

# On Xi Jinping's Thought Regarding People's Livelihood

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## Abstract

Xi Jinping's thought regarding people's livelihood reflects a new progress made in that of CPC's in the period of completing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects in China. The basic characteristic of Xi's thought regarding people's livelihood show in three aspects. It focuses on the overall layout of the construction of society to improve people's livelihood, it bases on the construction of the rule of law and anti-corruption system to strengthen the people's livelihood, and it holds justice for the people to promote social justice. The maximum theoretical contribution of the Xi Jinping's people's livelihood thought is to discuss the problem of party spirit and people from the social and power structure, then fulfill the best combination of the fundamental interests of the party and the masses of the people.

## Keywords

Xi Jinping, People's Livelihood Thought, The Rule of Law, Communist Party of China

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## 1. Introduction

Ensuring and improving people's wellbeing has become one of the most critical political themes in current China. To improve people's material and cultural lives is the fundamental purpose of reform and opening up and socialist modernization. Such an important principle is also the main point in the thought regarding people's livelihood (TPL henceforward) in the Communist Party of China (CPC). Wan Zhiang 万志昂 (2012) once pointed out that the TPL of the CPC is the sum of the position, views, principles, methods and strategy that CPC has had or ever held when she deal with the problems of people's livelihood in each historical period. After the long historical baptism of revolutionary struggle and socialist construction, the Party's people's TPL also gradually developed and matured.

Since the Eighteenth Party Congress, Xi Jinping has made a series of important speeches on livelihood issues,

paying close attention to, and suggesting new thoughts about, improving people's livelihood on behalf of the Party's new session of leadership. It marks new momentum in the development of the Party's TPL and breakthroughs in the period of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. This change resulted from the social new demand for people's livelihood and changes of eras. In general, Xi Jinping's TPL has not yet formed a macro and clear framework, but the new trends of his thought has been on the horizon.

All Xi Jinping's thoughts are conducted under the background of the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Undoubtedly, the theory system is the theoretical guide for the ruling ideology of Xi Jinping (Hong Xianghua, 2013). Therefore, Xi Jinping's TPL is still along the arrangement of the strategic target of completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects of the Eighteenth Party Congress. Generally speaking, Xi Jinping put forward creatively many constructive ideas from the angle of improving people's livelihood and strengthening the construction of modernization social governance system. These thoughts originated from the think of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and yet, they enrich the system of the Party's TPL at the same time. I think, several deployments or tasks which were put forward by the Eighteenth Party Congress are some political premises or stipulations to Xi Jinping. For example, "improving people's livelihood is the key of social construction"; "the rule of law is the essential requirement and important guarantee for upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics". Xi Jinping's theoretical innovation in people's livelihood doesn't deviate from the frame above on the whole. However, He has made many new achievements by virtue of his personal charms and determination. Furthermore, he has also given Chinese politics many new elements and signs.

## 2. The Basic Contents of Xi Jinping's TPL

### 2.1. The Iron Hand of Anti-Corruption

To emphasize development people's livelihood in the process of the construction of rule of law is the important content of the thought of Xi Jinping. Since Xi Jinping was elected as General Secretary of central committee of CPC in 2012, He attached great importance to the role of protection of the Constitution and law in improving people's livelihood. He said that we should give greater scope to the important role of the rule of law plays in the country's governance and in social management, uphold the unity, sanctity and authority of the country's legal system and ensure that the people enjoy extensive rights and freedoms as prescribed by law, such as the citizen's personal rights, property rights, basic political rights and other rights<sup>1</sup>. In his view, striving to maintain the fundamental interests of the most people and safeguard their pursuit of a better life is his bounden duty. That is to say, there will not be a just social order without a good legal environment, then will not have no good life of people.

