress.” When chairing the session, Xi Jinping stressed, “one primary topic of the 18th CPC National Congress is to adhere to and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics and to study, promote and implement the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress by focusing on adhering to and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics.” This collective learning session is of great proclamatory significance. At the very beginning of this learning session, Xi Jinping explicitly identified the “adhering to and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics” as the primary theme of the new CPC Central Committee. Xi Jinping’s statement above virtually delivers a signal concerning the development prospects of both the CPC and the country. That is, the new CPC Central Committee shall unswervingly adhere to and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, it can be concluded that Xi Jinping’s governing thought has an “inheritance-development” relationship with the spirit of the 18th CPC National Congress. Xi’s governing thought is themed by adhering to and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The fact that Xi Jinping’s governing thought adheres to socialism with Chinese characteristics is mainly reflected in its emphasis on “staying to the CPC’s original mission” and returning to the essence of socialism to avoid making “subversive mistakes.” Currently, socialism with Chinese

characteristics is misunderstood by some people as “capitalism with Chinese characteristics,” “state capitalism” or “crony capitalism.” Regarding that, Xi Jinping stresses, “we must never abandon the basic principles of scientific socialism, for without them, our system cannot be called socialism anymore.” Furthermore, concerning the economy, politics, culture, society and other fields, Xi Jinping also reiterates the importance of adhering to the basic principles of scientific socialism. In the economic sphere, he stresses that the dominant position of public ownership should by no means be under any threat; that China must pursue common prosperity, and that the CPC must always observe the basic principles and methodology of Marxist political economics. In the political sphere, he stresses that the CPC must maintain its position as the ruling party and Marxism as its guidance; in the cultural sphere, he stresses that core socialist values should always be pursued. In the social sphere, he stresses that more importance should be attached to ensuring and improving people’s livelihoods, and enabling people to share the social development fruits.

Xi Jinping’s governing thought is a new development in socialism with Chinese characteristics, which is reflected in six aspects. First, Xi’s governing thought for the first time interprets the Chinese characteristics. More specifically, it points out that the Chinese characteristics in socialism with Chinese characteristics mainly comprise the characteristics of practice, theory, the Chinese nation and the time. The characteristics of practice refer to the general basis, overall layout and primary task of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Characteristics of theory indicate the fact that socialism with Chinese characteristics is a combination of the general principles of scientific socialism and the reality of China. Characteristics of the Chinese nation

mean socialism with Chinese characteristics has the “gene” of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. Characteristics of the time refer to its spirit of reform and innovation and its emphasis on the modernization of national governance systems and governance capacity. Second, Xi’s governing thought stresses the importance for the CPC members to actively engage in historical campaigns with new features to successfully accomplish the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the Chinese Dream. Those historical campaigns prove the path to socialism with Chinese characteristics is a long-term process full of difficulties and setbacks. Meanwhile, they also require the CPC members to be equipped with strong solidarity, exceptional perseverance, and huge initiative. Third, Xi’s governing thought sets out its objectives of realizing the Two Centenary Goals and the Chinese Dream. From an objective-oriented perspective, it specifies the primary task of socialism with Chinese characteristics and answers questions concerning the vision of modernization and the national rejuvenation. Fourth, Xi’s governing thought highlights and elaborates the importance

of keeping to the “three self-confidences,” and holds that keeping to the “three self-confidences” in nature means consolidating our psychological defense, spiritual defense and ideological defense. Fifth, Xi’s governing thought becomes the first one to propose the strategic layout of Four-pronged Comprehensive Strategy. Moreover, it also offers a top-level design for the CPC’s general governing strategy and answers questions concerning how to realize national modernization and rejuvenation from a perspective of tools. Sixth, Xi’s governing thought proposes Five Major Development Concepts to boost the building of a moderately prosperous society and leads the way for the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The formation of Xi Jinping’s governing thought is an inevitable result of the process of Chinese history. In accordance with corresponding rules of the time, reality and objective conditions, Xi’s governing thought is based on solid theoretical and political foundations and is the core for constructing the discourse system of contemporary Chinese philosophy.

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