

**The “Second Integration” That Transforms China**  
— **Theoretical Innovation and Practice in Building the**  
**Modern Civilization of the Chinese Nation**

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## **Table of Contents**

**Introduction**

### **Chapter I: The Rich Connotation and Vigorous Practice of the “Second Integration”**

**1. Upholding the Way: Organic Integration of Beliefs and Millennia-Old Ideals**

**2. Advocating Etiquette: Organic Integration of Institutional Formation and Ritual-and-music Civilization**

**3. Putting People First: Organic Integration of Development Philosophy and People-centered Doctrine**

**4. Respecting Morality: Organic Integration of Core Values and Traditional Moral Orientation**

**5. Promoting Culture: Organic Integration of Advanced Culture and Fine Traditional Culture**

**6. Valuing Harmony: Organic Integration of the Concept of a Human Community with a Shared Future and the Path of Harmonious Coexistence Among Nations**

### **Chapter II: Historical Roots and Innovation of the “Second Integration”**

**1. Identifying the Point of Convergence: Penetrating the Social Fabric Unconsciously**

**2. Keeping the Roots and Spirit Alive: Steadily Charting a New Course Amid Changing Times**

**3. Restoring Vitality: Building Bridges through “Two Inclusions” and “Two Innovations”**

**4. Facilitating New Leaps Forward: Exploring Innovative Theories in Step with the Times**

## **Chapter III: Reliable Path to and Promotion Strategy for the “Second Integration”**

**1. Upholding the Guiding Role of Marxism**

**2. Essential Attributes of Culture**

**3. Fundamental Role of Culture**

**4. Positioning of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture**

**5. Intrinsic Laws of Cultural Inheritance and Development**

**6. Best of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture**

**7. Scientific Worldview and Methodology**

**8. High Compatibility between Fine Traditional Chinese Culture and Values of Scientific Socialism**

**9. Wisdom of Governance in China’s Fine Traditional Culture**

**10. Trends of Exchanges and Mutual Learning between Civilizations**

## **Chapter IV: Global Significance and Inspiration for the Times from the “Second Integration”**

**1. China’s Commitment to World Peace and Stability with Cultural Strength**

**2. Chinese Way of Governance: Managing Challenges from the Six Dialectical Relationships**

**3. Harmonious Coexistence: Contributing to a Better Future with a New Form of Human Advancement**

## **Conclusion**

## **Writing Explanation and Acknowledgments**

## Introduction

“This ancient culture is suddenly full of vigor and strength. That’s a mystery. No one could have imagined it!” exclaimed German political thinker Helmut Schmidt in a public interview when discussing Chinese culture.

With its super size and strong cohesiveness of society, China has achieved the remarkable “twin miracles” of fast economic growth and long-term social stability over the past few decades.

It is on the path of development and progress with safety and stability for its people. China’s 5,000-year-old civilization and culture of more than 10,000 years have been developing with vigor and vitality. How can we explain China’s success?

“Without China's 5,000-year-old civilization, where would the unique characteristics of China come from? And without the unique characteristics of China, where would our successful socialist path with Chinese characteristics be today?” Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said while paying an inspection visit to a park dedicated to Zhu Xi on Mount Wuyi in Fujian Province on March 22, 2021.

Zhang Jianguang, an expert on literature and history who guided Xi on the tour, said this revelation is simply amazing and will have far-reaching implications.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Zhang Jianguang, February 23, 2023.

Understanding the CPC is key to understanding today's China. Understanding China requires grasping the "cultural and civilizational soil" in which the CPC is firmly rooted.

In the history of the development of the CPC's theory, since the 1940s, there has been the accumulated practice of "integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities" with conscious summarization, which has successfully guided the CPC in leading the people's revolution, construction, and reform. Today's experts on the CPC's history call this practice the "First Integration." On July 1, 2021, in his speech at the gathering celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, Xi Jinping formally put forward "integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's fine traditional culture." His proposal has become known as the "Second Integration."

This innovative theory accurately grasps the current international and domestic trends, conforms to the historical process of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and demonstrates that since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, Chinese leaders have bravely stood at the forefront of the times with great vision and led China toward the great prospect of building a human community with a shared future. They have guided the Chinese people in strengthening their historical perspective, reinforcing their identity, and better interpreting the Chinese civilization, logically and coherently explaining China's governance today.

When attending the Symposium on Cultural Inheritance and Development in Beijing on June 2, 2023, Xi Jinping delivered an important speech, emphasizing, "Why is our socialism different? Why can it be full of vigor and vitality? The key lies in Chinese characteristics, and the key to Chinese characteristics lies in the 'Two Integrations'." "Integration is not a dish of assorted hors d'oeuvres. Neither is it a simple physical reaction. It is, however, a profound chemical reaction that creates an organically unified new cultural life."

This report argues that the "Second Integration" theory can be understood through six "organic integrations": the organic integration of communist and socialist beliefs with the millennial ideal of the Chinese nation, the organic integration of the matured and well-defined socialist system with Chinese characteristics with the ritual-and-music civilization, the organic integration of the people-centered idea of development with the people-oriented thought running through China for 5,000 years, the organic integration of core value of socialism with the traditional value orientation of the Chinese nation, the organic integration of the advanced socialist culture with fine traditional Chinese culture, and the organic integration of the concept of a human community with a shared future with the path of harmonious coexistence among nations.

The “Second Integration” theory, coming from the depths of Chinese history, has identified the points of convergence of Marxism with the fine traditional Chinese culture, preserved the Chinese nation’s roots and soul, activated the vitality of traditional culture, made a new great leap forward in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context, and created a new form of human civilization.

What is the scientific path to realizing the “Second Integration”? This report crystallizes it into the methodology of ten perspectives.

As a major country still growing considerably, China’s conceptual changes and governance strategies are not only fundamentally changing China but will also have a profound impact on the world. The theory and practice of the “Second Integration” have shown the world that China’s growth will continue to provide the world with the most significant public good of peaceful development and bring stability and certainty to the global community. Simultaneously, other countries can observe and use for reference China’s experience of governance from the perspective of the “Second Integration.”

The “Second Integration” has created a new pattern of the CPC’s theoretical innovation and opened up a new realm of adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times. It is a key to understanding China in the new era, a pair of insightful eyes to observe Chinese modernization and a new form of human civilization, and a method to understand the relationship between China and the world.

It is China’s new “cultural” way of governance leading the future in the 21st century.

The “Second Integration” is another initiative to emancipate the mind. It allows us to fully use the precious resources of fine traditional Chinese culture in a broader cultural space and explore future-oriented theoretical and institutional innovations.

— Xi Jinping



## **Chapter I: The Rich Connotation and Vigorous Practice of the “Second Integration”**

Inside the compound of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, there were three sets of statues: the one named “Comrades-in-Arm” is of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; the one named “Our Former Principal” is of Mao Zedong; and the third named “The Chief Architect” is of Deng Xiaoping. In March 2017, a new set of statues joined them -- it is of ancient Chinese philosophers Confucius and Laozi.

Students of the Party School have a chance to visit Qufu, Shandong Province, where Confucius lived over two thousand years ago. They learn Confucian classics in the Confucian mansion and temple, researching and understanding the way of governance the ancient sage advocated. At the birthplace of Confucius, Nishan Forum has been held for many years, attended by researchers of Confucianism and Chinese culture worldwide.

China today witnesses the vibrant exchanges of ideas between the East and the West, between the past and the present, and between China and the outside world. Chinese modernization endows Chinese civilization with new strength, and Chinese civilization gives Chinese modernization a profound heritage. The practical exploration of the “Second Integration” theory keeps unfolding.

### **1. Upholding the Way: Organic Integration of Beliefs and Millennia-old Ideals**

The “Second Integration” adapts communist and socialist beliefs to the millennial ideals of the Chinese nation, integrating the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics with the nation’s traditions and civilizational heritage.

“When the path is just, the common good will reign over all under Heaven.” This statement from the chapter of *Liyun, or The Conveyance of Rites*, in the Chinese classic *Liji, or The Book of Rites*, shows the way of governing the country and helping the world pursued by Chinese people with lofty ideals for thousands of years. Building a well-off society, achieving common prosperity, and realizing a world of great harmony have been the shared dream of noble-minded patriots in China through generations.

As a vanguard political party, the CPC has rallied people from all walks of life. From its humble beginning with 50 founding members to more than 98 million today,

the Party's growth over the past century owes much to integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with fine traditional Chinese culture. The millennial ideal of the Chinese has been transformed into the passionate belief and original aspiration of "seeking happiness for the Chinese people, striving for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, pursuing humanity's progress, and realizing global harmony."

### **A. Continuing to strive for "the happiness of the people"**

In March 2023, Nangou Village, Yan'an, Shaanxi, experienced a spring rain, which prompted the large tract of orchards to enter the flowering period. A villager named Zhao Yongdong was busy working in a grove. His family's 20-mu orchard yielded him a net profit of over RMB 100,000 the year before. Modern agriculture and rural tourism have recently developed in this remote village on the Loess Plateau, lifting the villagers out of poverty. The village's per capita income has increased nearly four times in a decade.

After continuous efforts, China had won the largest poverty alleviation battle in human history, lifting 770 million impoverished rural people out of poverty by the end of 2021. China has thus eliminated its absolute poverty, creating a great miracle in the history of world poverty reduction. The 1.4 billion Chinese are living a well-off life, with an average life expectancy of more than 78 years and an annual per capita disposable income of RMB 35,000. The Chinese people's sense of fulfillment, happiness, and security is increasing day by day.

Standing at a new starting point and aiming at satisfying the "people's aspiration for a better life," China is writing a new chapter of seeking happiness for its people by improving the essential public service system and services, making development more balanced and its results more accessible to the people, and substantially promoting common prosperity.

### **B. Being firm in the belief of "seeking rejuvenation for the nation"**

Historians point out that ancient China once enjoyed a glorious era, with its economy consistently ranking first in the world. However, modern China fell behind in global modernization, experiencing a century of decline and humiliation after 1840. The country went through intense humiliation, the people were subjected to great pain and the Chinese civilization was plunged into darkness. At the critical moment of national peril, the CPC shouldered the historical responsibility of "seeking national

rejuvenation” and fought for national independence and the people’s liberation. It aimed to build a strong and prosperous nation and bring happiness to the people. The CPC has brought about profound changes in China through a century of struggle.

China has maintained its status as the world’s second-largest economy for years. It also holds the top spot in terms of the scale of manufacturing. It has constructed the world’s largest high-speed railway and expressway networks. The country has been accelerating its technological self-reliance and self-strengthening efforts, steadily advancing toward a nation of innovation.

### **C. Committed to the ideal of seeking great harmony for the world**

The camel bells rang through the ancient Silk Road two thousand years ago, starting a journey of exchanges between Chinese and Western civilizations.

Today, the “steel camel caravan” roars westward: fully loaded China-Europe freight trains connect the East and the West again. In 2022 alone, 16,000 trains traversed Eurasia, transporting 1.6 million TEUs of goods.

In 2013, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to promote a human community with a shared future. In recent years, President Xi Jinping has put forward the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative in the face of the rapidly evolving global landscape, which is undergoing significant changes not seen in a century. He emphasizes China’s constructive role, highlighting its position as a builder of world peace, a contributor to global growth, a guardian of international order, and a promoter of human civilization progress.

Over the past decade, China has contributed an average of over 30% to global economic growth, becoming a vital engine for the recovery and development of the world economy and a prominent destination for transnational investments. Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva stated that China’s economy is displaying positive momentum and will provide significant opportunities for other countries. From its independent and peaceful diplomacy to establishing a new type of international relations, China’s series of actions on the world stage has played a “stabilizing” role in an otherwise turbulent world.

