

Brief Discussion on Discourse System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

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Abstract

The 18th National Congress Report requested “We have to keep our resolve to arm the whole Communist Party of China and educate our people with the theoretical system of the socialism with Chinese characteristics”, and, especially “We have to promote the theoretical system of the socialism with Chinese characteristics to enter the teaching material, the classroom and the brain of students”. This proposes new requirements for discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Apprehension of the spirit of the 18th National Congress and establishment of “confidence in path, confidence in theory and confidence in system” from cognition to identification can’t go without the explanatory power and persuasion power of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. From its descending to an instrument for publicity to its role as expression of social multiple interests and from its monologue to its dialogue, only if discourse system continuously responds to reality, can it strengthen appealing and cohesion force of socialism with Chinese characteristics and can it firmly grasp hegemony and dominant right of ideology work.

Keywords: Chinese characteristics, discourse system, ideology

Language is the material shell of thinking, and, that is to say, it is the carrier of theoretical expression of an idea. It can be said, the outcome of human being using linguistic signs for thinking and expressing an idea is discourse. As an outcome of language and speech, “discourse” originates from the need of practice. The so-called “discourse system” is an outcome of continuous systematization, standardization and profitability of “discourse” that is generated by continuously deepening of human practice and knowledge. The discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics was born out of Chinese practice and what it states is Chinese events and what it expresses is Chinese appeal.

1. Connotation of the Discourse System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Generally speaking, the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the discourse system of the contemporary Marxism ideology. The discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the discourse mode and discourse system of the latest achievement of sinicization of Marxism and is multiple-level discourse system that integrates practical innovation, theoretical innovation and institutional innovation of socialism with Chinese characteristics into a whole. Its specific content contains the following several aspects.

Foundation of formation: sinicization, modernization and popularization of Marxism. Theory of Marxism is broad and profound and its formation and development naturally is impossible without language and its dissemination also needs language. Without doubt, first of all, sinicization, modernization and popularization of Marxism have the language dimensionality. Language carries thought and theory to form discourse system and the thought and theory established by Marx and Engels naturally contains discourse system which, after continuous transition in innovation of practice and theory, becomes the contemporary dominant discourse system of Marxism. As the latest achievement of sinicization of Marxism, the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics was formed and developed in the process of sinicization of Marxism. This is also the basis for formation of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and also the motive for its construction and development.

Essence and soul: dominant socialism ideology in China. Formation and application of a set of discourse system comes from practice and is applied into theoretical speech, which, without exception, has its standardization and legal defense. The essence and soul of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics lies in its governing of ideology. The 17th National Congress Report requested, "We have to strengthen the appealing and cohesion power of socialism ideology"; the 18th National Congress Report emphasized, "We have to firmly grasp the hegemony and dominant right of ideology work, persist in correct orientation, improve the guiding competence and expand the mainstream public opinions of thinking." Thus, it can be found that, the Communist Party of China have, all along, attached great importance to the ideology work, while formation and application of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics can well facilitate this work. Vitality of the discourse system derives from its capacity of explanation and persuasion, which is why the discourse system has to possess the right to speak in order to occupy a dominant position. The discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is to brand the discourse system of Marxism with "the mark of China": Chinese discourse system, discourse system with Chinese characteristics, socialism discourse system and discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Such a series of concepts, seriously speaking, are distinguished and connected and these distinctions are due to the emphasis degree of ideology and system color.

Function positioning: keeping a foothold in Chinese practice and resolving Chinese issues. To resolve Chinese issues is to answer how to defuse new contradictions and resolve new problems in reform and development practice and respond to the new subjects proposed by the contemporary times and the doubts held by the western world in Chinese path and Chinese system so as to continuously consolidate the leading position of Marxism ideology. It was pointed out at the 18th National Congress Report that, “The path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics are the fundamental achievements struggled, created and accumulated by the Communist Party of China and the people for more than nine decades, so we have to cherish them more, persistently adhere to them and continuously develop them.” This embodies the accurate positioning of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. That is, the discourse system provides a powerful carrier for expression of thought and theory and the discourse system is of more explanatory power and persuasion power with thought and theory as the support. Innovation of practice, innovation of theory and innovation of system will inevitably mobilize adjustment of the discourse system relevant with them. All new statements, new ideas and new conclusions proposed at the 18th National Congress Report embody continuous updating and adjustment of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, such as, the comprehensive well-off society from “establishment” to “completion”, the overall pattern from “Four in one” to “Five in one”, it is proposed for the first time that “per capita income of urban and rural residents” will be doubled within ten years and it is emphasized that “fairer development achievements” will benefit the people, etc.

