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Abstract

The major speeches that Xi Jinping has delivered since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) provide an in-depth analysis of important theoretical and practical issues concerning all aspects of Party and State development. When it comes to how to comprehensively deepen reform, Xi has continued to develop the political theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics, offering many new thoughts about the great significance, guiding thought, overall objective, basic principles, and main tasks of and approaches to deepening political structural reform. These thoughts serve as an important guide to deepening political structural reform in this new situation.

Keywords: *political reform, structural reform, politics and public administration, governance capacity, socialism, political guarantee, social development.*

I. Deepening Political Structural Reform: a Historical Inevitability

Xi Jinping has discussed on several occasions, including the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the necessity and importance of upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics and deepening political structural reform, referring to it as a historical inevitability. He has three main reasons for this.

First, deepening political structural reform is something that was decided on following a review of the experience of the international communist movement and the lessons learned therein. Xi made a systematic review and examination of the five hundred years of socialism, and expounded the history and development process of socialism with Chinese characteristics as well as the historical inevitability of upholding and developing Chinese-style socialism and deepening political structural reform. Socialism has already undergone a process of almost five hundred years of development since it first appeared as utopian socialism, although it was not actually put into practice on a significantly large scale until the Soviet Union period. Following the death of Lenin, the Soviet Union established what we generally refer to as the Soviet model. After World War II, this model was regarded as the only model of socialism, and was expanded to Eastern European countries, China and other socialist countries. Although this model played a certain historical role under the specific conditions of that time, as economic and social development progressed, many elements of the model, especially its political system, came to reveal more and more serious problems. These included, for example, the lifelong tenure of officials, divorce from the people, bureaucratisation and lack of democracy and rule of law. These problems hindered economic and social development and inflicted staggering setbacks on the world communist movement. A review of the history of socialism shows that an important cause of the drastic changes in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s is that these countries had not established sound governance systems or fostered

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strong governance capacity. China, fortunately, had not adopted a carbon copy of the Soviet model; instead it had begun to independently explore a path of socialist development that is fitting for the Chinese context. Nevertheless, China's political system is derived from the Soviet model and is connected to it in many ways. In order to modernize China's governance system and capacity for governance, we must deepen political structural reform and rid China of the problematic vestiges of the Soviet model.

Second, deepening political structural reform is something that was decided on after reflection on the practical process of the socialist revolution and development in China. The Revolution of 1911 toppled the imperial system that had ruled China for more than two thousand years, instead establishing Asia's first bourgeois republic but it did not bring the democracy and good governance to China that had been envisaged. History has proven that the capitalist system cannot bring effective governance to China. With the founding of the People's Republic of China, the socialist political system was established, thus laying an important foundation for developing a new path for China's governance. There are tremendous advantages to the fundamental and basic political systems of socialism. In the historical process of constantly improving these systems, a series of important positive steps have been made in practice in the political development of contemporary China. This mainly includes considerable progress in the development of democracy and rule of law, the abolition of the lifelong tenure of officials, the incorporation of the need to respect and safeguard human rights into the Constitution, continuous development of community-level democracy and efforts to ensure that deputies to people's congresses are elected based on the same population ratio in both urban and rural areas, the basic completion of the establishment of a system of laws, the consolidation and expansion of the patriotic united front, and so on. These political achievements are helping to bring about rapid economic development and all-round social progress. However, there are still flaws in the current political system, including, for example, the mechanisms for democracy are yet to be improved, the level of the rule of law needs to be increased and bureaucratisation and corruption still exist to some extent. To make the political system of socialism with Chinese characteristics more mature and sustainable in the long term, we should not stay where we are; we must work to constantly rid the political system and mechanisms of their defects.

Third, deepening political structural reform is designed to provide the political guarantee for realizing the *Chinese Dream*. It was stated at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee that in the face of the new situation and new tasks, in order to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and then move on to complete the building of a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious, and realize the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation; we must, at this new historical starting point, comprehensively deepen reform. Xi Jinping's important expositions on the Chinese Dream provide powerful motivation for all Chinese people to reach consensus and work together on the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics. Political structural reform is an important part of comprehensively deepening reform and is crucial for safeguarding and promoting economic and social development. Faced with the new situation and new tasks, in terms of what is necessitated in order to realize the Chinese Dream, when it comes to China's governance system and capacity for governance, there are still many areas that are urgently in need of improving. Therefore, it is essential to deepen political structural reform and modernize political governance in order to provide the political guarantee for realizing the Chinese

Dream.

II. A Sound Theory to Guide the Deepening of Political Structural Reform

Theory is a guide for action. The deepening of political structural reform must be done by following the guidance of sound theory. Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the theoretical guidance for comprehensively deepening reform and political structural reform. It was stated at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee that in comprehensively deepening reform, we must hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics and take Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important thought of Three Represents and the Scientific Outlook on Development as our guide.

