

# Basic Principles of Marxism and the Theory and Practice of Social Development in Contemporary China

Jiajia Tan

Gansu University of Chinese Medicine, Lanzhou, 730101 Gansu, China

781202536@qq.com

**Keywords:** Fundamental Principles of Marxism, Contemporary Chinese Society, Economic Reform, Socialist Core Values, Social Equity, Cultural Construction, Theory and Practice

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to explore how the basic principles of Marxism play a guiding role in the development of contemporary Chinese society. By analyzing the core theories of Marxism and the specific practices of China's social development, the article elaborates on the formation of socialist core values, the promotion of economic reform, the realization of social equity and the advancement of cultural construction. On this basis, the article further explores the guiding significance of Marxist theories for the future development of Chinese society, and summarizes the experiences and challenges of combining theories and practices. Finally, the article looks forward to the continued influence of Marxism in the modernization process and its future development direction.

## 1. Introduction

As a scientific worldview and methodology, Marxism has profoundly influenced the development of human society since its inception[1]. In China, Marxism serves not only as the guiding ideology of the Communist Party but also as a crucial theoretical foundation for advancing social progress and achieving modernization. As Chinese society enters a new era, the challenge of how to integrate the basic principles of Marxism with the contemporary realities of China to promote sustainable development has become a topic worthy of deep exploration[2].

Throughout China's process of reform, opening up, and modernization, the application of Marxist theories across various fields—such as economics, politics, and culture—has deepened, leading to the establishment of a socialist path with Chinese characteristics[3]. This paper aims to explore Marxism's core theories, analyze their specific application in different aspects of China's social development, and examine how these theories can continue to provide strong guidance for China's social development under new historical conditions.

The purpose of this research paper is to demonstrate the importance of combining theory with practice by systematically exploring the relationship between the basic principles of Marxism and the development of contemporary Chinese society. This approach aims to provide theoretical support for further deepening reforms and promoting social progress[4]. The research methodology primarily involves literature analysis and case studies, with the goal of offering readers a comprehensive and in-depth perspective on the relevance of Marxism in Chinese society.

## 2. Overview of the basic principles of Marxism

Marxism, as a scientific theory of society, is grounded in several core principles: historical materialism, dialectical materialism, the theory of surplus value, and the ideal of communism[5]. Historical materialism posits that the material conditions of production form the foundation of social development, asserting that the economic base influences the superstructure and that societal progress occurs through the dynamic interplay between productive forces and production relations. Conversely, dialectical materialism emphasizes that the world is made up of interrelated and evolving matter, with development driven by internal contradictions within entities[6]. Together, these theories offer a scientific approach to comprehending social change and advancement. Economic Growth Formula:

$$G = \frac{Y_t - Y_{t-1}}{Y_{t-1}} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

Gini Coefficient Formula:

$$G = \frac{A}{A+B} \quad (2)$$

In terms of the basic view of social development, Marxism believes that human society has gone through a historical process from primitive communism, slave society, feudal society, capitalist society to communist society[7]. Marxism emphasizes the self-destructive contradictions embedded within capitalist society, namely, the contradictions between productive forces and relations of production, and between capital and labor, which will ultimately lead to the collapse of capitalism and the triumph of socialism[8]. Marxism also proposes that the overthrow of bourgeois rule and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat through a proletarian revolution, which will lead to the realization of a communist society, is the inevitable trend of social development, showed in Figure 1 :