## **2. Advocating Etiquette: Organic Integration of Institutional Formation and Ritual-and-music Civilization**

The “Second Integration” integrates the socialist system with Chinese characteristics with the ritual and music culture civilization, endowing the modernization of China’s system and capacity for governance with the strength of order, norms, and ethics.

“Etiquette keeps the universe in order,” and “music harmonizes heaven and earth.” In the Duke Wen of Zhou Temple in Qishan County, Shaanxi Province, sacrificial ceremonies were performed yearly to commemorate the duke for his ultimate virtue. The ritual and music system of the Western Zhou Dynasty, which originated three thousand years ago, represents a significant source of China’s cosmology, worldview, societal perspective, and moral values that have been passed down through the ages. The tradition of the ritual and music culture resonates in a new fashion in modern China. The socialist system with Chinese characteristics, defined by upholding the CPC’s leadership, constantly improves the modernization of China’s system and capacity for governance.

#### **A. Institutions bring effective regulations**

In the spring of 2023, the work on the application for UNESCO World Cultural Heritage status for Beijing’s Central Axis was in full swing. Cultural preservation organizations, working with enterprises, actively used advanced technology to develop the “Digital Central Axis,” enabling better international dissemination and facilitating global understanding. The Central Axis of China’s capital city holds unique cultural and symbolic significance. Here the millennial Chinese collective psyche of “grand unification,” the philosophical thinking of “fulfilling centrality and harmony,” and the tradition of orderly and balanced ceremonial protocols find contemporary expression.

Philosopher Lou Yulie believes that when China was poor and weak a century ago, some Chinese thinkers, sought to eliminate social evils and enlighten the Chinese, claimed that the millennia-old ritual system was to blame. In fact, traditional Chinese rites and ethics have their merits. The essence of rituals and ethics is to help people understand their place in society and act according to established rules and norms. For example, respecting “Heaven, Earth, the State, Parents, and Teachers” is a virtue of traditional rites and ethics. Today, we should choose and apply these traditions wisely.

Sound political order is the key to modernizing “ritual order.” From the perspective of governing the country, the rigorous self-governance of the Party since the 18th National Congress of the CPC has immense and far-reaching significance.

Adhering to and strengthening the centralized and unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee can be regarded as building a political order like the rules of a

giant chess game with the Party sitting in the commanding post. Such a political order reflects the balance between order and vitality, stability and growth. It is the activation of the Chinese tradition of “ruling by etiquette” that emphasizes rules and order.

In 2019, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CPC reviewed and approved the “Decision on Some Major Issues Concerning How to Uphold and Improve the System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Advance the Modernization of China’s System and Capacity for Governance.” It summarized the 13 significant advantages of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and the governance system, highlighted the adherence to and improvement of the fundamental, essential, and critical system, and vowed to build a systematic, scientific, standardized, and effective institutional system to better transform China’s institutional advantages into governance effectiveness.

“The current system of political consultation, democratic decision-making, political supervision, and grassroots autonomy reflects not only the essence of Marxism but also the legacy of traditional Chinese culture,” said Gao Guosheng, a scholar at the Central Institute of Socialism.

## **B. The rule of law entails strict constraints**

Facing the national flag, raising the right fist, and reciting the oath: “I pledge allegiance to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China ...” This scene has frequently appeared across the country since the implementation of the constitutional oath system in 2016. From national leaders to grassroots staff members, all employees of state organs must take the oath in public upon assuming office. The practice demonstrates China’s firm determination to build a law-based government.

Honest and upright people have always been respected. The Duke of Shao of the Zhou Dynasty pioneered the inspection system around 1,000 BC. In the spring of 2023, over 30 family members of newly promoted senior officials lined up in the Duke of Shao Park in Baoji City, Shaanxi Province, to champion the importance of family values and ethics.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the central leadership has demonstrated unprecedented courage and determination in boosting Party discipline and anti-corruption efforts. Over a decade, 553 officials registered at and supervised by the CPC Central Committee have been investigated, and over 25,000 officials at the department and bureau level and more than 182,000 officials at the county and division level had been subjected to disciplinary measures. A clean and upright political environment within the CPC has continuously taken shape and developed.

Through exploration, a successful path of relying on the Party's self-reform to break free from the historical rise-and-fall cycle of political power has formed.

### **C. Demonstration of ethical conduct and cultivation of able and virtuous people**

Society respects the virtuous and talented, families honor filial piety, and individuals emphasize self-improvement. The outstanding ethics and social norms in traditional Chinese culture are especially significant in today's world. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the "new able and virtuous people in rural areas" system has emerged as an effective and complementary force in grassroots governance.

Wang Guoqiang, the Party chief of Gaocun Town in Shanxi Province, said the town has about 800 "new able and virtuous people in rural areas" out of a total population of 32,000. They serve as the "reserve force" for the village and township Party and administrative committees.

In Zhili Town, Zhejiang Province, a mediation team of the "new able and virtuous people in rural areas" was formed. Guided by the traditional Chinese concept of "mediation" and relying on family bonds, friendship, and deep affection for their native place, they have successfully mediated over 1,660 family disputes in eight years, gaining full recognition from the public.

### **3. Putting People First: Organic Integration of Development Philosophy and People-centered Doctrine**

The "Second Integration" combines people-centered development thought with people-oriented thinking that has prevailed in China for five thousand years, endowing the governance concept with a deep sense of the people.

"The people are the foundation of a country, and only when the people lead a good life, can the country thrive." The people-oriented thinking is an essential component of traditional Chinese political culture, reflecting the governing philosophy of ancient China.

The CPC adheres to the Marxist view of historical materialism and further develops the fundamental tenet that "the people are the creators of history." This fundamental principle, integrated with Chinese realities, treats the traditional concept

of people-oriented thinking discerningly. The CPC selectively inherits and creatively draws upon the reasonable core of simple, people-centered ideas. The Party has put forward a people-centered philosophy of development and enriched and developed the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, realizing the historical transcendence of the people-oriented thinking from the perspectives of political standpoint and value orientation.

### **A. Development for the people**

The CPC has its foundation in the people. So does its strength. The CPC has put people at the center of all its endeavors since its founding. People-centeredness remains the most distinctive feature of the CPC.

“Chinese people’s well-being is a national priority.” “Our mission is to meet the Chinese people’s aspiration for a better life.” “This country is its people; the people are the country. As the CPC has led the Chinese people in fighting to establish and develop the People’s Republic, it has really been fighting for their support....” Xi Jinping made those remarks on different occasions.

“Bear in mind what concerns the people and act upon what they hope for.” As members of the governing Party, CPC officials uphold and implement those principles in their practical work.

### **B. Development by relying on the people**

“Water can carry a boat and may also overturn it.” The traditional Chinese people-oriented thinking puts “people” in such a critical position that it relates to a country’s survival. Drawing on the essential idea of “emphasizing the people,” the CPC underscores the respect for the principal position of the people and relies on the people to achieve rapid economic development and long-term social stability.

The Chinese people have always been the “main force” in the fight against poverty and pandemics and in the undertakings to promote reform, control contamination, and fend off risks.

The Chinese people directly participate in system design, legislation, and policy-making, becoming the masters of the country in its true sense. In August 2020 alone, netizens made over a million comments concerning the preparation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan. More than a thousand of the suggestions were adopted.

Lintao County in Gansu Province set up one of the country's first local outreach offices for national legislation. It has participated in the solicitation of opinions on 70 draft laws. For example, township official Yang Xin's suggestion was incorporated into *Rural Revitalization Promotion Law*. "Grassroots officials can also directly participate in national legislation. Democracy must be as visible and tangible as such," Yang said.

### **C. Results of Development to be enjoyed by the people**

Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of the American Kuhn Foundation, has kept track of China's development for over 30 years. He believes that the "people-centered" development philosophy is the cornerstone of the CPC's policies. Efforts to promote poverty alleviation and common prosperity are strong evidence of the philosophy.

China has effectively solved the problem of providing adequate food and clothing for its 1.4 billion people. In the past decade, nearly 100 million rural poor residents were lifted out of poverty, over 400 million people joined the middle-income group, and per capita disposable income for residents doubled. China has also built the world's most extensive education, social security, and healthcare systems. The vision of ensuring that every child receives nurturing care, everyone has access to education, everyone earns a decent income, everyone receives medical treatment when they are ill, everyone is well taken care of in their old age, everyone has a place to live, and every vulnerable group receives necessary support has gradually become a reality.

## **4. Respecting Morality: Organic Integration of Core Values and Traditional Moral Orientation**

The "Second Integration" integrates core socialist values with the traditional Chinese value orientation.

The ideas of "constantly striving to become stronger" and "promoting growth with great virtue" have their roots in the ancient Chinese classic, the *Book of Changes (I Ching)*. These and numerous other philosophical ideas in various classics have shaped the tradition of respecting morality that has lasted for over 2,000 years in Chinese culture and is now integrated into China's governing philosophy. Fine traditional Chinese culture always embraces a profound pursuit of moral integrity.

A person cannot stand without a strong spirit, and a nation cannot thrive without such a spirit. The Chinese spirit is the soul of national rejuvenation and strength,



encompassing not only the essence of traditional Chinese virtues but also the core socialist values. It is an ever-growing and enduring spirit passed down from generation to generation. Upholding the national spirit centered on patriotism and the spirit of the times centered on reform and innovation has become a powerful driving force for advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics.

### **A. With the core values as the guiding principle**

How to forge the Chinese spirit in the new era? In November 2012, the report to the 18th National Congress of the CPC formally proposed the core socialist values. The highly condensed “24 characters” are divided into three levels: Prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony are the value requirements at the national level. Freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law are the value requirements at the societal level. Patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness are the value requirements at the individual level.

“This generalization actually answers the major questions of what kind of country we want to build, what kind of society we want to build, and what kind of citizens we want to cultivate,”<sup>2</sup> said Xi Jinping in May 2014.

From establishing exemplary families and campuses to forming centers for promoting cultural and ethical advancement in urban and rural areas, core socialist values have been widely integrated into all aspects of social life.

The bulletin board of a community center for promoting cultural and ethical advancement in Jiayuguan City, Gansu Province, displays the governance innovations of the local government. They borrowed from the ancient classic *Guanzi* the governance thought of “taking the family as the family, the township as the township, the country as the country, and the world as the world.” They proposed the working idea of “Good Governance in the Impregnable Pass (a historical reference to the city) with Five Ways of Governance Well Integrated,” emphasizing the role of political guidance, the rule of law, moral and ethical standards, self-governance, and enhanced governance capacity.

### **B. The key is officials’ political morality**

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<sup>2</sup> Xi Jinping, “Youth Should Consciously Practice the Core Socialist Values,” On the CPC’s Work on Youth, CPC Central Party Literature Press, 2022, p72.

The demonstrative examples of pioneer models are vital to carrying forward the core socialist values to implement the national spirit and the spirit of the times. CPC officials are the backbone of society. Therefore, it is essential to do an excellent job morally cultivating these few key officials. Xi Jinping repeatedly emphasized that CPC members “should be committed to the greater good, uphold public morality and keep personal integrity.”

To be committed to the greater good is to love the Party and country, to uphold public morality is to maintain good social manners, and to keep personal integrity is to cultivate oneself.