Over the past two years, the obvious effect of the education-practice operation of party's mass line and anti-corruption activities had a closely relationship with comrades Xi's concept of the rule of law. It is very clearly that Xi Jinping advocates that state should use the system as a means of punishing the corruption. He said that we must maintain a tough position in cracking down on corruption at all times, conduct thorough investigations into major corruption cases and work hard to resolve problems of corruption that directly affect the people<sup>2</sup>. All those who violate the Party discipline and state laws, whoever they are and whatever power or official positions they have, must be brought to justice without mercy. The case of Zhou Yongkang is just a typical example. What he wants to do maybe describe as both "the tigers" and "the flies" should all be eradicated. He contends that we should deepen reform of key areas and crucial links, improve the system of anti-corruption laws, prevent and manage risks to clean government, prevent and fight corruption more effectively and in a more scientific way. One of his famous words is that "throw the power into the cage of system"<sup>3</sup>. The anti-corruption campaign which was launched by Xi Jinping has become a focus of the Chinese politic ruling in new period. As the director of John Thornton China center of American Brookings Institution Li Cheng pointed out, "Xi Jinping has dominated the largest scale and the highest level of anti-corruption movement in the history of the Communist

<sup>1</sup>Xi Jinping, "Zai Shoudu Ge Jie Jinian Xian Xing Xianfa Gongbu Shishi 30 Zhounian Dahui Shang de Jianghua" 在首都各界纪念现行宪法公布实施 30 周年大会上的讲话. December 4, 2012.

<sup>2</sup>Xi Jinping, Zai Renmin Ri Bao "Zhuanjia Xueze Dui E Zhi Gong Kuan Chi He De Fenxi He Jianyi" Deng Cailiao Shang De PiShi 在人民日报《专家学者对遏制公款吃喝的分析和建议》等材料上的批示. February 22, 2013.

<sup>3</sup>Xi Jinping, "Zai Di Shiba Jie Zhongyang Jilü Jiancha Weiyuanhui Di Er Ci Quantü Huiyi Shang de jianghua" 在第十八届中央纪律检查委员会第二次全体会议上的讲话. January 22, 2013.

Party of China.” (Li Cheng, 2014). As is well known, the universal appreciation in Chinese people is inseparable to Xi Jinping’s ruling with his iron anti-corruption.

## 2.2. Improve People’s Livelihood in Maintaining Stability and Human Rights

Xi Jinping treats the dialectical relationship between social governance and improving people’s livelihood from global social construction in a commanding height. Xi Jinping stressed, maintaining social stability is the basic task of the political-legal work, maintaining stability contains numerous realized conditions on people’s livelihood benefits. He said, “The maintenance of rights is the basis of maintaining stability, and rights is the essence of keeping stability.” So, President Xi demands to strengthen the legal authority in resolving the contradictions of society and perfect a series of systems in safeguarding the vital interests of the masses. And what’s more, Xi Jinping suggested that China should solute the reasonable and legal demands of the masses’ interests well, then, the masses would feel sincerely their rights were treated fairly and their interests were protected effectively. In the other hand, comrade Xi also highly concerned about people’s livelihood benefit in risk-assessment before political decision. He stressed, “Before a major decision is formed, we should listen to the opinions and advice of the masses fully and show much consideration for the bearing capacity of the masses.”<sup>4</sup>

There are some experts using a metaphorical expression called “velvet glove” to describe Xi Jinping’s governing style which looked durable and calm externally while so resolute internally (Han Qingxiang, 2013). This comment is really just perfect. When he visits and investigates the masses, he seems quite amiable and easy to be approached. But when he deals with such problems as national sovereignty, opposition corruption, etc., he could become serious even tough instantly.

## 2.3. “Justice for the People” to Promote Social Justice

Xi Jinping thinks highly of the fairness and justice value of law reflected by the judicial work. So, solving the deep-seated problems which influence judicial justice or capacity is an important aspect of Xi Jinping’s TPL. He emphasized on the principle of people in judicial work and pointed out that the basic goal of political and legal work is to secure people’s leading a peace and happy life. In the process of law enforcement, Xi Jinping emphasizes that judicial justice is the last line of defense to maintain social fairness and justice. He put forward four “will not” to policemen and judicial cadres—“will not be allowed to ignore the alarms of the masses, will not be allowed to make the ordinary people can not afford to fight the lawsuit, will must not be allowed to abuse power infringing upon the lawful rights and interests of the masses, will must not be allowed to make miscarriage of justice.”<sup>5</sup>