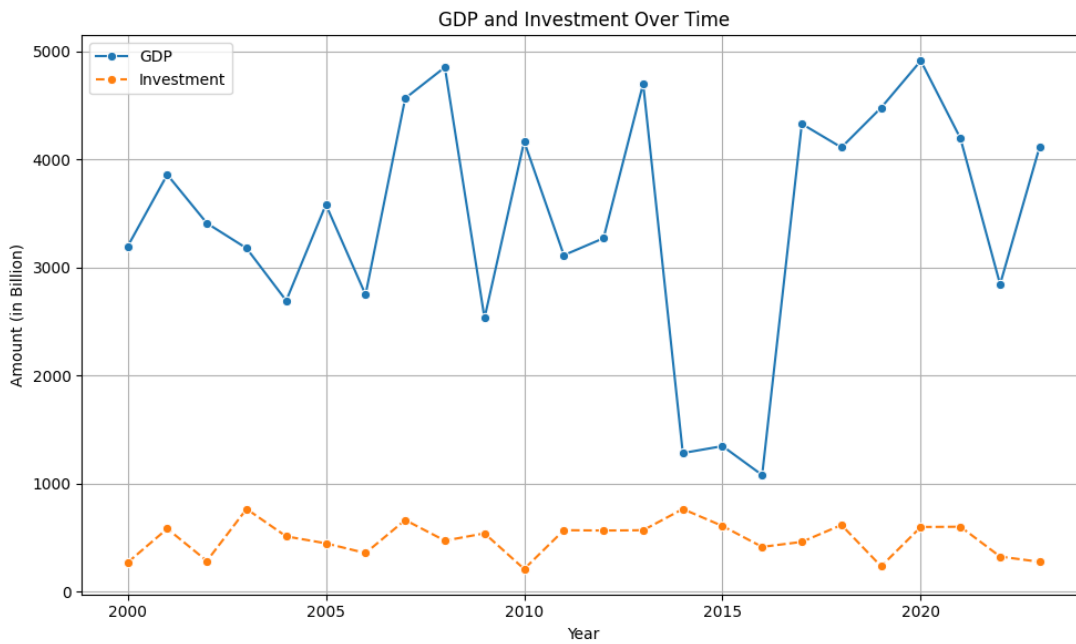


Figure 1 GDP and Investment Over Time

Marxism's relevance to contemporary social issues is evident in its deep analysis of the contradictions inherent in capitalist societies and its capacity to elucidate modern social challenges [9]. Currently, phenomena such as globalization, informatization, and the market economy have introduced new issues, including growing income inequality, environmental degradation, and labor unrest. Marxism addresses these problems by examining capital accumulation, labor exploitation, and class struggle, thereby revealing the systemic causes and offering a theoretical framework for critiquing capitalism and exploring socialist alternatives. Furthermore, Marxism's insights into culture, ideology, and the state-society relationship provide valuable perspectives for understanding the complexities of today's social landscape [10].

In China's context, Marxist principles have been adapted to local realities, leading to the development of the theoretical system known as socialism with Chinese characteristics. Since the onset of reform and opening up, China has made substantial progress in economic development, political reform, and cultural enhancement, with Marxist theory playing a crucial role in these advancements. By tailoring Marxist core principles to China's unique conditions, the country has not only achieved impressive economic growth and broad social progress but has also forged a development path suited to its specific national context. The practical application of Marxism in China has validated its scientific and strategic significance while contributing to the ongoing evolution and enrichment of Marxist thought. The discussion of these four aspects provides a

comprehensive understanding of Marxism's fundamental principles and highlights their essential role in shaping contemporary Chinese society.

3. Application of the basic principles of Marxism to the development of Chinese society

In the course of China's social progress, the essential tenets of Marxism have been extensively and profoundly utilized, offering a robust theoretical underpinning for advancing comprehensive development across various sectors, including the economy, politics, and culture. By establishing and implementing socialist core values, deepening economic reforms, and adjusting social equity and class structures, China has effectively merged the central ideas of Marxism with its unique circumstances, forging a development path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. These practices not only exemplify the innovative application of Marxist theory in China but also contribute valuable insights for the advancement of the global socialist movement.

3.1. Formation and Practice of Socialist Core Values Connotation of Core Values

Socialist core values are a crucial guiding principle formulated by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the pursuit of advancing the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, serving as the value framework for all of society to follow. These values are articulated at three distinct levels—state, society, and citizens—represented by the concepts of "prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony," "freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law," and "patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship." These values not only encapsulate the fundamental principles of Marxism but also embody the rich traditional culture of the Chinese nation and the social development goals of contemporary China.

At the national level, the core values—"prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony"—are a concise summary of the country's development objectives. "Prosperity" reflects the primary focus on economic growth and the pursuit of national strength and people's well-being; "democracy" highlights the enhancement of the political system and the realization of popular sovereignty; "civility" pertains to the comprehensive advancement of cultural development and the cultivation of spiritual civilization; and "harmony" signifies social stability and a climate of peaceful coexistence. Together, these four elements form the essential connotation of socialist core values at the national level, directing the development trajectory of Chinese society, showed in Figure 2 :