Jining City in Shandong Province uses fine traditional Chinese culture to enhance the cultivation of Party officials’ political morality and has put a lot of thought into building an education base aiming at boosting officials’ political morality: the Officials’ Political Morality Education College. The base develops on-site experiential teaching courses at the Confucian Mansion and Temple in Qufu and the Mencius Temple in Zoucheng, allowing students to experience the values of fine traditional culture in line with the times and enhance their cultural self-confidence. The Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee of the has arranged for over 1,300 middle-aged and young students to come to the base in 12 batches to receive political and moral education. After the training, many students returned to Jining with their children or colleagues to further share insights on traditional culture.

### **C. The rule of virtue and the rule of law complement each other.**

Law is written morality, which is the law of a person’s inner world. China insists on combining law-based governance with the governance by virtue, emphasizing the regulatory and educative roles of ethics. It aims to achieve a complementary relationship between law and ethics with law-based government and the governance by virtue reinforcing each other.

By combining autonomy, the rule of law, and governance by virtue, China has established a new pattern of grassroots management in urban and rural areas. There are 492,000 village committees and 116,000 residents’ committees nationwide, which are elected by the residents. In the new round of grassroots autonomous organization elections completed in 2021, hundreds of millions voted to elect nearly 2.8 million villagers’ (residents’) committee members.

## 5. Perspective of the Intrinsic Laws of Cultural Inheritance and Development

The “Second Integration” endows the national rejuvenation with cultural roots and spirit by adapting socialist advanced culture to China’s excellent traditional culture.

“By contemplating the forms existing in the heavens, we understand the time and its changing demands. Through contemplation of the forms existing in human society, we find it possible to shape the world.” The traditional Chinese cultural beliefs originate from this sentence from the *Book of Changes*. The Marxist view of culture holds that culture stems from people’s social practice of understanding and transforming nature while reacting to practice. It is inherently connected with the Chinese thought of “the ornamental observances of society being able to transform all under heaven.”

In today’s Chinese political narrative, culture is divided into three parts: fine traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture. These three cultures may have formed in different ways and at different times. But they are inseparable, eventually merging into a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics.

To develop socialist culture with Chinese characteristics means to create a socialist culture for our nation — a culture that is sound and people-oriented; that embraces modernization, the world, and the future; and that both promotes socialist material well-being and raises socialist cultural-ethical standards. In developing this culture, we must follow the guidance of Marxism, base our efforts on Chinese culture, and consider the realities of contemporary China and the conditions of the present era.”<sup>3</sup> Tradition is originality, and the root and soul of national rejuvenation lie in the excellent traditional Chinese culture."

### A. To cultivate people with culture: Immersing people’s minds in classics

Tourists from all over the country constantly stream to the San Su Ci in Meishan City, Sichuan Province, all year round. They make a memorable trip to worship the

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3 Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” Xi Jinping on the Governance of China, III, Foreign Languages Press, 2020, p.32.

models of ancient Chinese literati: Su Xun, Su Shi, and Su Zhe from the same family. The Chinese have recited their poems and prose for hundreds of years.

Xi Jinping visited the temple on June 8, 2022. He said, “A drop of water can reflect the sun, and the San Su Ci can demonstrate the profoundness of our Chinese culture. When we say we must firm up our cultural confidence, we have the three Su’s in China, an important example of the excellent traditional Chinese culture.”<sup>4</sup>

Culture provides norms, ways, and environments for group life. In the 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, culture has played an essential role in educating people, cultivating them, and unifying their minds. Cultural activities are all splendid nationwide, centering around the mission of “upholding socialism with Chinese characteristics, rallying public support, fostering a new generation of young people, developing Chinese culture, and better presenting China to the world.”

## **B. Utilizing cultural artifacts to bring history to life**

The street lights come on along the Qujiang River in Xi’an City. The magnificent scenery of the Tang Dynasty and the modern spectacle complement each other in brilliance. In the immersive experience of Tang culture, mesmerized tourists dressed in Tang and Han costumes find it hard to tear themselves away from the city’s enchanting tourist attractions.

The Shaanxi Culture Industry Investment Group, the operator of the Longest Day in Chang’an program, has been committed to “excavating the contemporary value of historical culture and exploring the modern expression of traditional culture.” Wang Yong, the group’s board chairman, said that China’s excellent traditional culture is a precious resource in integrating culture with tourism. With tourism adding extra charm to culture, culture breathed the soul into tourism. As a result, history and culture are both “appealing” and “profitable.”

It has become a new trend in Chinese cultural heritage utilization to bring to life the cultural relics collected in museums, the cultural heritage displayed on the vast land, and the texts written in ancient books. In recent years, the “archeology craze,” the “museum craze,” and the “intangible cultural heritage craze” have become extremely popular, and creative cultural production has boomed beyond expectation. The inheritance of culture and the continuation of civilization enrich people’s lives

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4 、 “On his inspection tour of the Three Su’s Temple, the General Secretary Mentioned Three Key Words,” Xinhua News Agency, June 11, 2022.

with intangible nourishment and power through popular activities and events suiting all tastes.

### **C. To cultivate and transform society with culture**

Culture guides social tendencies. In recent years, all parts of China have vigorously implemented projects to inherit and develop fine traditional Chinese culture improve public cultural service systems, create cities with high-level of civility, and revitalize villages, advocating the central theme of social norms to boost positive energy. As a result, people live and work in peace and contentment, society is stable and orderly, and the levels of social civility have been elevated.

The integration of advanced socialist culture with fine traditional Chinese culture has enhanced social civility, promoted openness and inclusiveness, and boosted innovation and creation.

“Vehicles giving the right of way to pedestrians” leads to social harmony, waste sorting makes the best use of everything, “new citizens” (unregistered urban residents) enjoy equal education and healthcare resources, citizens’ affairs are handled online, and farmers use intelligent technology ... New customs and styles have heralded a new chapter of a better life in contemporary China’s urban and rural areas.

## **6. Valuing Harmony: Organic Integration of the Concept of a Human Community with a Shared Future for Humanity and the Path of Harmonious Coexistence Among Nations**

The “Second Integration” combines the concept of a human community with a shared future with foreign relations between all nations in harmony and endows the new form of human civilization with a thorough mutual understanding of ideas.

Traditionally, the Chinese embraced the ideas of “being truthful and harmonious with their neighbors,” “being benevolent and friendly to them,” “valuing harmony above all,” and “harmoniously coexisting among various nations.” Ten years ago, Xi Jinping put forward “building a human community with a shared future,” integrating ancient wisdom into the new concept.

In today’s world, the trend of peace, development, cooperation, and win-win endeavors is unstoppable. However, growing deficits in global peace, development, security, and governance pose unprecedented challenges to human society. China has always adhered to the diplomatic principles of upholding peace and promoting

common development and is committed to fostering a human community with a shared future. Within the diverse forms of human civilization, China's ideas shine brightly.

### **A. Harmony in Diversity: Respecting the Diversified World Civilizations**

“Harmony in diversity” is an ancient Chinese philosophy passed down for over two thousand years. The Nestorian Stele, collected by the Forest of Stone Steles Museum in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China, records the historical facts of Roman missionaries preaching in China during the Tang Dynasty, reflecting China's respect for foreign cultures.

Quanzhou City in Fujian Province has long been known as a place where “seven religions converge.” Houses of worship of Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, Catholicism, Muslim, and Hinduism coexist harmoniously even to this day.

Civilizations may be different, but they are never superior or inferior to one another. In March 2023, Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilization Initiative to promote inclusive coexistence and mutual learning among different civilizations and contribute Chinese wisdom to this endeavor. The initiative advocates for a civilization perspective based on equality, mutual understanding, dialogue, and inclusiveness. It encourages cultural exchanges that transcend estrangement, mutual learning that goes beyond clashes, and coexistence that surpasses feelings of superiority.

### **B. Common goals: Promoting shared values for all humanity**

China proposed a set of common values for humanity — peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom. These values not only originate from Marxist ideology but also incorporate elements of fine traditional Chinese culture.

In promoting peace, China has established an 8,000-strong standby peacekeeping force and has dispatched over 50,000 peacekeeping personnel to nearly 30 UN peacekeeping missions. China has also established the China-UN Peace and Development Fund, becoming the second-largest contributor and an essential troop-contributing country to UN peacekeeping operations. Over the years, China has actively engaged in mediation and negotiation efforts in various regional hot spots.

In promoting development, China has proposed the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and supported the establishment of the New

Development Bank (NDB). China has also facilitated the reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) quota system and participated in formulating governance rules in emerging areas. China has made significant efforts to help developing countries find paths to prosperity, actively sharing its own experiences in poverty alleviation. China has repeatedly announced unconditional exemptions for heavily indebted poor and least developed countries from their interest-free government loans due to China.

In upholding fairness and justice, China does not follow the Western path of colonial plunder or tread the crooked path of seeking hegemony when becoming strong. China firmly opposes hegemonism and power politics, advocating equality among countries regardless of their size, strength, or wealth. China supports unity and a win-win mindset to address complex global challenges, aiming to create a just and equitable international environment.

### **C. Great harmony under heaven: Building a human community with a shared future**

Lichun, or the Beginning of the Spring, is the first of the 24 solar terms in the traditional Chinese lunar calendar. In 2022, it fell on February 4. On this day, a spectacular opening ceremony was held for the Beijing Winter Olympics, catching the world's attention. Snowflakes gathered together, igniting the torch that symbolizes peace. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the scene was particularly thought-provoking, reminding people that humanity is a united family with a shared future.

By promoting the building of a human community with a shared future for humanity, China does not seek to replace one system with another or one civilization with another. Instead, it aims to find common ground for building a better world among various nations. This concept not only draws inspiration from the essence of the traditional Chinese idea of “*tianxia*” (all under heaven) and the culture of harmony but also represents a creative development of the Marxist concept of “community.”

The Belt and Road Initiative is a significant practical platform for promoting the construction of a human community with a shared future. According to a World Bank report, the joint efforts in implementing the Belt and Road Initiative will help lift 7.6 million people out of extreme poverty and 32 million out of moderate poverty in the participating countries.

Diseases are the common enemy of all humanity. Over the past 60 years, China has dispatched 30,000 medical workers to 76 countries and regions in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, and Oceania, providing medical assistance to a total of 290 million

patients.

Climate change is a common challenge faced by humankind. China has carried out climate dialogue and practical cooperation with countries worldwide and has achieved remarkable results, making historic and vital contributions to the conclusion, signing, entry into force, and implementation of the Paris Agreement. China has signed memorandums of understanding on South-South cooperation on climate change with dozens of developing countries.



It is natural to integrate the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities and fine traditional culture if we are to create and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics based on the profound Chinese civilization of more than 5,000 years. This is the understanding we have drawn from our exploration of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the key to our success.

— Xi Jinping

## **Chapter II: Historical Roots and Innovation of the**

### **“Second Integration”**

The CPC has been able to overcome various tests and hardships over the past century because it has been constantly adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and has been committed to theoretical innovation and creation.

The report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC pointed out that “only by integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China’s specific realities and fine traditional culture and only by applying dialectical and historical materialism can we provide correct answers to the major questions presented by the times and discovered through practice and can we ensure that Marxism always retains its vigor and vitality.”

“It is necessary to summarize previous theories to initiate new ideas.” The “Two Integrations” proposed by Xi Jinping, especially the “Second Integration,” are not only an all-encompassing summary of history and a profound revelation of laws but also a correct guidance for theoretical innovation and development. They demonstrate a high level of the sense of history and cultural confidence, achieving a new leap forward and opening up a new realm for adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times.

