

# Integrating the Theory of Chinese-Style Modernization into the Teaching of *Outline of Modern Chinese History*

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**Abstract:** The teaching of the *Outline of Modern Chinese History* (hereafter referred to as the *Outline*) should adopt the theory of Chinese-style modernization as the central pedagogical thread, integrating it comprehensively throughout the entire teaching process. This paper emphasizes three main aspects: narrating the Communist Party of China's (CPC) leadership in guiding the Chinese people on the path of modernization, explaining the pivotal historical significance of the "great changes in the past decade of the new era", and elucidating the stance, viewpoints, and methodologies embedded in the worldview and methodology of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

**Keywords:** Chinese-Style Modernization, *Outline Course*; New Era, Scientific Worldview and Methodology.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) states, "From now on, the central task of the Communist Party of China is to unite and lead the people of all ethnic groups across the country to build a great modern socialist country in all respects, realize the Second Centenary Goal, and comprehensively advance the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernization" (The Book Editorial Group, 2022, pp. 16–17). The Decision of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee reiterates, "The current and upcoming period marks a critical phase for advancing the construction of a powerful country and achieving national rejuvenation through Chinese-style modernization" (The Book Editorial Group, 2024).

Contemporary youth serve as the mainstay and driving force in promoting Chinese-style modernization, bearing a significant responsibility. To fulfill their duties in this process, they must deeply understand the connotations, essential requirements, and profound significance of Chinese-style modernization. This paper focuses on this critical topic, proposing the incorporation of the theory of Chinese-style modernization as the central pedagogical thread in the *Outline* course. It aims to comprehensively present to young students the grand historical narrative of the CPC leading and uniting the people to explore and establish the pathway of Chinese-style modernization. By doing so, students can deeply appreciate the essence of "Chinese-style", why it is "Chinese-style", and how it is implemented as "Chinese-style". This effort will proceed from three main approaches..

## II. NARRATING THE CPC'S JOURNEY IN LEADING THE PEOPLE TOWARD MODERNIZATION

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) asserts, "Chinese-style modernization is socialist modernization under the leadership of the Communist Party of China" (The Book Editorial Group, 2022, p. 17). The establishme

### III. EXPLAINING THE PIVOTAL HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE "GREAT CHANGES IN THE PAST DECADE OF THE NEW ERA"

The influence of diverse ideological trends presents numerous challenges to young students' confidence in the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics. External factors include the ideological shockwaves of the Soviet Union's collapse and the Eastern Bloc's disintegration, as well as Western media narratives promoting "the failure of socialism" and "the obsolescence of Marxism". Additionally, the reality of "Western strength versus Chinese weakness" has hindered China's international discourse power. Internal factors, such as students' knowledge reserves and their comprehension of Marxism, further complicate the situation. How can we address the challenges to theoretical confidence and bolster young students' trust in the path of Chinese-style modernization?

To enhance their confidence, students must be guided to deeply comprehend the "great changes in the past decade of the new era", which represent a milestone of historical significance across five dimensions: Party history, the history of the People's Republic of China, the history of reform and opening-up, the history of socialism, and the history of the Chinese nation's development. Making "Chinese-style modernization" the logical thread of these five historical dimensions within the *Outline* course provides new solutions to the intellectual challenges faced by young students, such as "theoretical reliance on others", "theoretical confusion", and "theoretical inferiority".

#### 3.1 Highlighting the Milestone Significance of the "Great Changes in the Past Decade of the New Era" in Party History

The history of the CPC's century-long struggle is a central focus of the *Outline* course. When presenting this history to university students, it is essential to emphasize its core themes and essence: "From its very establishment, the Communist Party of China set communism as its highest ideal and ultimate goal, unflinchingly shouldering the historic mission of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (The Book Editorial Group, 2021). The century-long history of the CPC, filled with hardship and brilliance, is a chronicle of unrelenting efforts to achieve this mission through revolution, construction, and reform. The Party has successively completed the new democratic revolution, carried out socialist revolution and construction, and initiated the reform and opening-up era of socialist modernization.

