

# The Theoretical Logic of Deng Xiaoping's Thought on Socialist Construction\*

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**Abstract**—Deng Xiaoping is the chief architect of China's reform and opening up and the pioneer of the theory and practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In the process of reform and opening up, Deng Xiaoping's systematic answer to the issue of socialist construction laid the foundation for the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The reason why Deng Xiaoping can make a fundamental answer to the issue of China's socialist construction is inseparable from his profound understanding and flexible use of Marxist mode of thinking. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping's thoughts on socialist construction contain four organic logics. The first is to rethink and correct the subjectivist deviations in the past, return to reality, and establish practical logic for solving social reality problems; the second is to sum up the experience and lessons of the socialist construction exploration period, focus on contradictions and explore the historical logic of the prescriptive nature of socialism; the third is to actively open up to face the world, seek the development logic of socialist modernization; the fourth is to adhere to people-oriented concept, pay attention to and improve people's livelihood, and realize the value logic of the first rich promoting mutual prosperity.

**Keywords**—Deng Xiaoping; socialist construction; theoretical logic

## I. INTRODUCTION

Based on the new great practice of reform and opening up, Deng Xiaoping initiated the theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics and made a systematic scientific answer to the topic of "what the socialism is and how to build socialism". The formation of a scientific theory of thought often has its inherent logical support. Deng Xiaoping's thoughts on the construction of a socialist society in China are no exception. To clarify the logical meaning of Deng Xiaoping's socialist construction thought is of great significance for understanding its position and value in the formation of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.

## II. BASED ON REALITY: THE PRACTICAL LOGIC OF CRACKING THE REAL PROBLEM

Based on reality is the main theme of Marxist theory. Through the study of philosophy, economics, political science, sociology, history, etc., Marx deepened his ideological mains into social life, thus achieving practical analysis and basic grasp of capitalist social issues. In this process, Marx not only laid the scientific cornerstone of materialism, but also realized the fundamental criticism of the capitalist reality. Socialism moved from fantasy to science. Deng Xiaoping inherited the philosophical epistemological principle of "returning to reality" of Marxism and applied it to the analysis and investigation of China's real problems.

In the early days of reform and opening up, Deng Xiaoping's ability to sharply grasp China's practical problems was based on the direct premise of reflecting and correcting past subjectivist mistakes. According to the "Resolution on the Historical Issues of Several Issues of the Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China" (the "Resolution") issued in June 1981, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the party led the people of the whole country to win the victory of the socialist revolution. The foundation for the smooth development of socialism has been laid. The most profound and greatest social change in Chinese history is not determined arbitrarily by subjective wishes, but is determined according to the actual conditions of various aspects and the urgent needs of the national economy and the people's livelihood. The "resolution" objectively evaluated this fact and considered it to be "a road to socialist transformation that was suitable for China." [1]<sup>147</sup> In the past few years, "the national industrial output value has increased by an average of 19.6% per year. The total agricultural output value has increased by an average of 4.8% per year. The economic development is relatively fast; the economic effect is relatively good; and the proportion among important economic sectors is relatively coordinated. The market is booming and prices are stable. The people's life has improved markedly. [1]<sup>148</sup>. Taking this opportunity, the Communist Party of China successfully convened the 8th national congress of the Communist Party of China, and the party led the people to begin to move into comprehensive socialist construction. However, as Deng Xiaoping said, due to the lack of experience of the party leading the cause of

\*Fund: This article is the phased result of 2019 Youth Fund Project of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Ministry of Education — "Marx's Thought on People's Livelihood in the Perspective of Capital Criticism" (No. 19YJC710045).

socialist construction, there had been a deviation of subjectivism. In particular, the error of "leftism" eventually spread rapidly in the ideological field and evolved into a "cultural revolution" that lasted for ten years. The socialist construction cause had suffered serious setbacks.

In analyzing the deviations of the subjectivism, Deng Xiaoping believed that this was the result of "not calmly analyzing the subjective and objective aspects, and violating the rules of the development of the objective world". [2]<sup>140</sup> As a result, this was contrary to the actual situation of China. The reality is often accompanied with problems. The development and progress of society is always realized in the process of solving the problems of the times, and the solution of era problem must be combined with reality. Deng Xiaoping is deeply convinced of this rationale.

Through reflection on the tortuous process of socialist construction, Deng Xiaoping believed that the reason why the party's cause had "leftism" or "rightism" was mostly because of not fully understanding a basic problem for a long time, namely, "what the socialism is and how to build socialism". Therefore, he clearly stated in his article "Developing Democracy in Politics and Reforming the Economy": "There are many lessons we have learned, and the most important one is to clarify this issue." [2]<sup>116</sup> Around the third plenary session of the eleventh CPC central committee, Deng Xiaoping made a serious exploration of this issue and made a scientific conclusion on "Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" in "The Opening Ceremony of the Twelfth National Congress of the Communist Party of China" in September, 1982.