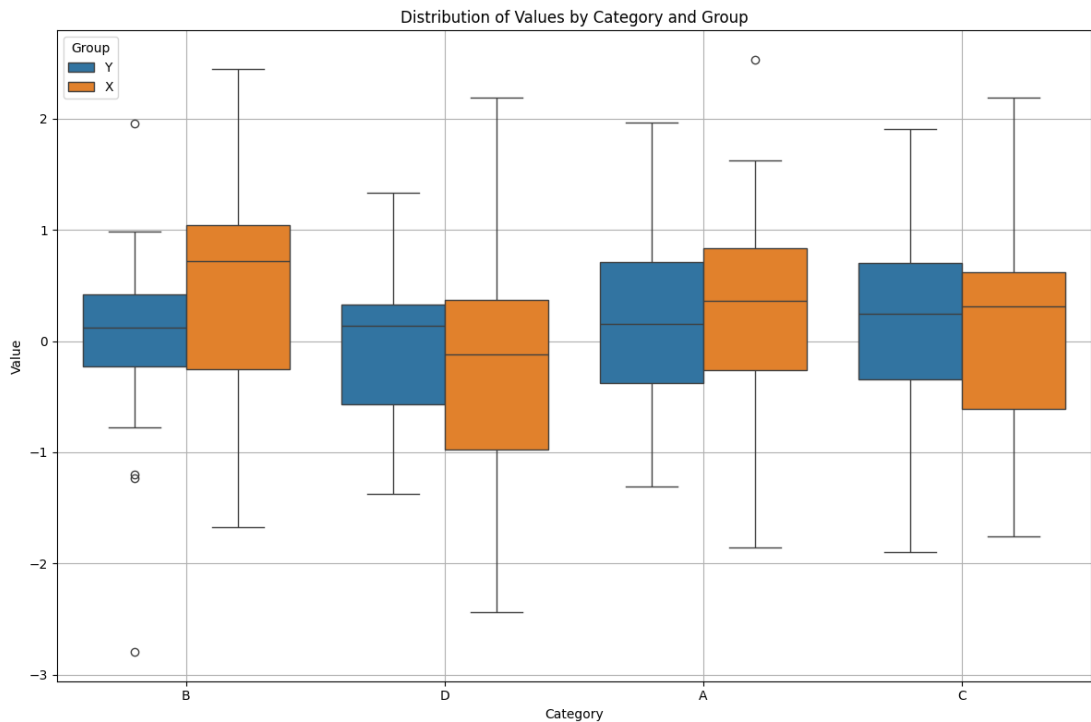


Figure 2 Distribution of Values by Category and Group

The core values at the social level—"freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law"—articulate the fundamental requirements for the social system and interpersonal relations within society. "Freedom" represents a fundamental right that every individual in society should enjoy, highlighting the alignment between personal and collective development; "equality" underscores the principle that all members of society are equal before the law and should have equal opportunities; "justice" demands that the social system be fair, with a rational distribution of social resources; and "the rule of law" stands as a vital tenet of national governance, encapsulating the idea of a law-governed state. These values aim to establish a socialist society characterized by freedom, justice, equality, and adherence to the rule of law.

At the civic level, the core values—"patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship"—serve as a high-level summary of the standards for individual conduct. "Patriotism" is a fundamental emotion and duty of every citizen, reflecting loyalty and love for the country; "dedication" emphasizes professional ethics and a commitment to one's work, acknowledging the value of labor; "integrity" is the bedrock of the social credit system, requiring individuals to be honest and trustworthy in their interactions; and "friendship" stresses the importance of mutual support and compassion in interpersonal relationships, which are key to fostering a harmonious society. These values not only guide individual behavior but also contribute to social harmony and progress.

The rich and profound essence of socialist core values not only embodies the central ideas of Marxism but also integrates China's contemporary realities and the characteristics of the current era, offering value-based guidance for the harmonious stability and sustainable development of Chinese society. In practice, these core values have gradually become ingrained in people's minds through education, public awareness campaigns, institutional frameworks, and other means, and they have emerged as a significant force driving the progress of Chinese society.

### **3.2. Economic reform and social development**

China's economic reforms initiated in the late 1970s marked the country's shift from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one. This transition not only represented a pivotal moment in China's economic trajectory but also acted as a crucial catalyst for the broader social advancement. By gradually integrating market mechanisms, liberalizing enterprise operations, and expanding foreign trade, China achieved unprecedented economic growth, leading to profound transformations across all facets of society. The success of these reforms has propelled China from a largely agrarian economy to the world's second-largest economy, laying the groundwork for the establishment of a socialist market economy.

Economic reforms significantly liberated and developed the productive forces. Early on, the introduction of the household contract responsibility system and the rise of township and village enterprises greatly incentivized agricultural productivity. As reforms deepened, the restructuring of state-owned enterprises and the rapid expansion of the private sector fully unleashed industrial productivity. China's manufacturing industry quickly ascended to a pivotal role in the global production and supply chain. This surge in productivity provided a robust material foundation for social development and paved the way for improving living standards.

These reforms also accelerated urbanization, leading to substantial changes in social structures. The development of industrialization and market economies attracted a massive influx of rural populations to urban centers in pursuit of better employment opportunities and living conditions. As a result, China's urbanization rate soared from less than 20% at the onset of reforms to over 60% today. This urban population boom spurred infrastructure development and service industry growth, furthering societal modernization. However, rapid urbanization introduced challenges such as increased urban management pressures and a widening rural-urban divide, necessitating additional reforms and social policy interventions.