During the ten years of great changes in the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Party has led transformative actions, undertaken monumental struggles, constructed major projects, advanced great endeavors, and preliminarily realized great dreams—marking a milestone in the CPC's century-long history. As emphasized by General Secretary Xi Jinping in the report to the 20th National Congress, "The great achievements of the new era were created by the Party and the people through hard work, grit, and perseverance" (The Book Editorial Group, 2022, p. 12).

#### 3.2 Highlighting the New Chapter of "Great Changes in the Past Decade of the New Era" in the History of the People's Republic of China

The *Outline* course highly values the historical significance of the founding of the People's Republic of China, marking it as the beginning of a new epoch for the progress and development of the Chinese nation. The establishment of the People's Republic transformed China into a modern nation-state with independent sovereignty and political autonomy. This achievement reflects the essence of the CPC's leadership in Chinese-style modernization and serves as the prerequisite for avoiding dependency-based development traps within the Western-dominated global order.

General Secretary Xi Jinping identified the founding of the People's Republic as one of the three milestones in China's modern history leading to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Over the past 70 years, the history of the People's Republic has fundamentally reversed the conditions of poverty and weakness that plagued modern China, paving the way for the realization of Chinese-style modernization and the nation's great rejuvenation.

Through relentless exploration, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. The past decade of the new era has witnessed transformative changes and historical achievements, creating two unprecedented miracles: rapid economic growth and long-term social stability. These successes have provided a stronger material foundation and more comprehensive institutional guarantees for the continued development of Chinese-style modernization in the new era.

### 3.3 Highlighting the Remarkable Achievements of the "Great Changes in the Past Decade of the New Era" in the History of Reform and Opening-Up

The history of reform and opening-up, an essential component of the *Outline* course, underscores the critical role this period played in advancing Chinese-style modernization. Reform and opening-up marked a pivotal step in propelling China's modernization journey forward, serving as the only path to adhering to and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, and as the decisive measure that shaped contemporary China's destiny.

Within the 40-plus years of reform, the significant transformations of the past decade occurred during the new era. The decade of great changes witnessed the leadership of the CPC Central Committee, with Xi Jinping at its core, rallying the nation under the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This leadership drove China's economic development to unprecedented heights, with the country's share of the global economy rising from 11.4% in 2012 to 18.5% in 2021, securing its position as the world's second-largest economy.

Moreover, this period achieved the realization of the millennium-long dream of building a moderately prosperous society, and the country completed the most extensive poverty alleviation campaign in human history. These efforts culminated in the achievement of the first centenary goal. Based on these extraordinary accomplishments, educators must guide students to understand that the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics has become more mature and refined. Additionally, the modernization of the national governance system and capacity has significantly improved, providing critical institutional and strategic support for the nation's continued progress.

### 3.4 Highlighting the Epoch-Making Significance of the "Great Changes in the Past Decade of the New Era" in the Developmental History of the Chinese Nation

The *Outline* course takes the history of modern China, starting from the Opium War of 1840, as its core content while succinctly presenting the 5,000-year development of Chinese civilization as its pre-modern backdrop. Educators should approach this topic from the perspective of human civilization, positioning the 5,000-year history of Chinese civilization within the broader context of world cultures. Under the premise of acknowledging the diversity of world civilizations, instructors must deeply explain to students the unique and creative cultural mechanisms underlying Chinese-style modernization.

The driving force behind the growth and development of Chinese civilization lies in its continual capacity to integrate and absorb external cultures. Conversely, Chinese civilization has also been accepted by and has influenced other cultural systems, thereby impacting global culture. The great changes of the past decade in the new era marked the completion of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, the innovation and expansion of Chinese-style modernization, and the advancement of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Furthermore, these achievements offer a new model of modernization for other nations aspiring to modernize, demonstrating a higher realm of possibilities.

### 3.5 Highlighting the Innovative Significance of the "Great Changes in the Past Decade of the New Era" in the History of Socialist Development

In the *Outline* course, the history of socialist development forms a critical backdrop for the founding of the CPC. Marxism established scientific socialism, which was further developed into Leninism by the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership. Guided by Leninism, the October Revolution in Russia established the world's first socialist state, spreading Marxism widely in China.

Against this backdrop, the CPC was founded in 1921, embarking on the path of integrating Marxism with China's revolutionary and practical realities. This process achieved the historic leap of Marxism's Sinicization, yielding theoretical innovations such as Mao Zedong Thought. During the period of reform, opening-up, and socialist modernization, the CPC developed theories such as Deng Xiaoping Theory, the "Three Represents", and the Scientific Outlook on Development, realizing a new leap in Marxism's Sinicization.