The reason why Deng Xiaoping can accurately grasp the basic problems of the times and make scientific answers lies in his philosophical wisdom based on the actual thinking of the times in China apart from his fearless political courage. Just as he said: "Whether what we say and do can solve the problem, and whether the problem is solved correctly or not, lie in whether we can combine theory with practice, and whether we are good at summing up experience and aiming at objective reality ... everything must start from reality." [3]<sup>113-114</sup> reality is actually objective, but also complex and changeable. If starting everything from reality, it must actually grasp the reality.

The study found that Deng Xiaoping had a "structural" understanding of China's "reality." First, it is necessary to attach importance to the "overall situation" in the development environment. Whether in the era of revolutionary war or in the period of conception and construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Deng Xiaoping made full use of the thinking of "overall situation", and believed that it would be impossible to produce a strategic and coordinated strategy without a practical grasp of the whole. Therefore, when faced with a complex domestic and international environment, Deng Xiaoping particularly stressed: "The most important issue is to be open-minded. It is necessary to look at the issue from the general situation, look at the world, look at the future, look at the current, and look at everything." [2]<sup>300</sup> With this guidance, there have the correct judgment and scientific

grasp of the international and domestic situation, and have the great conception and practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Second, it is necessary to attach importance to the "general situation" at the development stage. There is a "general situation" in the "overall situation", that is, the biggest reality. Deng Xiaoping believed that if people want to clarify the question of "what the socialism is and how to build socialism", it must clarify China's greatest reality. Otherwise, people will make mistakes and deviate from the socialist road. Through the scientific analysis of China's national conditions, on the eve of the "Thirteenth National Congress" of the Communist Party of China, Deng Xiaoping made an important speech on the topic "everything started from the reality of the primary stage of socialism". At this meeting, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that one of the important tasks of this meeting was to show that Chinese socialism was still in the "primary stage", namely, the "underdeveloped stage" of socialism. This judgment is crucial, pointing out the orientation and coordinates for the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics that has just set sail. Third, it is necessary to attach importance to "working step by step" in the development steps. The lessons learned in history prove that the practice of socialist construction cannot be "impatient" and should follow the laws of economic and social development and proceed step by step. Through in-depth thinking on the issue of "how to promote the socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics" and the active exploration of the solution path, Deng Xiaoping put forward a "three-step" strategy for economic and social development, namely, two steps in this century, achieving adequate or ample food and clothing and being fairly well-off, one another step in the next century in 30 to 50 years to reach the level of a moderately developed country, thus building China into a modern, highly civilized and highly democratic socialist country. It is not difficult to see that this is a scientific and social development strategy based on China's national conditions, which is in line with China's reality, and a scientific path to promote the socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics. Of course, the "three-step" strategy is a medium- and long-term development strategy based on China's actual situation. This is to lay the foundation for realizing the ideal society of the future. As Deng Xiaoping said, "The task of socialism is to develop social productivity and strengthen the power of the socialist countries. The life of the people will be gradually improved, which lays the foundation for communism in the future". [2]<sup>157</sup>

In order to highlight the actual basic status, Deng Xiaoping also emphasized the importance of "theory is linked to reality" in different occasions. In his opinion, whether theory was linked to reality was not only a matter of study, but also a political issue, which was related to the success or failure of the cause. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping pointed out in his speech at the political work conference of the whole army that "we cannot violate the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought at any time, but we must analyze the actual situation and solve practical problems in light of reality." [3]<sup>114</sup> In the article "How to evaluate a country's political system," he once said: "we firmly believe in Marxism, but Marxism must be combined

with China's reality. Only the combination of Marxism in China's reality is the true Marxism we need." [2]<sup>213</sup> Moreover, the actual situation is not fixed, which requires us to continue to carry out theoretical innovation with the development of practice. Therefore, when Deng Xiaoping talked about the innovative principles and methods of Marxist theory, he said frankly: "we are now building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The times and tasks are different. We must constantly combine the changing reality and explore the answers to new problems, thus developing the Marxist theory."