In studying Xi's relevant expositions, it becomes clear that first and foremost, we must attach great importance to the role of Marxist theory, especially the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, as the guiding thought for deepening political structural reform. Only by adhering to the guiding thought provided by sound theory will we be able to attain a thorough and accurate understanding of the natural laws behind the governance of the CPC, the development of socialism, and the progress of human society; maintain unfaltering confidence in our ideals and convictions; and, in spite of the complicated situation we are in, carry socialism with Chinese characteristics forward. In deepening political structural reform, we must promote the Chinese spirit. The Chinese spirit is the spirit of the nation, at the heart of which is patriotism; the spirit of the times, at the heart of which is reform and innovation; and the spirit of science, the sine qua non of which is seeking truth from facts. The Chinese spirit is the force from within, which will ensure that political structural reform progresses steadily.

Second, we should remain confident in the political system of socialism with Chinese characteristics by following the guidance of a sound theory. By nature, deepening political structural reform is a case of self-improvement and development of the socialist political system. Its nature is determined by the nature of Chinese socialism; and this is something we must be principled in our approach to and, have firm confidence in. There is a bottom line for our political structural reform: we cannot stick to the Soviet model, and it is absolutely out of the question that we should copy a Western political model.

Third, we should stay confident in the path of political development of socialism with Chinese characteristics by following the guidance of a sound theory. In deepening political structural reform, we must keep to the correct path. We must uphold socialism with Chinese characteristics. Just as Xi put it, "Only the wearer knows whether or not his shoes fit." Only the people of a country are the ones in the best position to say whether a development path suits their country. We must base what we do on Marxist theory, especially the world view, values, and political outlook of the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics, remaining committed to the development path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

III. Objective of Deepening Political Structural Reform

According to the Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on Certain Major Issues concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reform adopted at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, the overall objective of comprehensively deepening reform is to *"improve and develop the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and modernize China's*

governance system and capacity for governance.” Xi Jinping gave an illuminating explanation of this overall objective at the session. Given the overall objective of comprehensively deepening reform, the objective of deepening political structural reform should be to improve and develop the political system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and in so doing, to go on to modernize China’s political governance system and capacity for political governance. The goal of “improving and developing the political system of socialism with Chinese characteristics” tells us the direction in which efforts to deepen political structural reform will be oriented and the political model we have chosen. Just as Xi said, China is a large country, so it absolutely cannot make catastrophic mistakes on fundamental issues, and its basic principles and fundamental orientation cannot be changed. At the same time, the goal of “modernizing China’s governance system and capacity for governance” points to the need to make China’s political system and its implementation more democratic, effective, and law-based. This means it is necessary to strengthen the dynamism of the Party and the State, stimulate the initiative of the people, expand socialist democracy, step up efforts to build China into a rule of law country, and promote socialist political progress. We must ensure that the Party constantly improves its capacity for effective, democratic, and law-based governance, that government offices keep improving their ability to perform their functions, and that the people become better able to manage state affairs, economic and social affairs, and their own affairs in accordance with the law. We need to do our best to establish a complete set of political institutions that are well-designed, standardized, and efficient by 2020 so that our political institutions are more mature and better defined.

IV. Fundamental Principle of Deepening Political Structural Reform

Xi Jinping has stressed that the fundamental principle of deepening political structural reform is to *“deepen political structural reform with a focus on integrating leadership by the Party, the position of the people as masters of the country, and the law-based governance of the country.”* This means three points should be borne in mind in deepening political structural reform.

First, upholding leadership by the CPC is a prerequisite for deepening of mentioned reform and a fundamental guarantee for the position of the people as masters of the country and the law-based governance of the country, because the CPC is core force leading the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics forward. Deepening of this reform is to strengthen the Party’s leadership and improve its governance capacity, and to consolidate its position as the Party in power. Without this, there would be no way of genuinely achieving the next important points.

Second, ensuring that the people are the masters of the country is both the starting point and the goal of deepening this reform because this is what, by nature, socialist democracy must work on to achieve, and is also the value orientation of leadership by the Party and the law-based governance of the country.

Third, the rule of law is the basic means that the Party leads the people to governing the country. With a law-based governance of the country as its theme, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee stressed that law-based governance is an essential requisite and an important guarantee for upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, as well as a natural element for modernizing the country’s governance system and capacity. It has an important bearing on the efforts of our Party to govern and rejuvenate the country, the wellbeing of the people, and the lasting stability of the Party and the country. The law-based governance of the country provides a guarantee through law not only for the

position of the people as the masters of the country but also for the position of the CPC as the Party in power in China.