## 3. An Analysis of Xi Jinping’s TPL from a Comparative Perspective

### 3.1. The Characteristics of Xi Jinping’s TPL

Xi Jinping is the first supreme leader of Chinese Communist Party who improves the people’s wellbeing based on guaranteeing human rights and social justice. He diverts people’s attention from the material-meeting to the social equality and constraints of the law in the course of improving people’s livelihood. Although this thinking can not come out without the good foundation such as economic, cultural development which has been laid by the former leaders, Without doubt, Xi Jinping is one of the country’s Supreme leaders who reflects the interests of the people most seriously from the social structure and power structure. He has not only realized the urgency on the punishment of corruption to establish public confidence currently in social justice, but also has known what are the people most concern and worry about. He has clearly foreseen that after the food and clothing problem have been solved, what most Chinese people consider more is the establishment of an equal social justice and how to maintain and realize the rights of people and their development. This is a long process, but we must do it now. Xi knows the law of improving the people’s wellbeing, and he knows more about the need of Chinese people and the inevitable trend of development of Chinese society. This is one of his most praiseworthy qualities. Therefore, the major decision of the rule of law based on the deep thinking on the management system of state and society will force Chinese to face significant risks of “deep-water area of reform”. But at the same

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<sup>4</sup>Xi Jinping, “Zai Dang De Shiba Jie Yi Zhong Quanhui Shang de jianghua” 在党的十八届一中全会上的讲话. November 15, 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Xi Jinping, “Zai Zhongyang Zheng Fa Gongzuo Huiyi Shang de Jianghua” 在中央政法工作会议上的讲话. January 7, 2014.

time, it will also be an important point of Chinese political system reform or an important achievements of the new administration led by Xi Jinping.

Because of various reasons, the reform of the political system has been an extremely sensitive link for CPC. So far, no one shows such irresistible courage in Chinese political circles like Xi Jinping in official rectification and promoting reform which was aware of in official documents but not carried out in practice. However, relying on the great courage as he said “Blacksmith should also have his strong”, Xi Jinping dared to break the habit to improve the rule of law to an unknown height. The modernized national governance system is based on the rule of law, which emphasizes on the reasonable allocation for public power and control by the law. Xi Jinping attaches great importance to improving the ability of deepening reform, promoting development, resolving conflicts and maintaining stability for leading cadres application the thinking and the way of the rule of law. He ever pointed out, “the foundation of the constitution is the people’s support from the bottom of their hearts, and the soul of the constitution is people’s genuine belief. Only if citizens have been granted extensive rights and freedom according to the law, the constitution could win persistent belief from the people and melt into the masses of the people.”<sup>6</sup> As for it, Xi Jinping emphasizes the important position of the people from the angle of constitution implementation, which shows his political wisdom on ensuring people’s livelihood.

### 3.2. Comparative Analysis of Xi Jinping’s Thoughts with Those of Other Leaders of China

Mao Zedong’s thought on people’s livelihood is mainly reflected in the political and military means to secure the people’s wellbeing. During the period of the new democratic revolution, the Party’s people’s TPL was generated in the hard and bitter war. At this stage, the CPC formed a TPL based on the farmers and utilizing the Agrarian Revolution as the method. Generally speaking, in the new democratic revolution period, the overall framework of the CPC’s TPL represented by Mao Zedong aimed at abolishing a series of institutional barriers of imperialism and feudalism under the guidance of ideas of national independence and people’s emancipation. The main goal was to guarantee the fundamental position of the people as masters of their country. Unfortunately, after the founding of new China, the situation became obscured instantly in that the new regime didn’t know how to tackle with such a contradiction that they attached a great importance to people’s livelihood and the development of productivity while damaged the productivity construction and people’s wellbeing as well at the meantime. However, the TPL of the CPC at this stage was still making its way for the established objectives factually along with the idea of how to develop the productive forces and how to carry out the construction of people’s livelihood.