In the new era, the creation of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era represents another leap in the Sinicization and modernization of Marxism, bringing renewed vitality to scientific socialism in 21st-century China. These innovations have provided the theoretical foundation for achieving Chinese-style modernization and continue to propel the modernization process forward, making profound contributions to global socialist theory and practice.

#### IV. EXPLAINING THE STANCE, VIEWPOINTS, AND METHODOLOGIES EMBEDDED IN THE WORLDVIEW AND METHODOLOGY OF XI JINPING THOUGHT ON SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS FOR A NEW ERA

During the Chinese people's exploration of pathways to national salvation, old approaches proved ineffective, and traditional theories lost their relevance, creating an urgent need for new theoretical guidance. Amid various ideological trends of the time, Marxism demonstrated its truth and power. Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era represents contemporary Marxism in China. From a methodological perspective, the report of the 20th National Congress of the CPC distilled the worldview and methodology of this thought, emphasizing the principles of self-confidence and self-reliance, problem orientation, systematic thinking, and a global perspective. As the "master key" for studying and solving problems, this scientific worldview and methodology not only provide essential guidelines and practical approaches for advancing Chinese-style modernization in the new era but also offer significant insights for teaching the *Outline* course.

##### 4.1 Upholding Problem Orientation to Strengthen Students' Problem Awareness

General Secretary Xi Jinping stated in the report of the 20th National Congress, "We must uphold a problem-oriented approach. Problems are the voice of the times, and the fundamental task of theory is to answer and guide the resolution of problems" (The Book Editorial Group, 2022, pp. 15–16). Adhering to a problem-oriented approach is a distinctive feature of Marxism and a fine tradition of the CPC, playing a crucial role in addressing practical issues. In a symposium with ideological and political education teachers, Xi Jinping emphasized that teachers must "uphold a problem-oriented approach. The issues that students are curious about or confused about generally fall into a few categories. These issues should be thoroughly dissected, deeply researched, and explained clearly, presenting facts and reasoning step by step" (Central Party History and Literature Research Institute of the CPC, 2020).

The *Outline* course overlaps with secondary school history curricula in terms of historical facts, often reducing students' enthusiasm and interest. Therefore, enhancing problem awareness is critical for effective teaching. While imparting knowledge and guiding values, educators must also prioritize developing students' ability to analyze and resolve problems.

Chinese-style modernization focuses on maximizing human value, ensuring its respect and recognition. It seeks to address contradictions such as the gap between people's growing material and cultural needs and underdeveloped production, as well as the disparity between aspirations for a better life and unbalanced, inadequate development. Fundamentally, Chinese-style modernization is driven by the historical transformation of China's primary social contradictions. Teachers should design thematic units around the central theme of "Chinese-style modernization" in the *Outline* course, constructing a chain of interconnected problems. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the connotations, elements, characteristics, and structure of Chinese-style modernization, helping students deeply understand why it is "Chinese-style", what defines it as "Chinese-style", and how it is implemented as "Chinese-style".

##### 4.2 Upholding Self-Confidence and Self-Reliance to Enhance Students' Inner Drive and Appeal for Cultural Confidence

The history of modern China is a radiant narrative of how the CPC, with a stance of self-confidence and self-reliance, guided the Chinese nation from crises and hardships to the great rejuvenation. The Party united the Chinese people in embracing Marxism and independently realized its Sinicization, producing groundbreaking theoretical achievements. The leadership of the CPC represents the fundamental advantage of Chinese-style modernization. On the new journey toward building a modern socialist country, all Chinese people must continue to uphold self-confidence and self-reliance to better harness the Party's greatest political strength—its leadership.

The core of the methodology of self-confidence and self-reliance lies in unwavering faith in Marxism, confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, with particular emphasis on cultural confidence. The historic mission of national rejuvenation has now fallen on the shoulders of contemporary youth. Therefore, instilling the "Four Confidences" in young students during the *Outline* course is a necessary political attribute of the course.