### III. FOCUSING ON CONTRADICTIONS: EXPLORING THE HISTORICAL LOGIC OF THE ESSENCE OF SOCIALISM

Reality always presents people with a variety of problems, and the exploration of ways to solve problems will lead people to new areas. When Marx was alive, he was good at capturing the problems raised by the times, such as religious issues, philosophical issues, issues of state and law, and issues of political economy. In the process of "solving the problem", Marx discovered and called it historical materialism — "the total result I got and used to guide my research work once I got it" [4]. Deng Xiaoping attached great importance to Marx's thinking and took this as a basis to think about Chinese social issues and explore the essence of socialism.

According to historical materialism, the basic contradiction of society (the contradiction between productivity and production relations, economic foundation and the superstructure) promoted the development of human society from low to high. As everyone knows, the basic contradiction of society is the most fundamental contradiction in human society. It stipulates the essence of the whole process of human society development and plays a dominant role in it. In the specific social and historical environment, the basic contradiction of society always has its "derivatives", that is, the special form of existence — the main contradiction of society. Although the main contradictions of society are attached to the basic contradictions of society, they play a leading and decisive role in the process of certain social development, and stipulate and influence the resolution of other secondary contradictions. The main contradictions of society are not constant, and their basic forms will change with the development of social practice. Even under certain conditions, the primary and secondary contradictions will transform each other. This requires us to grasp the stage characteristics in real time when dealing with and understanding the general existence of social contradictions. "If people do not pay attention to the stage of the development of things, people can't handle the contradictions of things properly. [5]<sup>314</sup> It is impossible to grasp the main contradictions of society in a practical way.

Looking back at history, during the exploration period of the socialist revolution and comprehensive construction, the People's Republic of China has achievements and mistakes. The success lies in the fact that the party and the state can correctly grasp the main contradictions of the society at that time and formulate correct guidelines and basic policies. On

the contrary, mistakes lie in the misjudgment of the main contradictions of society and the wrong development route formed.

Since the victory of the new-democratic revolution and the completion of the land reform, the main contradictions of society have been transformed into contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie, the socialist road and the capitalist road. This is the result of the combination of the Chinese revolutionary reality, the revolutionary nature and the revolutionary tasks. In accordance with this judgment, the Party Central Committee proposed the "socialist industrialization and Socialist transformation of agriculture, handicraft industry, capitalist industry and commerce", that is, the general line of the transitional period. The "general line" reflected China's objective reality, followed the historical laws, and guided the general direction of China's social revolution. Therefore, Liu Shaoqi called it "a beacon to shine on our work" in the 8th national congress of the Communist Party of China [6]<sup>206</sup>. With the basic completion of socialist transformation, China has entered a new era of socialist construction, and major social contradictions have also undergone fundamental changes. "The 8th national congress of the Communist Party of China" confirmed this point and clearly pointed out that the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in China had basically been resolved. "The main contradiction in China is the contradiction between the people's demand for the establishment of an advanced industrial country and the reality of a backward agricultural country, and the contradiction between the people's need for the rapid development of economy and culture and the current situation where economy and culture cannot meet people's needs [7]. This judgment correctly grasped the main contradictions of the society in China at that time. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping said: "the routes of the 8th national congress of the Communist Party of China are correct." [2] Regrettably, because the party was not prepared enough for the comprehensive construction of socialism at the time, the correct opinions put forward by the 8th national congress of the Communist Party of China did not persist in practice. After the 8th national congress of the Communist Party of China, the People's Republic of China had achieved many achievements in socialist construction and suffered serious setbacks at the same time. [2]<sup>2</sup>

After order out of chaos, Deng Xiaoping regained and perfected the judgment of the 8th national congress of the Communist Party of China on the main contradictions in Chinese society. At the theory-discussing meeting on theoretical work in 1978, he put forward, "as for what is the main contradiction of the current period, that is, the main problems or central tasks that the whole party and the people of the whole country must solve in the current period... Our level of productivity development is very low, far from meeting the needs of the people and the country, which is the main contradiction in Chinese current period. Solving this main contradiction is the central task." [3]<sup>180</sup>. Two years later, the "Resolution" expressed it in essence as "the contradiction between the growing material and cultural needs of the people and the backward social production". [1]<sup>186</sup>

In fact, Deng Xiaoping's efforts to restore and perfect the correct understanding of the main contradictions in Chinese society are also a process of clarifying what socialism is and confirming the essence of socialism.