#### **1. Identifying the Point of Convergence: Penetrating the Social Fabric Unconsciously**

The prerequisite for “integration” is mutual compatibility. Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture have different origins but exhibit a high degree of compatibility. Only through mutual compatibility can they organically integrate with each other. After Marxism was introduced into China, the idea of scientific socialism was warmly welcomed by the Chinese people and finally took root in the soil of China to blossom and bear fruit. That is not accidental. It is because of the integration of Marxism with China’s excellent history and culture passed down for thousands of years and with the values that the majority of the Chinese embrace in daily life.

##### **A. A high degree of alignment in value propositions**

Marxism envisions an ideal society of communism. Meanwhile, fine traditional Chinese culture regards the ideal of “common good that reigns over all under Heaven when justice prevails” as the highest political pursuit and the people-oriented thought based on the concept of “people being a nation’s foundation, which stabilizes the nation” as the fundamental political belief. It also takes the idea of “cultivating moral characters, putting one’s own houses in order, running the country well, and letting peace prevail on earth” as the logic for practice. Fine traditional Chinese culture permeates the political ethics of “identifying the family with the same structure of the country” characterized by the assumption that “the whole world is one family.” Both Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture hope to build a beautiful society free from oppression and exploitation, where everyone is equal and free.

In his speech at the ceremony commemorating the bicentenary of the birth of Karl Marx on May 4, 2018, Xi Jinping emphasized nine aspects of studying Marx. These nine aspects demonstrate the convergence between the basic tenets of Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture where values are concerned. For example, Marxist thought on the patterns underlying the development of human society, namely, human society would ultimately move toward communism as an inevitable trend, corresponds to the idea of “Great Harmony” embraced by ancient Chinese. Marxism’s perspective on the relationship between man and nature resonates with China’s philosophy -- “the harmony between heaven and humanity.” Marxism’s ideas about world history happen to align with the traditional Chinese concept of “*tianxia*” (all under Heaven). As a result, Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture have become the primary sources contributing to the concept of “a community with a shared future.”

The report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC further clarifies the alignment of these two at the level of values. It points out that some aspects of the Chinese people’s worldview, perspective on the world, social outlook, and moral values accumulated through long-term production and daily life are highly compatible with the advocated values of scientific socialism. It makes the phenomenon of “intuitively applying them in daily life” an essential characteristic of the “Second Integration.”

As Marxism of contemporary China and of the 21st century, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era resonates with fine traditional Chinese culture at the level of values. Therefore, it can go deep into the hearts of the Chinese people and integrate into the Chinese cultural genes.

## **B. A high degree of alignment between the view of practice and practical rationality**

Philosopher Tang Yijie once stated that both Marxism and Confucianism emphasize practice. Marxism's most important theoretical qualities lie in upholding the principle of starting from reality, integrating theory with practice, seeking truth from facts, and testing and developing truth through practice. Moreover, traditional Chinese culture also has a fine tradition of materialism. Many insightful materialistic viewpoints have been proposed by the ancient philosophers such as Guanzi and Mencius of the pre-Qin eras to such scholars as Wang Fuzhi, Yan Yuan, Dai Zhen, and Wei Yuan of the Qing Dynasty. The practical rationality embedded in traditional Chinese culture is also an essential cultural and psychological base that facilitates the acceptance of Marxism by the Chinese people.

Traditional Chinese culture is not exclusive. On the contrary, it cherishes the idea of "thriving by embracing each other like the sea welcoming all rivers." In a word, it is good at absorbing all the outstanding achievements of human civilizations. The victory of the October Revolution in Russia enabled modern Chinese intellectuals to experience the practical power of Marxism-Leninism in transforming the old world more directly. As a result, they turned to studying and disseminating Marxism-Leninism one after another. The early intellectuals who were the first to accept Marxism-Leninism integrated the practical character of Marxism with the historical wisdom of the fine traditional Chinese culture that advocates studying ancient classics to meet present needs. At the most critical moments of modern China, the power of Marxist truth revitalized the great civilization that the Chinese nation had created over thousands of years.

## **2. Keeping the Roots and Spirit Alive: Steadily Charting a New Course Amid Changing Times**

"Only a river with a far-reaching source can flow longer, and only trees with deep roots can grow with thick foliage." The "Second Integration" regards culture as the "root and spirit," adapts to the times, and profoundly integrates the power of culture into the nation's vitality, creativity, and cohesion. The "integration" has solidified the foundation of the path, enabling socialism with Chinese characteristics to have a broader and deeper historical depth and expanding the cultural foundation of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Modernization through a Chinese path empowers Chinese civilization with modern strength, while Chinese civilization endows modernization through a Chinese path with a profound heritage.

## **A. The historical choice of preserving cultural heritage and continuity**

The CPC is not only an active leader and practitioner of advanced Chinese culture but also a faithful inheritor and promoter of fine traditional Chinese culture. As early as the New Democratic Revolution, Mao Zedong, one of the first-generation CPC leaders, pointed out, “Studying our historical heritage and critically summarizing it with the methods of Marxism is another task of our learning.”

Excellent traditional Chinese culture is the spiritual heritage of China and its nation. It needs to be inherited and protected from generation to generation and advanced with the times with the ability to weed through the old to bring forth the new. Xi Jinping incisively pointed out, “Excellent traditional Chinese culture is the crystallization of wisdom and the essence of Chinese civilization. It is the root and soul of the Chinese nation, providing us with a solid foundation to stand firm amidst the tide of world cultures.”<sup>5</sup>

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core has been steadfastly adhering to dialectical materialism and historical materialism. With an objective, scientific, and respectful attitude, it has been committed to discarding what needs to be discarded, transforming what needs to be transformed, and innovating what needs to be innovated, striving to make the most basic cultural genes of the Chinese nation adapt to contemporary culture and coordinate with modern society. The CPC persists in integrating the idea of “strengthening the foundation and nurturing the roots” with the notion of “upholding the tradition while fostering innovation” to conduct in-depth research into new situations and emerging issues under the new conditions of the new era. While inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture, the CPC has also accomplished creative transformation and innovative development, ensuring that the strength of the Chinese national culture is continuously inherited and revitalized.

## **B. The scientific choice for promoting the great rejuvenation**

Today’s China is standing majestically in the east of the world, and it is closer to, more confident about, and capable of realizing national rejuvenation than at any time in history. Fine traditional Chinese culture contains the endless inner strength of the

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5 Xinhua News Agency, “Xi Jinping presided over the 39th group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and delivered an important speech,” May 28, 2022.

Chinese nation, records its long-standing cultural memory, and is the civilizational foundation for realizing China's national rejuvenation.

The Chinese nation cannot rejuvenate without solid cultural confidence and prosperity. Cultural confidence is a broader, deeper, and more fundamental form of confidence. The "unique cultural tradition" is the "primary reason" for choosing the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Xi Jinping traced the roots of socialism with Chinese characteristics to the "inheritance and development of Chinese civilization of over five thousand years," using culture to connect China's history of civilization development. He emphasized that the national governance system results from long-term development, progressive improvement, and endogenous evolution based on China's historical inheritance, cultural traditions, and socioeconomic development. His statement fully demonstrates that China's confidence in the chosen path, theory and system all boil down to the cultural confidence built upon a foundation of over five thousand years of civilization.

Building upon cultural confidence, the report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC for the first time put forward the concept of "cultural confidence and strength," further highlighting the importance of culture as the "root and soul" of the Chinese nation on the path to advance the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### **C. The inevitable choice amidst the impact of diverse ideological currents**

Currently, ideas and culture impact each other worldwide, leading to significant changes in social ideology. Since the beginning of reform and opening up, China has absorbed excellent elements of world culture and civilization humbly on the one hand. On the other hand, erroneous trends such as money-worship, hedonism, and egocentricity have occasionally occurred. Historical and cultural nihilism has appeared in the Chinese intellectual sphere. Some equate modernization with Westernization and uphold the so-called "universal values" representing Western values as the criterion, which has seriously affected people's thinking and the social discourse environment.

Facing the onslaught of various foreign trends of thought and detrimental endogenous thinking, Xi Jinping emphasizes the importance of "becoming prouder, more confident, and more assured in the identity of Chinese people." He repeatedly pointed out that it is necessary to understand the source of strength of the Chinese nation from fine traditional Chinese culture. He said, "Fine traditional Chinese culture has become the genetic heritage of the Chinese nation, deeply rooted in the hearts of the Chinese people, and subtly influences their ways of thinking and behavior. Today, as we advocate a set of core socialist values, we must draw abundant nourishment

from it; otherwise, it will lack vitality and influence.”<sup>6</sup>

In the context of the social transformation in the new era, excellent traditional culture plays a crucial role in neutralizing the impact of diverse cultural values and cultivating core socialist values. It is thus imperative to inherit and promote it vigorously.

### 3. Restoring Vitality: Building Bridges through “Two Inclusions” and “Two Innovations”

Critical inheritance is the methodology of Marxists. Guided by the Marxist worldview and methodology, Xi Jinping has inherited and developed the scientific approach adopted by the CPC toward traditional culture, insisting on applying the past to the present, drawing lessons from history, and treating tradition with discernment while discarding what is outdated. Neither giving an excessive emphasis on the past at the expense of the present nor rejecting the past as irrelevant to the present, he strives to achieve creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture and integrating the essence of Marxist ideology with the refined essence of excellent traditional Chinese culture and with the shared values embraced by the Chinese people without realizing it.

#### **A. Setting the record straight: valuing tradition without advocating for a return to the past**

Cultural nihilism completely denies traditional culture, while cultural conservatism unconditionally affirms traditional culture. They use the concept of “time-honored tradition” to oppose modernization and the idea of “enduring orthodoxy” to resist adapting Marxism to the Chinese context. They simplistically interpret the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as the revival of traditional culture. Some negative ideological trends have emerged under the guise of “traditional culture.”

Culture possesses distinct historical characteristics and is the product of the practical human activities. In its formation and development, traditional culture

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6 Xinhua News Agency, “Speech by Xi Jinping at a Symposium with Teachers and Students of Peking University,” May 4, 2014.

inevitably reflects the limitations and influences of people's cognitive level, historical conditions, and social systems of that time. Consequently, it may contain outdated elements or aspects that have become obsolete. When it comes to traditional Chinese culture, it should not be mindlessly and uncritically copied. It can be considered outstanding only by eliminating the dross and preserving the essence.

Once grasped by the majority, advanced cultural ideas can be transformed into a powerful material force. Conversely, if backward or erroneous notions are not overcome, they can impede social development and progress. Since its establishment, the CPC has always attached importance to distinguishing the essence from the dross in traditional culture. Xi Jinping, from the perspective of historical materialism, affirmed the characteristics and advantages of traditional culture while dialectically pointing out its shortcomings and inadequacies. He emphasized guiding CPC members, especially leading officials, to resist and oppose decadent political cultures, such as the misuse of *guanxi* (personal connections and networks), the art of cunning and deceit, bureaucratic maneuvering, and unwritten rules. He also underscored leading the entire society in actively cultivating and practicing core socialist values, establishing a sound moral atmosphere, and preventing the resurgence of feudal and decadent ethical culture.

### **B. Cultivating a righteous mind and pursuing the right path to activate traditional culture with Marxism**

The Confucian theory about the relationship between knowledge and practice runs through traditional Chinese culture. The essence of such a relationship is embodied by the idea that when one possesses the supreme virtue of a sage within oneself and applies it to the external world, one would become a true king where governance is concerned. Since the rise of neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, traditional Chinese culture had increasingly become rigid and conservative. From the “knowledge-action” perspective, Confucian scholars emphasized “inner sagehood,” which refers to cultivating inner virtues and character. However, they often overlooked the importance of “outer kinghood,” which involves the practical application of those virtues in the external world. Consequently, they found themselves trapped in a dilemma of “idly discussing inner virtues, only to be willing to sacrifice their lives for the ruler in times of crisis,” leaving them powerless and unable to respond effectively to changes and challenges.