Deng Xiaoping’s concern especially in the field of people’s livelihood was to develop the economy. After the Third Plenary Session of the eleventh central committee of the Chinese Communist Party, The governing theory of China has entered a new stage of development. Bring order out of chaos politically made the economic construction of China show a vigorous vitality. In the process of the socialist modernization, Deng Xiaoping put forward many insightful thoughts about people’s livelihood which indicated his inheritance creatively and development of Mao Zedong’s TPL. Deng depended on the ideas of “putting our heart and soul into serving the people” and the liberation of productive forces, around the basic theoretical question of “what is socialism” and “how to build socialism”, he put forward a series of new thoughts on people’s livelihood boldly such as “the development is the hard truth”, “achieving common prosperity”, “three favorable standards” important thoughts, etc. (Deng Xiaoping, 1993). The concept of CPC’s people’s livelihood in this period mainly embodied the influence of the economic determinism of the Marx’s doctrine.

Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao threw their more unremitting efforts in the cultural and ecological field of people’s livelihood. Comrade Deng Xiaoping’s TPL had some regret in a certain extent. The main performance for the party policy was ready to focus on the economic construction more instinctively, so, ignored the social construction to a certain extent, leading to the social development obviously lagged behind the economic development. Therefore, after a period of time of the reform and opening up, the backlog of social contradictions in China became the necessary condition and objective environment that Comrade Jiang Zemin must face to. Jiang Zemin’s TPL is an important embodiment of the “Three Represents” in theory level. Comrade Jiang based on the people’s livelihood, to maintain social stability and harmony of all kinds of contradictions as above pointed, adhered to the belief of “always represent the fundamental interests of Chinese people” and “benefit the people”.

<sup>6</sup>Xi Jinping, “Zai Shoudou Ge Jie Jinian Xian Xing Xianfa Gongbu Shishi 30 Zhounian Dahui Shang de Jianghua” 在首都各界纪念现行宪法公布实施 30 周年大会上的讲话. December 4, 2012.

Among these outlooks, his typical thoughts are “priority education theory”, “the employment theory”, “society security and welfare theory” (Yu Huiying, 2012). Hu Jintao’s TPL embodied mentally in the report of 17th National Congress of CPC. In this report, Hu Jintao expressed many measures about people’s livelihood concretely such as the establishment of a social security system, ensuring the fairness of education, solving the difficulties of the masses of employment and maintaining social stability thoughts, etc. It is worth mentioning that both of them had attached great importance to the field of culture and ecological environment of the people’s livelihood, it is a new attention of the CPC since Deng Xiaoping.

From a comparative perspective, these several leaders’ standpoints and views of China regarding people’s livelihood are of equal importance. They are all the appropriate reaction to meeting the needs of the times which were made to improve the livelihood of the people in the specific historical period. Their thinking and the measures of solving such problems had not been deviated from the nature and purpose of the CPC, had not been deviated from the political principle of relying on the people and serving the people invariably. If you find out that some divergences between them, I will say that they are mainly just the extent and areas which had been involved to the problem are different. There is no doubt that the four leaders’ focuses on dealing with the people’s livelihood are different. The focus of Mao Zedong period in people’s livelihood was to liberate people. This focus mainly required political means such as revolution. For this reason, the change of production relations was advocated then. Deng Xiaoping’s biggest contribution to people’s livelihood is that he has finished transforming the Party’s perspective about people’s livelihood, and he has made the material guarantee of people’s livelihood improved to a very pragmatic and realistic height. Jiang Zemin further developed the concept of people’s livelihood, by means of the important thought of the “Three Represents”, which discussed the philosophical basis of the Party’s concept of the people’s livelihood. Hu Jintao focused on the improvement of people’s livelihood. This improvement should cover every angle of people’s livelihood. But in any case, Xi Jinping’s TPL is the closest to the original meaning to the people’s livelihood, because this view about people’s livelihood really suggests an institutional-pursuit of people’s happiness. It is really a kind of fairness system relying on the ultimate guarantee of social justice. However, this order can only be established through the rule of law. Therefore, the author believes that Xi Jinping’s TPL is the most closest to the fundamental meaning of the livelihood issues.