Expression pattern: expression pattern of Chinese excellent culture and linguistic form that Chinese people are delighted to hear and see. Discourse conveys thought and at the time when thought and theory gives discourse system “what to say”, it also requests the discourse system to “how to say it”. What discourse system itself embodies are language art, cultural intelligence and value appealing. The reason why the discourse system with Chinese characteristics, Chinese style and Chinese manner can turn to be the mainstream discourse is that its expression must be rooted in excellent Chinese traditional culture and is based on the fact that people are delighted to see and hear it and that people comprehend and approve it.

2. The Contemporary Circumstance of the Discourse System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Generally speaking, throughout more than 30 years since the reform and opening up in China, China economy (especially such economic measurement index as GDP) has remained at a stable and relatively high growth speed. It was revealed by the Chinese official data that Chinese GDP in 2011 attained 47.3 trillion RMB Yuan and its economic aggregate leaped to the second in the world and its total export and important volume leaped to the second in the world. What China displays to the world is a condition of rapid social development under the backdrop of non-western culture dominated by non-capitalism ideology. Then, such western discourses come into being as “China threat theory”, “China pride” and so on. These concepts bred from western discourse system imply the voice over of ideology. In the face of some western utterances that emerge continuously, Chinese people should have their own right to speak and possess a set of discourse system with profound explanatory power and persuasion power.

“Chinese model” that has been discussed hotly in the recent years is the best case in point. That “Chinese model” really became a topic hotly discussed by the international society originated from an article entitled “Beijing Consensus” by Joshua Cooper Ramo in May 2004. Without doubt, the initiator of “Beijing Consensus” has provided a new perspective for the world to focus on and study China. Nonetheless, as the opposite of “Washington Consensus”, “Beijing Consensus” is incapable of being recognized by part of Chinese scholars, and the hot discussion then is inclined to such neutral utterance as “Chinese model”. No matter whether it is “consensus” or “model”, this is nothing more than a judgment that we use what kind of utterance to refer to the development miracle of China. After we calm down to treat with this hot discussion, it is not difficult to detect that in the thousands of articles, works and advertisements, no unanimous conclusion can be drawn in the favorable comment, doubt or negation by scholars and media in the Chinese model. There are too many discussions and too few final conclusions, and if there is no approval, consensus is impossible. This exactly indicates that it is not accomplished in one action that Chinese development path and theoretical system forms its own particular paradigm and discourse system.

It is better to say that we are deeply worried about the problems arising in the current condition of Chinese development than to say that we are not confident in the judgment on the contemporary circumstance of discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. During the period of social transition, it is unavoidable that China will be faced up with “modern diseases” emerging in the process of modernization of other countries, mixing of contradictions and prominence of sacrifices. At a primary stage of socialism, there is still a great gap between the real China and the ideal society in the eyes of classical authors of Marxism, and China is still an “unqualified” socialist. Nevertheless, this should not result in any doubt in the enormous progress made in the reform. Unavoidably, the explanatory power and the persuasion power of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics are subject to digestion and shielding of multiple utterances. The sources that impact the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics not only come from some western utterances, but also come from some internal noises.

Firstly, it is cognitive crisis. To a large extent, whether interpretation and explanation of theories and policies that the academic field is crazy about or follow-up of hot issues in the mainstream media and network public opinions display monologic discourse system. Such discourse only appears in a large number of documents of the party in power and the government and is confined to theoretical research or the circle of ideological practitioners. This is not only limitation of publicity, but also limitation of the subject of publicity. There is still a long way to go for popularization of Marxism and universality of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the realistic practice.

Then, it is identity crisis. The explanatory power and the persuasion power of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics concerns the cohesiveness and influencing power of dominant ideology. The identity crisis of the national dominant ideology, of course, not only refers to the crisis of legal defense of the discourse system with Chinese characteristics. Currently, this identity crisis reflects gap between ideal and reality. “The two necessities” in the discourse system of Marxism have not been completely fulfilled in reality and the lofty ideal of the communism and the common ideal of socialism with Chinese

characteristics are full of difficulties and reverses in the process of fulfillment. The reason why “Chinese dream” responds to the common ideal is that, in reality, people witness such phenomena as privilege and non-legalization and also see how the discourse system of formalization and dogmatization is correct yet long, empty and false. Connected with power and authority, discourse system naturally possesses its right to speak, but the degree of identity by social members is an internal requirement for it to continuously improve its power of utterance and behind the instrument of discourse system is expression of interests.

Tell it like it is, the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics has failed to achieve an ideal effect in its telling the Chinese story to the world. Moreover, the internal persuasion power of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics seems also insufficient. This is exactly the contemporary internal and both and circumstance of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

3. The Prospect of the Discourse System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Clear awareness of the contemporary circumstance of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics has not only answered the question of “why it is necessary” to construct and adjust the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, but has also put forward the question of “how it is possible” that the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics has the prospect of explanatory power and persuasion power.