In addition to upholding the fundamental principle of integrating these three factors in deepening political structural reform, it is also essential to stick to a number of other basic principles. Political structural reform is an open reform and should actively look to learn from all human political achievements. The reform should be conducive to improving the productive forces and the people's standards of living. It should help maintain China's territorial integrity and should be in the interests of the Chinese nation as a whole. In a word, political structural reform should be conducive to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

V. Clearly Defined Tasks of Deepening Political Structural Reform

The Party Central Committee with Xi Jinping as General Secretary has, on the basis of the reality of the Chinese context and a firm grasp of the pulse of the times, set forth the following main tasks of deepening political structural reform:

First, it is necessary to uphold and improve China's fundamental political system and its basic political institutions. That means, for the fundamental purpose of ensuring that the people are the masters of the country, it is essential to uphold and improve the system of people's congresses, the system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, the system of regional ethnic self-governance, and the community-level self-governance system; and pay more attention to improving the democratic system and enrich the forms of democracy.

Second, it is necessary to build China into a rule of law country. In the face of the new situation and these new tasks, it is necessary to make better use of this important period of strategic opportunities for China's development, and do better in bringing together all the energies of society, balancing interests in society, coordinating social relations, and standardizing social behaviour, so that as Chinese society is undergoing profound changes it is both full of life and vibrancy and in good order. We must ensure the rule of law plays a greater role in leading and standardizing our practices, uphold the highest authority of the Constitution and other laws, and deepen structural reform in administrative enforcement of law as well as judicial structural reform.

Third, it is essential to transform government functions more quickly. Earnest efforts should be made to transform government functions, deepen administrative reform, introduce innovations in government administration, and improve the creditability and executive capabilities of the government. The main ideas connoted by "a service-oriented government" are that the government has well-defined functions, is well-structured, is clean and efficient, and enjoys the support of the public. The main function of a service-oriented government is to provide the public with public goods and services and ensure that all the people benefit more from the fruits of development by sharing the benefits derived more equitably. A rule of law government is a government that carries out law-based governance of itself and society. A rule of law government must observe the fundamental principle of following the Constitution and other laws in its work, and in terms of government behaviour, it must carry out government administration based on the law.

Fourth, it is necessary to strengthen the system of oversight and control over the exercise of power. Xi Jinping stresses the need to have a zero-tolerance attitude towards corruption and

fight embezzlement and corruption whenever they arise, remain committed to both fighting “tigers” and swatting “flies,” encourage public oversight over the exercise of power, ensure that the exercise of power is transparent, and make the mechanisms for monitoring and coordinating power more effective.

Fifth, it is imperative to strengthen and improve leadership by the Party. We must deepen reform of the Party building system with a focus on making the exercise of power more effective, democratic, and law-based. Starting with a fight against formalism, bureaucratisation, hedonism, and extravagance, we should improve the system for regularly refining conduct, and accelerate the development of systems and mechanisms in order to provide a political guarantee for success in reform and opening up and socialist modernization.

Deepening political structural reform relates to the future of the country, the destiny of the nation, and the wellbeing of the people, and has far-reaching ramifications. It therefore leaves no room for error and it requires an effective approach. Xi Jinping has made a number of important expositions on how we should approach comprehensive reform, which includes political structural reform. Some of the important points made are: (1) We need to strengthen the integration of top-level design and “crossing the river by feeling the stones.”; (2) We need to encourage the mutual reinforcement of overall progress and breakthroughs in key areas; (3) We need to make reform measures more systemic, more holistic and better coordinated, and ensure that political structural reform and economic, cultural, social and ecological structural reforms fit together; (4) In deepening political structural reform, we need to balance the relationships between reform, development, and stability and remain dedicated to balancing the intensity of reform and the pace of development with people’s ability to tolerate changes; and (5) We need to deepen political structural reform while ensuring social stability, promote social stability and development by deepening political structural reform, and deepen reform systematically in an orderly manner. Xi’s expositions on approaches to comprehensively deepening reform and deepening political structural reform are filled with the wisdom of dialectical and historical materialism.

VI. General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Major Expositions on Deepening Political

Structural Reform: a Continuation and Development of the Political Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

General Secretary Xi Jinping’s major expositions on deepening political structural reform continue and develop the political theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics and constitute the latest achievements in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context. The main achievements are as follows:

First, he approaches and discusses the necessity and importance of political structural reform from the perspective of the natural laws of historical development. Since reform and opening up began, the CPC has always attached importance to political structural reform. Deng Xiaoping once said, “*The success of all our other reforms depends on the success of political structural reform. Without political structural reform, economic structural reform cannot succeed, because the first obstacle to be overcome is people’s resistance.*” Xi has expounded on this major issue from the perspective of the natural laws of historical development and the development of socialism over the past five hundred years. He has stated that history, present and future are well connected and that, in order to implement the major plan worked

out at the Party's 18th National Congress, it is necessary to carefully review and summarize the experience gained in reform and opening up, develop a deeper understanding of the historical inevitability of reform and opening up, show greater initiative in trying to grasp the natural laws of reform and opening up, and become more determined to shoulder the great responsibility of deepening reform and opening up.