In the teaching process, educators should organically integrate China's outstanding traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture. On one hand, teachers should help students recognize and understand the developmental trajectory of modern Chinese culture, thereby enhancing their inner drive and appeal for cultural confidence. On the other hand, educators should empower university students to resist the erosion of various erroneous social ideologies.

#### **4.3 Upholding Integrity and Innovation to Enhance Students' Ability to Analyze and Solve Historical Problems Using the Dialectical Materialist View of History**

General Secretary Xi Jinping stated in the report of the 20th National Congress, "We are engaged in a great undertaking unprecedented in human history. Upholding integrity ensures we do not lose direction or make subversive mistakes, while innovation allows us to seize the moment and lead the times" (The Book Editorial Group, 2022, p. 15). Educators should guide young students to deeply understand that the key to the CPC's successful leadership in achieving Chinese-style modernization lies in steadfast adherence to Marxist beliefs while continuously advancing the theoretical innovation of Marxism in its Sinicized form. These innovative theories have provided the intellectual foundation and strategic direction for Chinese-style modernization at various stages.

The Party's leadership in modernization has not followed the Western developmental model; instead, it has successfully expanded and established a unique pathway of Chinese-style modernization. Over the past decade of transformative change, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era has provided a comprehensive strategic framework for Chinese-style modernization. This approach, grounded in the principles of integrity and innovation, has led to remarkable achievements in the modernization efforts of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

In the ongoing journey of national rejuvenation, the CPC will undoubtedly continue to uphold the principles of integrity and innovation, advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation from victory to victory. Within the *Outline* course, improving teaching effectiveness requires continuous reform and innovation in teaching methods and techniques. However, such innovation must avoid superficial tactics aimed solely at engaging students' attention. Instead, it should uphold a rigorous and scientific approach, using the dialectical materialist view of history to analyze and address historical issues. This ensures that students develop a profound and systematic understanding of historical analysis and problem-solving.

#### **4.4 Upholding Systematic Thinking and Leveraging the "Grand Historical Perspective" to Broaden Students' Horizons**

The methodology of systematic thinking provides a significant practical inspiration for teaching the *Outline* course: the effective application of the "grand historical perspective" to enhance teaching outcomes. The grand historical perspective involves examining events or issues within the long trajectory of Chinese history and the broader context of world history to uncover patterns and solve problems. Within the *Outline* course, this teaching method translates into a dual approach: connecting the past and present to analyze the longitudinal historical changes of major events in modern Chinese history, thus deepening and heightening students' critical thinking, and linking China with the world to understand their interactions, thereby broadening students' intellectual scope.

General Secretary Xi Jinping consistently employs the grand historical perspective to interpret "Chinese-style modernization", integrating the past, present, and future, as well as the interconnection between China and the world. This approach helps students grasp why China has chosen a modernization path distinct from the Western model. It breaks the misconception among some students that "modernization equals Westernization" and encourages them to confidently and independently develop a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical innovation and practical value of Chinese-style modernization.

In addition, systematic thinking requires observing phenomena through the lens of universal connections and comprehensive development. Teachers must present the Party as one dedicated not only to seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation but also to advancing global progress and harmony. This broader perspective necessitates incorporating insights from all exemplary civilizations, addressing universal human concerns, fostering the construction of a community with a shared future for humanity, and promoting the creation of a better world.

In summary, the theory of Chinese-style modernization should serve as the central thread in teaching the *Outline* course. This requires adjusting teaching strategies and emphases, innovating methods and approaches, and improving the quality of instruction. By doing so, educators can help students develop a more historically grounded understanding of Chinese-style modernization. This involves several key points: Firstly, it is about confirming that Chinese-style modernization represents a successful alternative to the traditional Western approach to modernization. Secondly, it entails recognizing the originality and exemplary value of Chinese-style modernization as it represents a new pathway in the history of human civilization. Thirdly, it is crucial to cultivate a high level of historical and cultural awareness to both identify and resist the encroachment of Western modernization, while also supporting the Party's independent creation and expansion of Chinese-style modernization. Lastly, it is about understanding Chinese-style modernization as a model that aims for common prosperity and makes significant contributions to human civilization. Ultimately, the goal is for students to deepen their understanding of Chinese-style modernization through the *Outline* course, integrating their aspirations for self-fulfillment with the dynamic development of Chinese-style modernization.

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