Through his brilliant work “On Practice,” Mao Zedong revitalized the traditional concept of knowledge and action by proposing “applying the Marxist theory to practice.” On this basis, Xi Jinping further developed the idea of knowledge and



action. He emphasized the unity of knowledge and action, promoting action through knowledge and emphasizing practical work. He sharply criticized the “double-faced” behavior of “acting one way in someone’s presence and another behind his back, or speaking one way while acting another”—a behavior marked by knowing without acting or knowing one thing but acting another way.

“A challenge Xi Jinping faces is to prevent China from becoming a country without an independent culture and spirit. He has to awaken and modernize China’s outstanding traditional cultural genes,” commented a foreign scholar.<sup>7</sup>

In the face of unprecedented global changes, how can we grasp the profound value of fine traditional Chinese culture by adapting to the changes in the world and the era? The answer lies in the “Second Integration.”

“The basic tenets of Marxism combine with fine traditional Chinese culture,” in which the word “combine” highlights the dominant position of Marxism in the “Second Integration.” Activating China’s fine traditional culture with Marxist positions, viewpoints, and methods in an objective, scientific, and respectful attitude can better integrate Marxism with contemporary Chinese practice and align it with the theme of the era of national rejuvenation.

Chinese Communists have developed a correct understanding of the dialectical unity and resonance between Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture. Per the requirements of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, through the “Second Integration,” they have conducted a scientific assessment and made correct selections regarding traditional Chinese culture. Only through this process can the Chinese nation’s most fundamental cultural genes be activated, enabling them to adapt to contemporary culture and coordinate with modern society.

### **C. Contributing to social stability and order by adhering to proper rites and norms: creative transformation and innovative development**

How can the integration of the basic tenets of Marxism with excellent traditional Chinese culture be achieved? The key lies in creative transformation and innovative development. Take the term “original aspiration” as an example. It first appeared in “Soushenji” (*In Search of the Supernatural*) from the Jin Dynasty, meaning the original wish or belief.

In the report to the 19th National Congress of the CPC, Xi Jinping emphasized,

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<sup>7</sup> James C. Hsiung (US), “Traditional Culture Is a Unique Strategic Resource,” Study Times, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/n1/2016/0617/c376186-28453910.html>

“The original aspiration and the mission of Chinese Communists is to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation.” The long-lost term “original aspiration” has been reactivated by being given a new meaning by integrating the Marxist Party spirit with the traditional culture of self-cultivation to inspire the Chinese Communists to keep devoting themselves to the new era. “Original aspiration” became a household buzzword in China in 2017.

The promotion of traditional culture has happened not only in politics. Over the past decade, “creative transformation and innovative development” in the cultural sector have deeply penetrated Chinese people’s lives.

Classical dances like the “Night Banquet in the Tang Palace” and the “Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting” became a hit as soon as they debuted. TV programs such as “Chinese Poetry Conference” and “China in Classics” triggered a craze for reading poetry and studying classics. The new archaeological discoveries in historical sites like Sanxingdui and Liangzhu have ignited the public's enthusiasm for cultural relics. On April 18, 2023, the Dunhuang Academy in Gansu Province, in collaboration with Tencent, launched an online platform of “Digital Cave of Buddhist Scriptures.” Modern high technology has revitalized the millennium-old historical site, instantly allowing the world to appreciate Chinese stories and aesthetics.

Through the “Second Integration,” fine traditional Chinese culture undergoes creative evolution and innovative development. The ideological concepts, humanistic spirit, and moral standards therein are fully explored, giving rise to new connotations that transcend time and possess contemporary value. With the integration of artistic creativity and Chinese cultural values, as well as the fusion of Chinese aesthetics and contemporary aesthetic pursuits, the spirit of the times revitalized the vitality of fine traditional Chinese culture, making it welcome among the public. It ultimately promoted the integration of the essence of Marxist ideology with the essence of fine traditional Chinese culture and the common values that people intuitively apply in their everyday lives.

#### **4. Facilitating New Leaps Forward: Exploring Innovative Theories in Step with the Times**

Continuously writing a new chapter of adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times is the solemn responsibility of contemporary Chinese Communists. The “Second Integration” continuously consolidates the historical and popular foundations for adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times, firmly rooting Marxism in China. Meanwhile, the “Second Integration” represents another liberation of thinking, enabling China to fully use the precious

resources of fine traditional Chinese culture within a broader cultural space, exploring theoretical and institutional innovations for the future.

### **A. Transformation power: Promoting the popularization of Marxism**

Since the introduction of Marxism to China, how to deal with the relationship between Marxism and traditional Chinese culture has become a major theoretical and practical issue. The Chinese Communists gave a scientific answer: Chinese Marxists are, first and foremost, “Chinese.” Marxist theory is not a dogma but an action guide and must develop with changes in practice. The history of the development of Marxism is the history of its continued development at the hands of Marx, Engels, and their successors in accordance with developments in time, practice, and knowledge. This history is one of continued self-refinement by absorbing all human history’s redoubtable cultural and intellectual achievements. Over the past 100 years, Marxism has profoundly changed China, and China has also greatly enriched Marxism.

The “First Integration” achieved the initial leap forward in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context. The contemporary Chinese Communists, with Comrade Xi Jinping as their chief representative, have deepened their understanding of the laws governing the adaption of Marxism to the Chinese context and modernization of Marxism through the “Second Integration” with a high level of historical consciousness and unwavering cultural confidence. They take Chinese civilization as the source of living water and inherit the essence of humanistic spirit, moral values, and historical wisdom from the splendid civilization of more than 5,000 years. By integrating the ideological essence of Marxism with the spiritual characteristics of fine traditional Chinese culture, they have been fortifying the historical heritage and cultural foundation of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The “Second Integration” opens a new chapter of modernizing and localizing Marxism in China. By grounding itself in the reality of China and responding to the needs of the times, it takes confident strides forward in the direction guided by “Chinese wisdom.”

### **B. Centripetal force: Continuing to promote the process from popularization to “intuitive daily application”**

The philosophical concepts, moral ideals, values, and practical wisdom in fine traditional Chinese culture have enriched and enhanced Marxism. By promoting the integration of the basic tenets of Marxism with the values and modes of thinking

found in fine traditional Chinese culture, Marxism was transformed from being “in China” to “being shaped by China.” As Mao Zedong pointed out, “‘Adaptation to the Chinese context’ means thorough and comprehensive transformation from within and without,” gradually making the process a reality.

Because of this, Marxism has a stronger historical and cultural foundation and a popular base. It has become a stance, viewpoint, and methodology that the Chinese need, acknowledge, and apply to their reality. Ultimately, it becomes interconnected with the essence of fine traditional Chinese culture and merges with the shared values people embrace daily intuitively.

Based on China’s realities and looking toward modernization, globalization, and the future, China is consolidating the guiding role of Marxism in the ideological domain. Through the development of advanced socialist culture and the observation of socialist culture and ethical standards, China is promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture. China integrates it into all aspects of social life, continuously helping the Chinese raise their political awareness and moral standards. This process also makes adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times more cohesive.

### **C. Integration power: Making efforts to foster the "new culture of the Chinese nation" in the new era**

In January 1940, Mao Zedong raised the historical question of constructing the "new culture of the Chinese nation" in his article *On New Democracy*. At present, the proposal of the “Second Integration” has significantly expanded the direction, connotation, and space for adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times. Through the “Second Integration,” a new path has been found to adapt Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times, gradually merging it into the “new culture of the Chinese nation” in the new era.

Under the impetus of the “Second Integration,” Marxism permeates into the discourse system of fine traditional Chinese culture, and the vitality of fine traditional Chinese culture is activated through the integration of the spirit of the times. Breaking free from the antithesis between “Marxism, China, and the West,” Marxism, which has taken root in China for a century, now further embeds itself in the cultural soil of China through the “Second Integration.”

Theoretical awareness and cultural confidence are the strength of a nation's progress; advanced values and a free mind are the source of social vitality. China has achieved a new leap forward in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context along the

new trail blazed by the “Second Integration” by drawing from the concept and thinking of governing the country from fine traditional Chinese culture and using Marxism as a guide in inheriting and developing such a culture in the contemporary era.

## **5. Creating New Forms: Contributing a New Chapter to Human Civilization**

China’s great social transformation is not a master-plate from which we simply continue our history and culture, nor a pattern from which we mechanically apply the ideas of classic Marxist authors, nor a reprint of the practice of socialism in other countries, nor a duplicate of modernization from abroad. The “Second Integration” deeply roots Marxism into fine traditional Chinese culture, making it an essential component of Chinese culture. It breaks free from the traditional confines of “Marxism with a Marxist soul, a Chinese body, and Western application.” Instead, the integration has made each other successful, forming an organic and unified new cultural entity. It allowed Marxism to become Chinese, fine traditional Chinese culture to become modern, and the new culture developed through “integration” to become a cultural form of Chinese modernization.

### **A. From Integration to Reconstruction**

Some theorists argue that the “Second Integration” theory is a significant original contribution like “putting new wine in a new bottle.” The theory is not simply a mixture of Marxism and traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, but rather a “chemical reaction” of activation and re-creation. It is a significant original contribution from a Chinese standpoint, breaking away from the Western discourse system.

Chinese modernization is the domain where the “Second Integration” is realized. Since the Opium War in 1840, modernization has become the goal pursued by numerous Chinese with lofty ideals. “How to achieve modernization and what kind of modernization to achieve” has been a question of the times. The “Second Integration” has calibrated the course and provided a clear direction for Chinese modernization.

The “Second Integration” takes a philosophical perspective on culture from the heights of human development and views it through the historical depth of China’s 5,000-year civilization. The modernization of a country can only flourish and endure if it is rooted in the fertile soil of its own history and culture. The “Second

Integration” integrates the Communist faith, socialist beliefs, and the millennia-old ideals of the Chinese nation, giving Chinese modernization a value orientation, cultural confidence, and historical support.

## **B. From culture to civilization**

The “Second Integration” is not only a phenomenon of cultural integration but also a matter of civilizational fusion. The imprint of culture is embedded in all human activities of material production, invention, creation, and theoretical construction, giving rise to human civilization. Chinese modernization is deeply rooted in fine traditional Chinese culture, embodying the advanced essence of scientific socialism. It draws on the achievements of all human civilizations, represents the direction of progress in human civilization, and presents a new vision distinct from the Western model of modernization. It is an entirely new form of human civilization.

Chinese modernization builds upon the foundation of inheriting all the outstanding achievements of human civilization, from agricultural to industrial civilization. It incorporates the humanistic spirit embedded in the traditional Chinese culture, which advocates the idea of taking benevolence as a responsibility and “Do not do unto others what you would not want to be done unto you.” It embraces the concept of unity between nature and humanity and respect for nature. It also incorporates the shared values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom that belong to all human beings. In doing so, it achieves a significant breakthrough in transforming human civilization from industrial to modern.

According to the *Book of Documents*, a Chinese classic, “Great virtues carried forward can result in a harmonious clan, which will lead to a harmonious society, which, in turn, will lead to the harmony of all states.” Thus, the fine traditional Chinese culture has the distinctive characteristics of cosmopolitanism. Marxism has also advocated “global vision” and “humanistic care” since its birth. In his grasp of the general trend of the world, Xi Jinping keenly and profoundly captured this point of convergence and put forward the concept of “a community with a shared future” from a far-sighted perspective. This concept is a Chinese idea and solution put forward with an eye on human development and the world’s future. It conforms to the laws of the world’s historical development and resonates with the universal aspirations of all humanity. Naturally, it has received wide acclaim and enthusiastic response from the international community.