Second, Xi is the first in the history of the development of Marxism to propose modernizing the state's governance system and capacity for governance. Zhou En Lai announced four modernization goals at a session of the Third National People's Congress, which included the goals of modernizing China's industry, agriculture, national defence, and science and technology. Xi, however, has gone further to elaborate on the great significance and basic meaning of modernizing the country's governance system and capacity for governance. This is something that is a first in the history of the development of Marxism and answers, in the context of China and the present day, the question of how a socialist society should be governed. Xi has made it clear that in the context of socialism with Chinese characteristics the "governance of the country" means that the CPC leads the people in the governance of China. The country's governance system mainly refers to the country's system of institutions while the country's governance capacity mainly refers to the actual ability to use the systems and institutions to govern the country.

Third, Xi has offered new insights for developing and improving the political system. For example, it was clearly stated at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee that *"we need to promote the extensive, multi-level, and institutionalized development of deliberative democracy"* and that the objective of developing a system of deliberative democracy is to *"create a system of deliberative democracy with reasonable procedures and sound links."* This is a development of the thinking on the system of political consultation.

Fourth, Xi has offered a new perspective on government functions. He stated at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee that the problem at the heart of reform is how to properly handle the relationship between the government and the market to ensure that the market plays the decisive role in allocating resources and that the government plays a better role. This is a major theoretical innovation not only because this was the first time the statement that "the market plays the decisive role in allocating resources" was made but also because a new statement was made about government functions. Previously it had been stressed that the government should mainly assume the functions of exercising macroeconomic regulation, supervising and overseeing the market, offering public services, and managing society. Now, not only has the function of environmental protection been added to this, but the different functions of the central government and the local governments have been clearly delineated. It was stated that the central government's function of exercising macroeconomic regulation would be strengthened, while the functions of the local governments of offering public services, supervising and overseeing the market, managing society, and protecting the environment would also be strengthened.

Fifth, Xi has come up with the new thinking of "building China into a rule of law country." Since reform and opening up began, the Party has gradually established the concept of law-based governance of the country. On the basis of this, Xi has gone further to propose "building China into a rule of law country" and has summarized this thinking as *"making coordinated efforts to simultaneously develop the law-based governance of the country, the law-based exercise of state power, and the law-based administration of government; and adopting a holistic*

approach to the development of a rule of law country, a rule of law government, and a rule of law society.” The adoption of the theme of the “law-based governance of China” at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee was a first in the history of the CPC.

Sixth, Xi elucidated on how to strengthen oversight and control systems over the exercise of power. The CPC has always attached great importance to combatting corruption and practicing integrity. Mao Zedong once discussed with a democrat how China could break out of a political cycle of rise and fall. Xi Jinping has carried forward and developed this tradition by coming up with new thinking on using institutional means to check power, manage affairs and administer personnel; encouraging public oversight over the exercise of power; confining the exercise of power to an institutional cage; and introducing innovations in the system for combating corruption and upholding integrity with a focus on institution building.

The academies of governance throughout the country should play an important role in upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics and deepening political structural reform. These academies are China’s main providers of training for civil servants, important centres for research on public administration theory and innovation in government administration, and think-tanks for Chinese policymakers to consult. Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the work of academies of governance. During his visit to the Chinese Academy of Governance, he gave a number of important instructions regarding how to develop the academies of governance. In the face of this situation and these tasks, these academies must carefully study and implement the guiding principles from Xi’s major speeches and make their due contributions to comprehensively deepening reform, part of which is political structural reform.

First, in our work providing instruction and training for civil servants, we need to apply ourselves to including the guiding principles from Xi’s speeches in our textbooks, bring them into our classrooms, and make them a way of thinking for our students. We need to make sure our students better understand the substance of these principles, really digest them, and put them into action in order to improve their political ability.

Second, we need to step up effective research on deepening political structural reform. Academies of governance offer a complete set of subjects on political science, have strong research and teaching staff, and enjoy favourable conditions presented by their exchanges with Chinese and foreign counterparts. These academies need to put into full play their own advantages and characteristics and produce a number of weighty and high-level research results.

Third, we need to do better in offering advice on deepening political structural reform. Academies of governance need to focus on research in strategies, policies and countermeasures regarding the sensitive, thorny and key problems in administrative and political structural reforms, reach their full potential as think tanks, and provide powerful advisory and intellectual support for policymaking on reform. Political structural reform is an important part of efforts to comprehensively deepening reform. Deepening political structural reform and modernizing the governance of China is to help provide a strong political guarantee and support for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.