3.1 Construction and Adjustment: To Be Powerful in the Dominant Right of Utterance

Sinicization of Marxism can't go without conversion of discourse system, which is the groundwork for formation of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The discourse system possessed at the beginning of establishment of Marxism was an outcome produced by the initiators' words for their times. Marx and Engels are not only genius who created scientific theories, but also models who converted theoretical utterances into popular utterances. “We attempt to make ourselves simple and popular and we suppose that our readers have not the least concept of political economics. We hope that the workers can comprehend our explanation.” (Note 1) Thus, it can be seen that, Marx and Engels, likewise, attached importance to the issue of discourse conversion of “how to express a theory”. By contrast, Mao Zedong made indelible contributions to formation of the discourse system of Marxism with Chinese features. This was not only attributed to his application of excellent traditional Chinese culture, but, meanwhile, derived from his integration of Chinese social customs and social psychology and his extraction of the utterance material that people were delighted to see and hear. His core discourse complied with Chinese revolution and the need of Chinese construction practice, so he both had made contributions and had had fault. Ever since the reform and opening up in China, Deng Xiaoping has initiated a socialist path with Chinese characteristics which formed a core discourse of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. The utterance of “economic construction as the center” has dominated Chinese reform practice. With efforts by several generations of central collective leadership and the people, the socialist career has been continuously developed and the discourse system has also been continuously adjusted to adapt to the practical changes, such as, “well-off society”, and “harmonious society” which have been guiding practice of modernization in China.

At present, the challenges faced up by the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics should not be ignored. It is through political power that the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics acquires its right to speak. However, in order for this right to speak to become a widely recognized dominant right of mainstream utterance, it is necessary to pay attention to resolving the following two problems. The first one is from instrumental to value conversion. The discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics should not evade from the realistic issues. Constant response to social contradictions and uninterrupted answers to realistic issues is exactly the due critical value orientation of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. If the discourse system is merely an instrument that blindly emphasizes theoretical defense, otherwise, it might lose its superiority as a mainstream discourse. The second problem is conversion from monologue to dialogue. The discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is explained and interpreted through power of political authority and by means of publicity and inculcation of mainstream ideology and it displays monologic discourse system. In order for the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics to go towards the folk and to be comprehended and approved by the public, it has to break through the top-down one-way inculcation and realize bi-directional “communication” between propagandists and reception objects. Ideology utterance and academic theoretical utterance are distinguished from daily life utterance. Of course, it is necessary, first of all, to make clear what kind of role the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics plays. Currently, the fashion of “modifying the style of writing” comes into vogue and it is advocated that articles and speeches should be short, practical and innovative instead of long, empty and false. Likewise, such strong pragmatic spirit is also what the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics requires.

3.2 Cognition and Identity: To Improve the Discourse System of Mainstream Ideology

The discourse system of socialist ideology needs to be cleared up in terms of cognition. With transfer of the work focus after the reform and opening up in China, it is frequent occurrence that people misread “taking economic construction as the central task” as “economy determines all and GDP higher than all”. At present, the core utterance of human orientation in the “scientific outlook on development” really embodies the value pursuit of Marxism in comprehensive development of human. Nonetheless, in reality, socialist ideology is not only “in the position” of adhering to the discourse system of Marxism and its value orientation, but is also “not in the position” of making a critical analysis of realistic socialist problems and realistic contradictions. The “symptom of fear of capitalism” in socialist ideology originates from its loss of tension in the feature of defense of the dominant ideology and the feature of criticism on realistic Chinese issues. The former is suspended and the latter is laid aside. Socialist ideology also lacks necessary tension in terms of “internal utterance” and “external utterance”. Thus, it is inevitable that it will affect the identity of social members in socialist ideology. It is difficult to come to consensus without identity.

At a new period, in order to build consensus, it is necessary to carry out, in a deep-going way, propaganda and education of socialist core value system and direct social ideological trend with socialist core value system. It is a must to firmly grasp the hegemony and dominant right of ideology work, adhere to correct orientation, enhance the guidance competence and

expand the mainstream thinking public opinions. Ideology searches for a reasonable “point of strength” between “weakening” and “strengthening”. In addition to directly proving its dominant magic of governing social ideology and building consensus with social practice and development achievements, one of the most fundamental tasks is to constantly construct and adjust the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Building of confidence in path, confidence in theory and confidence in society from cognition to identity can't go without the explanatory power and the persuasion power of the discourse system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. From its descending to an instrument for publicity to its role as expression of social multiple interests and from its monologue to its dialogue, only if discourse system continuously responds to reality, can it strengthen appealing and cohesion force of socialism with Chinese characteristics and can it firmly grasp hegemony and dominant right of ideology work.

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Note

Note 1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Volume 3. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1960, p.332.