## **C. From adapting for application to excellence**

Persistently integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities and fine traditional Chinese culture is a long-term historical process. The continuous integration of Marxism with Chinese civilization is opening up a great era of revitalizing Chinese civilization and human civilization at large. The "Second Integration" embodies the scientific decision and governance wisdom of Chinese leaders who accurately grasp both the interactions of conflicting global ideologies and cultures and profound changes in social and ideological concepts in Chinese society.

The revival of Chinese civilization can only be realized under the premise of the CPC's long-term governance in contemporary China. Without it, the so-called "cultural China" would have long ago withered away and become a "civilization in museums." The Chinese path has distinct characteristics determined by the historical heritage of thousands of years of Chinese civilization. However, the Chinese path is also universal, encompassing the general principles of scientific socialism established by Marx. Therefore, Xi Jinping emphasizes, "We uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics and promote the coordinated development of material, political, ethical, social, and ecological civilizations. We have created a new path to modernization with Chinese characteristics and a new form of human civilization."

Marxism is the crystallization of advanced Western culture, originating from Western civilization yet transcending it with a broad cosmopolitan perspective. Since the introduction of Marxism into China, it has not only sparked profound changes in Chinese civilization but has also been gradually adapted to the Chinese context. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has revitalized the ancient Chinese civilization, infusing it with new vitality and vigor. It has significantly deepened the connotation and expanded the scope of Chinese civilization, propelling it to new heights.

Just as there are no bounds to practice, there is no end to theoretical innovation. It is the solemn historical responsibility of today's Chinese Communists to continue opening new chapters in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times.

--Xi Jinping



## **Chapter III: Reliable Path to and Promotion Strategy for the “Second Integration”**

Currently, the world is undergoing an unprecedented and accelerating transformation, and the historical process of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is irreversible. The new development environment and historic mission require the CPC to scientifically apply the basic principles of Marxism, inherit and promote fine traditional Chinese culture, and promote the “Second Integration” to respond to new situations, address new challenges, meet new demands, promote new development, and embark on a new journey.

The “Second Integration” has opened up a new realm of adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times, representing today’s essence of Chinese culture and the spirit of China. How to find the scientific path of the “Second Integration?” This report outlines ten aspects in this regard.

### **1. Upholding the Guiding Role of Marxism**

As soon as it was established, the CPC firmly aligned itself with Marxism. Xi Jinping pointed out, “Marxism is the fundamental guiding ideology upon which our Party and country are founded; it is the very soul of our Party and the banner under which it strives.” The Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the CPC clearly stated the need to “highlight the fundamental system which ensures that Marxism guides all our ideological work” and decisively institutionalize the foundational system for ensuring the guiding role of Marxism in the ideological domain, elevating it to a fundamental national system and prioritizing it as a critical aspect of constructing an advanced socialist cultural system.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the foundational system for ensuring the guiding role of Marxism in the ideological domain can we effectively ensure the advancement of the “Second Integration” in the right direction. Upholding the fundamental system for ensuring the guiding role of Marxism, which is unique, essential, and institutional in the ideological domain, should never be shaken, obscured, or confused at any time. Throughout history, the downfall of many political parties, the collapse of many regimes, and the decline of many nations began with the confusion of guiding ideologies and the loss of leadership in the realm of ideology. This guiding position determines the nature and direction of socialist culture with

Chinese characteristics. The creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture must adhere to the guidance of Marxism; otherwise, we risk losing our direction.

## **2. Essential Attributes of Culture**

Culture is the soul of a country and a nation. One fundamental attribute of culture lies in its values recognized by people. The competition of cultures is essentially one of values. China possesses firm confidence in its path, theories, and institutions, fundamentally rooted in the cultural confidence inherited over five thousand years of its civilization. Throughout its long evolutionary process, Chinese civilization has developed a unique system of values, cultural connotations, and spiritual qualities through which the Chinese people perceive the world, society, and the meaning of life. It is the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes China from other countries and nations, and it has forged the cultural confidence of the Chinese nation, which has been assimilating the strengths of various cultures.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the essential attributes of culture can we have a deeper understanding of the significance of the “Second Integration” in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Without a strong sense of cultural confidence and the flourishing of culture, there can be no realization of socialist modernization in China, nor can there be a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Firm confidence in the path, theory and system of socialism with Chinese characteristics ultimately stems from solid cultural confidence, which is also an important reason why the 1.4 billion Chinese people have formed strong cohesion. This has provided solid ideological guarantees and powerful inspiration for opening up new horizons for the cause of the Party and the country in the new era. The “Second Integration” is the CPC’s profound summary of the historical experience of adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times. It reflects a deep understanding of the development laws of Chinese civilization, indicating that the CPC’s knowledge of the Chinese path, theories, and institutions has reached new heights. It also signifies that the CPC’s historical and cultural confidence has reached new heights and that its consciousness of promoting cultural innovation while inheriting fine traditional Chinese culture has reached new heights.

## **3. Fundamental Role of Culture**

Culture is a spiritual force that can react to the material world and ultimately transform into a powerful material force. The soft power of culture can also be transformed into the hard power of the economy. A nation thrives when its culture thrives, and a nation becomes strong when its culture is strong. The capability of culture is deeply ingrained in a nation's vitality, creativity, and cohesion. The 5,000-year accumulation of Chinese civilization has brought tremendous confidence and pride to the Chinese people, serving as a source of unwavering spiritual strength.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the fundamental role of culture can we effectively unleash the tremendous strength generated by the "Second Integration" in the new journey of fully building a modern socialist China. In the new journey of fully building a modern socialist China, culture is an essential component of advancing the well-planned and coordinated efforts to implement the "Five-sphere Integrated Plan" (the five integrated areas are economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological) and the "Four-pronged Strategy" (the four prongs covering the building of a modern socialist country, expanding in-depth reform, promoting law-based governance, and enforcing strict Party self-governance). For that matter, culture is a significant fulcrum in promoting high-quality development, a crucial factor in meeting the growing aspirations of the people for a better life, and a significant source of strength in overcoming various risks and challenges on the path of progress. Integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with fine traditional Chinese culture will further unleash the fundamental role of culture and garner a magnificent force of unity in the nation's undertakings.

#### **4. Positioning of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture**

China's fine traditional culture, created and continued by the Chinese nation in thousands of years of history, is the root and soul of the Chinese nation, an essential source for cultivating core socialist values, and a solid foundation for the Chinese nation to gain a firm footing in the global cultural interaction.

We can only enhance our historical consciousness and cultural confidence in the "Second Integration" by accurately understanding the positioning of fine traditional Chinese culture. "History and reality have shown that a nation that abandons or betrays its own history and culture not only fails to develop but also risks experiencing various historical tragedies." The 5,000-plus-year Chinese civilization carries the nation's spiritual heritage. Socialism with Chinese characteristics, with its distinctive features, takes root in the fertile soil of Chinese culture. Forgetting history, abandoning culture, and discarding traditions are equivalent to severing the spiritual lifeline of the Chinese nation. By firmly establishing cultural confidence and

strengthening identification with Chinese culture, we can carry forward the excellent traditions with the spirit of the times. It will enable us to better build the Chinese ethos, values, and strength, endowing the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics with a profound historical heritage and unwavering determination for progress.

## **5. Intrinsic Laws of Cultural Inheritance and Development**

Cultural inheritance and development follow inherent laws. They must adapt to the requirements of the development of the times and the needs of the people, and only creative transformation and innovative development can help achieve lasting cultural inheritance and development. Creative transformation transforms those connotations and outdated forms of expression that still have valuable lessons to offer in accordance with the characteristics and requirements of the times, endowing them with new contemporary meanings and forms of expression to restore their vitality. Innovative development means supplementing, expanding, and refining the connotations of traditional culture in line with the new progress and advancements of the times, enhancing its influence and appeal.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the inherent laws of cultural inheritance and development can we find scientific approaches and methods to promote the “Second Integration.” By adhering to creative transformation and innovative development, we can activate the essence of fine traditional Chinese culture, promote the integration of the core of Marxist ideology with the essential elements of fine traditional Chinese culture, and integrate them with the shared values people unconsciously embrace in their daily lives. It is the only way to give scientific socialism theory a more distinctive Chinese character and provide a solid historical and popular foundation for adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times.

## **6. Best of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture**

With a history stretching back to antiquity, fine traditional Chinese culture is extensive and profound; it is the crystallization of the wisdom of Chinese civilization. Traditional culture espouses many important principles and concepts, including pursuing the common good for all; regarding the people as the foundation of the state; governing by virtue; discarding the outdated in favor of the new; selecting officials based on merit; promoting harmony between humanity and nature; ceaselessly

pursuing self-improvement; embracing the world with virtue; acting in good faith and being friendly to others; and fostering neighborliness. These maxims, which have taken shape over centuries of work and life, reflect the Chinese people's way of viewing the universe, the world, society, and morality. They have formed the essential characteristics and the development pattern of Chinese civilization, which features benevolence, emphasizes people's lives, respects justice and integrity, advocates righteousness, upholds universal harmony, and seeks common ground while agreeing to differences.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the essence of fine traditional Chinese culture can we find the source of vitality for the essence of the "Second Integration." Fine traditional Chinese culture is not only the spiritual lifeline of the Chinese nation but also an important source for nurturing the core socialist values. The ideological concepts, values, humanistic spirit, and moral norms therein are the core elements of Chinese people's thoughts and psyche and significant value in addressing the issues of human society. Only by accurately grasping the best of fine traditional Chinese culture and understanding its essence can we better adapt the tenets of Marxism to the fine traditional Chinese culture and further identify the objects and connotations to be integrated. On the one hand, we need to explore the up-to-date values of fine traditional Chinese culture and the common values of humanity. On the other hand, we need to present Marxism with more Chinese characteristics, style, and charm to root it in the land of China firmly.

## **7. Scientific Worldview and Methodology**

Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, combining theory and practice, provides in-depth answers from entirely new perspectives to a series of major historical issues concerning the development of the Party and the country and the governance of the Party. It not only explains what needs to be done and why but also how to approach and address these issues. It provides strategic planning, tasks assignment, and problem-solving guidance, vividly reflecting the unity of Marxist worldview and methodology. It continuously puts forward new ideas, perspectives, and approaches that guide practical problem-solving. The scientific approach to advancing theoretical innovation requires adherence to putting people first, upholding self-confidence and self-reliance, advocating the principles while fostering innovation, focusing on problem-solving, adopting a systemic perspective, and embracing a global vision. These principles significantly embody the thought, viewpoint, and methodology of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with

Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the worldview and methodology of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and persistently upholding and applying the principles, viewpoints, and methods embodied in it can we better understand the theoretical character and distinct features of the “Second Integration.” It is based on the 5,000-year civilization of the Chinese nation, reflecting the defining features of Marxism and demonstrating distinctive Chinese features and characteristics of the times. Only by a deep understanding of its essence can we better meet the requirements of the times, correctly understand the problem, and effectively guide the practice.