Economic reforms fostered income diversification and contributed to overall societal prosperity. With the expansion of the market economy, income sources diversified, with wages, investments, and business revenues becoming key components of income distribution. These reforms not only elevated the general living standards but also facilitated the rapid expansion of the middle class, which plays

a crucial role in supporting social stability and development. Nonetheless, the widening income gap has emerged as a significant concern. To promote social equity and stability, the government has focused on reducing income disparities and maintaining harmony through measures like tax regulation and social security system construction.

The interplay between economic reforms and social development has established a solid foundation for China's modernization efforts. Sustained economic growth has driven progress in various societal domains, leading to notable improvements in public services such as education, healthcare, and culture, as well as significant enhancements in people's quality of life. Concurrently, societal development has provided new momentum and direction for economic reforms, particularly in areas like technological innovation and green development. As China continues its reform and modernization journey, the challenge will be to achieve a more balanced interaction between economic growth and social progress.

#### **4. The significance of the basic principles of Marxism in guiding the future development of Chinese society**

As the guiding ideology of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Marxism has played a crucial role in the country's social development and will continue to provide direction and theoretical support for China's future progress. In the face of new challenges in the new era, the fundamental principles of Marxism will inject strong momentum into the continuous advancement of Chinese society, offering robust theoretical backing for realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

Marxism offers scientific guidance for China's economic development. As China enters a critical phase of economic restructuring and upgrading, achieving high-quality development has become a central issue. The Marxist theory of the relationship between productive forces and production relations provides a methodological framework for understanding the underlying laws of economic development. Moving forward, China will deepen economic reforms, promote scientific and technological innovation, and pursue green development, aiming for sustainable economic growth while maintaining the balance between a market economy and the socialist system.

The basic principles of Marxism serve as the theoretical foundation for achieving social equity and justice. Social equity is a key goal of socialism with Chinese characteristics and one of the core values guiding China's social development. Marxism's emphasis on the fair distribution of social resources and the common prosperity of all people underpins China's efforts to improve its social security system, reduce income disparities, and ensure social equity in the new era. In the future, China will continue to build a fairer and more equitable society through policy adjustments and social reforms guided by these Marxist principles.

Marxist principles provide directional guidance for political system reform and social governance. Amid new international and domestic challenges, China's political system and social governance model face increasing pressure. Marxist theories on the state and society offer valuable insights for China as it deepens political reforms, strengthens the rule of law, and improves its social governance system. In the future, while adhering to the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, China will continue to advance political reforms and enhance the scientific and refined management of society to better navigate the complex domestic and international landscape.

Marxism provides value guidance for cultural construction and thought leadership. In the new era, China is integrating its rich traditional culture with socialist core values to build a distinct cultural soft power. Marxist theories on culture and ideology form the ideological foundation for China's cultural initiatives. Looking ahead, China will continue to bolster cultural confidence and promote the flourishing of socialist culture, ensuring that this ideological guidance supports the country's long-term stability and enriches the spiritual life of its people. The basic principles of Marxism have been the theoretical cornerstone of China's past social development and will continue to steer the course of Chinese society in the future. Through ongoing theoretical innovation and practical exploration, Marxism will provide an inexhaustible source of power and wisdom for achieving the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

## 5. Conclusion

As a scientific worldview and methodology, the core principles of Marxism have profoundly shaped every stage of development in Chinese society and continue to be pivotal in the new era. This paper examines how Marxist fundamentals have influenced the formation and application of socialist core values, guided economic reforms and social development, and addressed issues related to class structure and social equity.

Marxist principles underpin the creation and practice of socialist core values, which serve as a guiding framework for state, societal, and individual behavior. These values promote social harmony, bolster national strength, and enhance cultural self-confidence. By adhering to and refining these core values, Chinese society has aimed to achieve fairness, justice, and harmony while pursuing economic growth. Economic reforms, guided by Marxist theory on the contradictions between productive forces and production relations, have driven significant achievements. The reforms have transformed China's economy and social structure, positioning the country as a key player in the global economic arena. Nonetheless, these reforms have also introduced new social challenges, and Marxist theories on social equity and class structure offer valuable insights for addressing these issues.

Marxism provides theoretical support for advancing social equity and optimizing class structure. As society evolves, income disparity and social inequality have become more prominent. Marxism advocates for the fair distribution of resources and the common prosperity of all, offering crucial guidance for addressing social disparities and fostering justice. The Chinese government, guided by these principles, has implemented policies to reduce income inequality and promote equity, working towards the goal of common prosperity for all.

## Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the Phase research results of the 2023 Youth Fund Project for Humanities and Social Sciences Research of the Ministry of Education, titled "Risk Measurement and Governance Mechanism of Online Populism from the Perspective of Algorithm Recommendation" (Project No. 23YJC710081)

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