#### 4. The Theoretical Contribution

Xi Jinping’s TPL is not only related closely to the rule of law, but also stresses the unity between the ruling principle of the party and the interests of the people, that is the unity of party spirit and people in other words. As he made the principle of the party’s purpose and its interests combined skillfully, I think he was successful in raising the people’s livelihood theory of contemporary China to a new height. On August 19, 2013, Xi Jinping made an important speech on the national meeting on propaganda and ideological work. He expounded profoundly a series of major theoretical and practical issues which are relevant with the long-term development of the propaganda and ideological work in term of the overall interests of the party and state. Xi Jinping emphasized, the economic construction is the central task of the party, while ideological work is an extremely important work of the party. As for the ideological work, he stressed, “The unity of party spirit and affinity to the people is always consistent. Adhere to the party spirit, the core is to insist on the correct political orientation, standing firmly the political position, publicizing the party’s theory and policies, resolutely maintaining conformity with the center committee of party and firmly safeguard its authority. For sticking to people, We should bring as much benefit as possible to the people, resolve as many difficulties as possible for them, and solve the most pressing and real problems of the greatest concern to them. Above all, should establish a people-oriented work orientation.”<sup>7</sup> What he said last year showed that Chinese ruling party has abandoned the concept that the supremacy of the interests of the state is always prior to the people which was formed during the period of revolutionary ideology.

Such important principle which was put forward by Xi Jinping above is not only the obvious feature of his concept of the people’s livelihood, but an outstanding contributions to the people’s livelihood thought of the CPC. Party spirit is the position which can not be given up throughout for Chinese ruling party, however, safeguarding the people’s interests is also her fundamental political aim. They are identical in essence. So, this principle reveals the basic direction of future governance of the CPC and a fundamental attitude to treating the issue

<sup>7</sup>Xi Jinping, “Zai Quanguo Xuanchuan Si Xiang Gongzuo Huiyi Shang de Jianghua” 在全国宣传思想工作会议上的讲话. August 19, 2013.

of people's livelihood. Undoubtedly, it will make it become more and more clear and easy to distinguish in Chinese reform goal and striving direction.

## 5. Conclusion

Xi Jinping's TPL contains profound legal thinking which enriched and developed Marx's law ideas. Because Confucian thought was the orthodox ideas in ancient China, the involvement of the legalist thought was rather limited. But the successive CPC leaders had to highlight the theme on the people's livelihood because of the specific historical conditions or the times task. Therefore, the key areas to guarantee people's livelihood were different in various historical stages. Nowadays, comrade Xi Jinping improves people's livelihood focus in the construction of rule of law. This is the first time that the CPC leaders associate the people's livelihood and law problem so closely, so it is a significant enrichment and development for Marx's theory of law.

Finally, it is necessary to add chairman's cognition about the process of the improvement of people's livelihood. Since the reform and opening up, China's livelihood status has been greatly improved. However, people's demand is a developing process from the low level to the high level. With the development of economic and society, the connotation of people's livelihood will become more abundant, so does its extension. Therefore, as Xi Jinping pointed out, improving people's livelihood is a dynamic process step by step. When he investigated in Tianjin, he said, "The people's livelihood construction is an investment with high return. If we strived, we will recover the masses' recognition and support to the development which brought about the harmonious relationship between cadres and the masses. So improving people's livelihood is a long-term work; it hasn't any destination, only continuous new starting points." (Xinhua net, 2013).

The Eighteen Session of the Fourth Plenary Congress, closed on October 23rd in 2014, considered and adopted "the decision of several major issues of the CPC Central Committee on the comprehensive promotion of the rule of law". It put forward the guiding ideology of comprehensive promotion of the rule of law, overall objectives and basic principles. The meeting depicted a new roadmap for the construction of a country under the rule of law. The results of this meeting marked the level of understanding of the CPC's scientific management to modernization countries has reached a new level; it is also an important manifestation of Xi Jinping's thoughts regarding the law as well. It is not only beneficial to solve all kinds of key problems which China's reform faces currently, but also embodies the earnest expectations of whole Party and people in beliefs in law, social justice and happiness of people's livelihood.

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