## **8. High Compatibility between Fine Traditional Chinese Culture and Values of Scientific Socialism**

The scientific socialist values contained in the basic tenets of Marxism are highly compatible with the values formed by the Chinese people through the ages. The core socialist values not only contain the essence of Marxism but also embody the essence of fine traditional Chinese culture. The encounter of Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture has revitalized and empowered both, enabling the former to take root and bear fruit.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the high compatibility between fine traditional Chinese culture and the advocacy of scientific socialist values can we build a bridge and bond for understanding the “Second Integration.” The “Second Integration” is an important method and scientific path by which the adaptation of Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our times can enter a new realm. Only by finding the inherent relationship between the basic tenets of Marxism and fine traditional Chinese culture can we make them attract, activate, and promote each other, achieving a comprehensive integration of all the theories and principles of Marxism with fine traditional Chinese culture in all aspects and dimensions so that they will ultimately merge into one, making original contributions to the enrichment and development of Marxism.

## **9. Wisdom of Governance in Fine Traditional Chinese Culture**

Fine traditional Chinese culture is an essential ideological and cultural source for

the governance of the CPC. Over thousands of years, the Chinese nation has developed rich ideas about the system and governance of the state. Within the realm of fine traditional Chinese culture, there is a wealth of philosophical and social scientific content and wisdom in governance and statecraft. It provided an important foundation for ancient people to understand and transform the world and offers valuable references for us to uphold and improve socialism with Chinese characteristics and advance modernizing China's system and capacity for governance.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the governance wisdom contained in fine traditional Chinese culture can we clarify the historical positioning of the "Second Integration" in modernizing China's system and capacity for governance. In governing China, the CPC respects history and culture, rejecting historical and cultural nihilism. It neither forgets the heritage of history nor belittles Chinese culture. The CPC is adept at drawing wisdom from fine traditional culture to govern the country and benefit the people. At the same time, it observes, grasps, and leads the times from the standpoints, viewpoints, and methods of Marxism, constantly deepening the understanding of the laws underlying governance by a communist party, the building of socialism, and the development of human society. These are crucial experiences of the Party in its endeavor to govern the country and rejuvenate the nation. They are also practical explorations to achieve the "Second Integration."

## **10. Trends of Exchanges and Mutual Learning between Civilizations**

Exchange and mutual learning are essential requirements for the development of civilizations. The diverse paths to modernization taken by different countries and regions today are rooted in rich and enduring cultural heritages. The various civilizations created by human societies shine brilliantly, endowing each country's modernization with profound heritage and distinctive characteristics. These civilizations transcend time and national boundaries, making significant contributions to the progress of human society collectively.

Only by having an accurate perspective of the trend of exchange and mutual learning among world civilizations can we promote the "Second Integration" and make more outstanding global contributions in building a human community with a shared future and promoting common values for all humanity. All things coexist and flourish without harming one another, and various paths run parallel without conflicting with each other. In promoting the development and progress of human civilization, China not only contributes to the emergence of new forms of civilization but also offers new concepts of civilization. Peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom, these common values of humanity, are the core concepts of

China's fine traditional culture that transcend time and space, shining upon every corner of the world. China is also committed to promoting the exchange and mutual learning of civilizations, aiming to overcome estrangement between civilizations with exchanges, prevent their clash with mutual learning, and overcome a false sense of superiority with coexistence. China encourages countries worldwide to value the inheritance and innovation of their own historical cultures, explore the contemporary values of their cultural heritages, and promote the continuous progress of human civilization.



The peaceful nature of Chinese civilization fundamentally determines that China will continue to build world peace, contribute to global development and safeguard the international order, and that it will continue to pursue exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations rather than cultural hegemony. It also determines that China will not impose its own values and political system on others. China is a champion of cooperation, not confrontation. Never will it dish out favors to acolytes and punishments to opponents.

--Xi Jinping

## **Chapter IV: Global Significance and Inspiration for the Times from the “Second Integration”**

To the international audience, the “Second Integration” embodies China’s way of governance through culture. It answers the “What makes China” question from the governance perspective. By adhering to the “Second Integration,” the power of Marxism has revitalized the Chinese civilization. At the same time, Marxism itself gains nourishment from the fertile soil of fine traditional Chinese culture. It has acquired distinct Chinese characteristics, styles, and grandeur. It shows the world that the Chinese path to modernization and the new forms of human civilization it has created are deeply rooted in its historical culture and civilization traditions. Based on this historical and cultural heritage, modern China stands firm as a responsible major power, providing stability and certainty amid changes in the world, the era, and history. It represents a progressive force committed to upholding world peace and development.

Based on the new era and looking toward the future, the Chinese path of governance provides new insights into the peaceful coexistence of civilizations in the 21st century and offers inspiration for countries to build a better world jointly.

### **1. China’s Commitment to World Peace and Stability with Cultural Strength**

The “Second Integration” theory’s proposal is an intellectual endeavor of China in the context of unprecedented changes in the world and China’s commitment to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Under the guidance of this theory, China has transitioned from cultural self-awareness to cultural self-confidence and further to cultural self-strengthening. It reflects the vision of Chinese leaders since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, as they have stood at the forefront of the times, looked ahead, and worked towards the grand vision of building a human community with a shared future. They have led the Chinese people to upgrade their understanding, transform their thinking, and update their concepts, providing a logically consistent interpretation of governance in China. With the power of culture and civilization, China plays a constructive role in safeguarding world peace and stability.

**A. Reconstructing historical perspectives: Going beyond old ideas and taking the initiative to innovate.**

For a long time, the narratives about China in world history have been dominated by such perspectives as “stagnation theory,” “cyclical theory,” and “backwardness theory.” While China’s modernization has been progressing rapidly, the understanding of Chinese history and culture, both domestically and internationally, has not kept pace with the development of the times.

Scholar Zheng Yongnian believes that for a culture to become a “soft power,” it must be able to explain itself and enable “others” to understand and be convinced, ultimately leading to “others” voluntary acceptance.<sup>8</sup>

The “Second Integration” theory goes beyond the Western-centric perspective that has prevailed in modern times and the old notions within China itself. It reconstructs the Chinese people’s understanding of their own history and effectively explains the current success of China. As a result, it enables the Chinese people to seize the historical initiative and have the mindset of taking the initiative. This transformative perspective has already influenced people with a breadth of vision in other developing countries.

"Even understanding China, we see it from the prism of the West, but then things began to change." On March 25, 2023, during the Asia Youth Leaders Forum’s opening ceremony of in Guangzhou, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar bin Ibrahim stated in a video speech: “Look at how we understand our cultures. We always feel the West is superior. We were always told that to progress, we must be one of them. But we realize that this cannot be the case. We started looking at our own experience, our own history, and our own contributions of our forefathers.”

## **B. Reshaping Identity: Addressing the Challenges of Our Time, Resolving Identity Confusion**

The current world faces an identity crisis in politics, with the emergence of tribalism within nations and a fault line in the world order of globalization, as stated by American political scientist Francis Fukuyama in recent years.<sup>9</sup>

Many scholars argue that Western-style modernization has led people to an

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8 Zheng Yongnian, *The Revival of Chinese Civilization*, The Eastern Publishing Co., Ltd., 2018, p188.

9 Francis Fukuyama (US), *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*, China Translation & Publishing House, 2021.

atomized life, causing them to have a sense of loss. People in all countries are looking for a “sense of belonging,” and countries are looking for “recognition.” The struggle toward “recognition” focuses on identity. It has led to greater challenges in a country’s internal governance and more complex exchanges between countries.

Through the “Second Integration” theory, Chinese leaders have reshaped their country’s cultural identity and social consensus, thereby strengthening national and political identity. With cultural self-confidence under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese have further reinforced confidence in their path, system, and theory.

### **C. Reinterpreting Civilization: Constructing the Chinese Narrative and Promoting Civilizational Exchange**

Today, the “clash of civilizations” notion is still widely popular worldwide. Western centrism and white supremacy may have changed their appearance over time, but their core has not changed in essence. The two-way confrontation between the "civilized" world dominated by the West and "non-civilized" forces affects the trend of international relations.

From elaborating on China’s concept of civilization to an international audience on occasions such as delivering a speech at the UNESCO headquarters to proposing the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, Xi Jinping has repeatedly expounded on the significance of cultural exchange and mutual learning to the world. Civilizations may vary in manifestations but should never be judged in superiority or inferiority. Faced with notions like the clash of civilizations and racial supremacy, China firmly advocates respecting each other’s history, national conditions, and development paths. It emphasizes the need for cultural exchange to transcend cultural barriers, mutual learning to transcend conflicts, and coexistence to go beyond claims of superiority.

At the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting held in March 2023, Xi Jinping put forward the Global Civilization Initiative, emphasizing the promotion of cultural exchange and mutual learning. This initiative further enriches and expands the practical path toward building a human community with a shared future.

## **2. Chinese Way of Governance: Managing Challenges from the Six Dialectical Relationships**

The report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC put forward the “Six Upholds”: upholding the people-centered approach, upholding self-confidence and self-reliance, upholding fundamental principles while breaking new ground, upholding a problem-oriented approach, applying systems thinking, and maintaining a broad vision. These reflect Xi Jinping’s worldview and methodology of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era and serve as a vivid embodiment of the theory of the “Second Integration.” This “six-in-one” methodology reveals the six dialectical relationships between theory and practice in China’s governance in the new era. It represents the modern development of China’s traditional thinking and reflects Marxist dialectical materialism. It provides a valuable reference for other countries striving to address governance challenges.

### **A. The relationship between the people and the entity**

Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that man is, by nature, a political animal. Only through shared living can individuals become fully realized as humans in the truest sense. From an ontological perspective, humans exist in relation to one another, and none can exist outside of these relationships.

In modern society, the key to good governance for managing public life lies in handling the relationships with the “people.” No ruling party in the world does not mention “the people” in its reports and speeches, but it is uncommon for them to prioritize the people’s interests above all else and put them first in governance practice.

Chinese leaders’ emphasis on “putting the people at the center” differs from the “people-based” concept under the context of “bureaucracy centered on officials” in ancient China or the Western emphasis on individual rights. It is also distinct from the “God”-centered religious concept or the “capital”-centered idea prevalent in capitalist societies. From the perspective of governance in China, “the people” occupy the “top” position and become a legitimate source of ontological significance.

In March 2019, during his state visit to Italy, Xi Jinping said: “I will put aside my own well-being for the good of my people.” On February 20, 2021, Xi Jinping stated at the mobilization meeting to study Party history: “This country is its people; the people are the country.” The report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC emphasized the need to stand firmly with the people, respond to their wishes, respect their creativity, and pool their wisdom.

Surveys conducted by overseas institutions such as Harvard University’s Belfer Center consistently show that the CPC has enjoyed a satisfaction rate of over 90

percent among the Chinese people for many years. Compared to political parties worldwide, such a level of governance achievement is rarely seen.

## **B. The relationship between self-reliance and learning from the overseas**

China's stability, unity, and prosperity today may be impossible without learning from other countries and being open to the world. However, the fundamental reason for China's achievements lies in the fact that the Chinese people refuse to be subordinate to other countries and persist in independently carving out their own path.

“The problems of China must be addressed based on China's national conditions and answered by the Chinese people themselves,” as stated in the report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC. The CPC forged the path to success in China today as it leads the people through independent exploration, and the Chinese chapter of Marxism was written by the Chinese Communists relying on their own strength in practice. China must adapt to changes without being closed and rigid. Simultaneously, the country cannot simply copy and imitate foreign ideas without digesting them.

“Where there is a transition from nonexistence to existence, opening up new prospects and pioneering new paths, there is inevitably a manifestation of spiritual presence at its origin,” said historian Qian Mu.<sup>10</sup>

The “Second Integration” theory finds the cultural source of this self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-improvement.

## **C. The relationship between innovation and upholding fundamental principles**

“Although Zhou was an old state, its mission lies in reform,” as the classical *Book of Songs* chanted. The spirit of “constant innovation” formed in China since ancient times has extended theoretically in the “Second Integration” of the new era.

Innovation should be based on upholding fundamental principles. By adhering to the tenets of Marxism, grasping the principles of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and embracing the new trend of the times, China will not lose its direction or deviate from its course.

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<sup>10</sup> Qian Mu, *Chinese Cultural Spirit*, Jiuzhou Press, 2012, p97.

How can the “Second Integration” theory be transformed into a driving force for practical development? Xi Jinping has proposed creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture. This approach is not only applied in the narrow sense of the cultural industry and undertakings. Still, it is gradually embedded in the governance practices of various fields in China, including politics, economy, society, and culture.

#### **D. The relationship between problems and theories**

Problems are the precursors of theories, while theories are a distillation of problems. It is necessary to discover problems in practice, summarize theories, and use them to guide practice in transforming reality.

How to pinpoint and identify problems? Where to find them? The report to the 20th CPC National Congress focuses on five key areas: new problems encountered in practice; deep-rooted problems intrinsic in reform, development, and stability; pressing issues concerning the people’s immediate interests; significant issues in the international context; and prominent issues facing the Party’s growth. Exploring these problem areas reflects China’s leaders’ close integration of theory and practical issues and their profound insights into the national and global circumstances. It is a fundamental approach to the success of China’s governance by the power of culture.

#### **E. The relationship between the system of the whole and the parts**

Traditional Chinese thinking has a holistic and interconnected nature. Chinese people believe that everything is interconnected and interdependent. We can only grasp an object or event’s laws of development by viewing them with the understanding that they are universally connected, part of a complete system, and constantly evolving.

This holistic, comprehensive, and systematic way of thinking can transcend partial, sub-disciplined, and specific thinking, allowing the Chinese to rise above temporary and particular issues, enabling them to understand the relationships between the present and the future, the whole and the parts, and the small and the large.

Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the importance of bearing in mind the country’s most fundamental interests and cultivating a “systematic way of thinking.”

“Chinese people have a strong aptitude for a global perspective, much like appreciating a landscape painting, where they first focus on the overall picture before examining the details.” This observation was made by Joshua Cooper Ramo, Vice Chairman and CEO of Kissinger Associates, an international geopolitical consulting firm based in the United States.

## **F. The relationship between China and the world**

“We must cultivate moral character and prioritize education to attract people outside China.” That has been the tradition guiding China’s interactions with the world. “Having a global perspective” is what the CPC members cherish.

Unlike the Western worldview that sees the world as something to be conquered, the Chinese people have traditionally understood the world as “*tianxia*” (all-under-heaven), an ancient concept of the world. Whether “governing the world per the requirements of world governance”<sup>11</sup> or “observing the world from the world’s perspective”<sup>12</sup> means using the world as the yardstick to understand the world as a political organic whole. It is the principle of “there being no distinction between nations.” In the eyes of the Chinese people, any external existence is seen as an issue to be addressed rather than an object to be conquered.<sup>13</sup>

Under the vision of building a human community with a shared future, the CPC not only seeks happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation but also strives for progress for humanity and the world. It aims to broaden its global perspective, deeply understand the trends of human development and improvement, actively respond to the shared concerns of people from all countries, and contribute to addressing the common challenges facing humanity. With an inclusive and open-minded approach, it draws upon and absorbs the achievements of all civilizations to promote the construction of a better world.

A better world contributes to a better China, and a better China leads to a better world. In the new era, China engages itself with the world with a mindset of interconnection, interdependence, win-win cooperation, and harmonious co-existence.

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11 *Guanzi: Herdsmen*

12 Laozi: The Fifth-fourth Chapter of *Tao Te Ching*.

13 Zhao Tingyang, "Contemporaneity of the World: Practice and Imagination of World Order," CITIC Publishing Group, 2016 edition, page 5.



### **3. Harmonious Coexistence: Contributing to a Better Future with a New Form of Human Advancement**

At the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, Xi Jinping pointed out, “As we have upheld and developed socialism with Chinese characteristics and driven coordinated progress in material, political, cultural-ethical, social, and ecological terms, we have pioneered a new and uniquely Chinese path to modernization, and created a new form of human advancement.” The new form of human civilization is the crystallization of the CPC’s adherence to the “Two Integrations” in its unremitting struggle to lead the Chinese people to achieve national rejuvenation and promote modernization through a Chinese path. From the metaphysical “*dao*” (principles) to the physical “*qi*” (concrete things), this new form of civilization has already reached different levels and generated tremendous positive effects worldwide.

#### **A. The way of concept: new insights into the ideal society of the world**

American scholar Philip Clayton believes that the world is facing a series of crises that capitalism can never resolve. Three significant consensuses have emerged globally: the ecological crisis, the consequences of unregulated capitalism, and the “death of modernity.”<sup>14</sup>

Clayton, who has conducted in-depth research on Chinese issues, believes that Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era holds great significance in addressing the common challenges of human society.

In an era of globalization where "a loss for one is a loss for all" and "prosperity for one is prosperity for all," amid escalating predictable and unpredictable risks and challenges, what constitutes the ideal state of the international community? How should we envision the common future of humanity?

History has shown that how leaders envision the world often determines its reality. Under the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity, China envisions a magnificent world characterized by “lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness and inclusiveness, and a clean and beautiful environment.”

From 2013 to 2023, Chinese leaders have put forward a series of new concepts

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14 Philip Clayton and Justin Heinzekehr, *Organic Marxism: An Alternative to Capitalism and Ecological Catastrophe (Toward Ecological Civilization)*, translated by Meng Xianli, Yu Guifeng, and Zhang Lixia, People’s Press, 2015, p14.

and ideas that focus on the global perspective and are oriented towards the world: the concept of a human community with a shared future, the new type of international relations, the shared values of all humanity, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative.

From confusion, negligence, and even smear and attack, to serious attention, thorough research, and broad participation, the responses from countries worldwide to what China put forward have greatly changed over the past decade..

On September 18, 2018, during his meeting with Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid, Xi Jinping said, “China advocates building a human community with a shared future, which means advocating mutual respect, equality, diversity, and win-win cooperation among countries. As the Chinese saying goes, everything has its strengths and weaknesses. Regardless of their size, all countries have their own merits and are equal members of the international community. We should reject the law of the jungle where the strong prey on the weak and the winner takes all.”

“Harmony in diversity” and “Everything has its strengths and weakness” are both ideas rooted in the fine traditional Chinese culture and embody the essence of Marxist dialectical materialism. Different civilizations should mutually respect each other, seek common ground while reserving differences, coexist harmoniously, transcend supremacy through the co-existence of civilizations, and go beyond conflicts through mutual understanding and exchange.

Xi Jinping said, “To build a human community with a shared future is not to replace one system or civilization with another. Instead, it is about countries with different social systems, ideologies, histories, cultures, and levels of development coming together for shared interests, shared rights, and shared responsibilities in global affairs, and creating the greatest synergy for building a better world.”<sup>15</sup>

Carlos Martinez, a British writer and China researcher, stated that China’s economic strength and global status have significantly increased in the past decade. China’s foreign policy aligns with the international community’s demand for peace, progress, and sustainable development and the requirements for building a human community with a shared future. It starkly contrasts with the Cold War policies centered around consolidating hegemony.

## **B. The Instrument of Practice: The Implementation Mechanism of Integrating Knowledge and Action**

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15 Xinhua News Agency, “Xi Jinping Attends the Commemoration Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of the Restoration of the People's Republic of China's Lawful Seat in the United Nations and Delivers an Important Speech,” October 25, 2021.

Integrating Marxism with fine traditional Chinese culture needs to be put into practice.

Over the past decade, Chinese leaders have continuously put forward new ideas and concepts in diplomacy while implementing these ideas in practice. Xi Jinping, as head of the state, made scores of foreign visits and China held many milestone diplomatic events. These include the G20 Summit, the BRICS Summit, the China International Import Expo, the China-ASEAN Expo, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, the Global Conference on Cyberspace, and many others. China has enhanced its cultural confidence by hosting or playing a major role in various international events, and its contributions to civilization have reached far and wide.

The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, developed for a decade, represents the “materialization” of China’s new form of human civilization in the global development arena. It is a significant public good China contributes to the world’s peaceful development.

In August 2018, on the 5th anniversary of advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, Xi Jinping used traditional Chinese painting skills to explain how to improve the Belt and Road Initiative from “*daxieyi*” (freehand brushwork) to “*gongbihua*” (meticulous brushwork). In April 2019, at the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, Xi Jinping put forward the goal of advancing the Belt and Road Initiative in the direction of high-quality development.

According to the latest statistics from the “Belt and Road” Portal of China, by January 6, 2023, China had signed over 200 cooperation documents for jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative with 151 countries and 32 international organizations. Initiatives such as the China-Europe Railway Express, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Silk Road Fund, and various bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms under the Chinese proposal are flourishing. Over the past decade, this initiative has transformed from an idea to actions, from vision to reality.

Italian scholar Giovanni Andornino said the Belt and Road Initiative had shaped China’s identity as a global leader and reorganized the existing world order in a non-hegemonic manner.<sup>16</sup> Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had said that the Belt and Road Initiative had profound historical significance in maintaining world peace and stability, promoting cultural diversity, and fostering sustainable

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16 Giovanni B. Andornino, “The Belt and Road Initiative in China’s Emerging Grand Strategy of Connective Leadership,” *China & World Economy*, Vol.25, No.5, 2017.

development of human civilization.<sup>17</sup>

The new form of human civilization created by China is guided by the value pursuit of fulfilling the people's aspirations for a better life. It embodies the cultural genes of inclusiveness, harmony among nations, and the idea of a shared community for all. It is significant and offers inspiration for the modernization efforts of developing countries.

In the complex and turbulent world undergoing drastic changes unseen in a century, even established developed countries are facing new development needs. According to Gustaaf Geeraerts, director of the Contemporary China Research Institute in Brussels, Belgium, China is not only a developing country but also a major emerging power, and these two roles will eventually fuse China into a “responsible great power.” In fact, visionary politicians have already taken proactive actions.

On April 7, 2023, Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron, who was visiting Guangzhou, enjoyed a performance of the renowned ancient Chinese piece “High Mountains and Flowing Water,” played on a Tang Dynasty Guqin by a Chinese musician. Xi told Macron that a touching story about friendship lies behind this ancient Chinese Guqin melody, passed down for thousands of years.

Under the guidance of the theory of the “Second Integration,” Marxism in contemporary China is showing vigorous vitality. Chinese modernization keeps unfolding with grandeur. This new form of human civilization created by China greets the world with a friendly attitude.

“China will open its arms wider to embrace the world and contribute more dynamic achievements of its civilization to a better world in the future.”<sup>18</sup>

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17 “Promoting the New Development of China-Japan Relations,” *People’s Daily*, October 27, 2018.

18 “Keynote Speech by Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations,” Xinhua News Agency, May 15, 2019.

## **Conclusion**

The “Second Integration” theory answers the questions of “where does it come from” and “where it is going” concerning the governance of China. It is a theory and a series of practices that point not only to the present but also to the future. Only with the “Second Integration” theory can we explain China’s historical legitimacy, governance capacity, and vitality. Without a deep understanding of the Chinese civilization that has been developing for over 5,000 years, it is impossible to fully recognize China as a major force for safeguarding world peace and development.

In the era of accelerating changes unseen in a century on a global scale, to fully build a modern socialist China and advance national rejuvenation, China needs to keep advancing the “Second Integration” based on the significant achievements and valuable experience already attained in this regard.

The adaptation of Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times will continue.

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