During the Cultural Revolution, the "Gang of Four" advocated the slogan "better to have poor socialism than rich capitalism", "better to have the grass of socialism than the seedlings of capitalism", which caused the chaos of people's ideological theory to a large extent, leading to ambiguity and even misunderstanding of socialism. Deng Xiaoping believes that such mistakes are mainly because we have not figured out what socialism and Marxism are. [2]<sup>137</sup> To understand this problem, it is necessary to recognize: "Poverty is not socialism, and socialism is going to eliminate poverty... It is not in conformity with the requirements of socialism to improve the people's living standards." [2]<sup>116</sup> That is to say, socialism is to meet the needs of the people's lives and to improve the people's living standards. The manifestation of dimension of "needs" reflects Deng Xiaoping's emphasis on the fundamental pursuit of "what the purpose of developing socialism is". Of course, to meet the "needs" of the people, it is necessary to put the development of productive forces first. When productivity is developed, it can provide a corresponding material basis for eradicating poverty and improving the living conditions of the people. However, in the past, due to excessive exaggeration of adjusting the role of production relations in economic and social development, "one-sided emphasis on 'being large in size and collective in nature', having food prepared in a large canteen cauldron" [2]<sup>115</sup>, and failing to regard the development of productive forces as the first task, the socialism construction took a relatively tortuous road. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping said in a conversation with Tanzanian Vice President Mwinyi: "We calmly analyzed the reality of China, summed up the experience, and affirmed the great achievements of the 30 years from the founding of the People's Republic of China to 1978. However, everything we do can't be said to be successful." [2]<sup>115-116</sup>

When Deng Xiaoping made the argument that "poverty is not socialism" and "only the development of productive forces can eliminate poverty", the essence of socialism was ready. In Deng Xiaoping's Southern Talks in 1992, Deng Xiaoping made a scientific summary and pointed out that "the essence of socialism is to liberate productive forces, develop productive forces, eliminate exploitation, eliminate polarization, and finally achieve common prosperity." [2]<sup>373</sup> "The theory of socialist essence" embodies Deng Xiaoping's most fundamental grasp of the proposition "what the socialism is", that is, the productive forces — liberation of productive forces, development of productive forces and production relations — eliminating exploitation, eliminating polarization" and achieving the social goal — common prosperity". This process reveals the essential prescriptive nature of socialism.

When the main contradiction of socialism and the essence of socialism are clarified and mutually proved logically, there is a clear direction in building socialism for China. Since then, the masses have completely thrown away the heavy burden of thought and unswervingly moved

toward the road of getting rid of poverty and getting rich and running a well-off society.

#### IV. FACING THE WORLD: SEEKING THE DEVELOPMENT LOGIC OF SOCIALIST MODERNIZATION

Marx once said that "communism is a society premised on the universal development of productive forces and universal exchanges in the world". He also expressed that "the national is universal, and history changes to world history." When "globalization" rapidly expanded in the 1980s and 1990s, Deng Xiaoping creatively inherited and developed this view of Marx, and then put the development subject of socialist modernization into the world coordinate to examine and solve.

In the past 30 years since the founding of New China, China has tried to establish an equal external relationship with all countries in the world. However, due to various reasons, Chinese contacts with the rest of the world are mostly single, loose, closed and semi-closed. On the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong called at the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee, "We must first do business with the socialist countries and the people's democracies as much as possible, and at the same time we must do business with the capitalist countries." [8]<sup>1435</sup> At the preparatory meeting of the new political consultative conference in June, it was emphasized again that "the Chinese people are willing to carry out friendly cooperation with the people of other countries in the world, and resume and develop international trade so as to facilitate the development of production and economic prosperity". [8]<sup>1466</sup> However, this desire has not been realized. Because of the establishment of the new China, the Western capitalist world led by the United States began to impose the most severe embargo and blockade on China. As a last resort, China can only adopt a "one-sided" policy to limit foreign relations to some socialist democracy countries in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. During the period of socialist transformation, Chinese Communist Party implemented the policy of "cleaning the house and treating guests". By the end of 1956, the assets of Western capitalism and other Western capitalism in China were basically cleared. Then, the relationship between China and the world has become relatively "single", and was "in the ideological maintenance of the mutual support and intercommunication within the socialist camp, the lack of adjustments" [9]. In the 1960s, relations between China and the Soviet Union deteriorated, and China was forced to close the door to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Foreign relations suffered unprecedented setbacks. In the predicament, China has tried to establish economic and trade exchanges with capitalist countries such as Western Europe and Japan. According to statistics, during the period from 1962 to 1966, China imported more than 20 sets of complete sets of technical equipment from western developed countries, covering metallurgy, chemical, electronics, precision instruments, etc., but this was quickly broken by the "Cultural Revolution", foreign economic and trade relations stuck into stagnation and decline. Therefore, regarding this history, Deng Xiaoping said that "in the opinion of 'Gang of Four',

everything is worship thing foreign and fawn on foreign countries and traitorism, isolating China from the world." [3]<sup>127</sup>. In the early 1970s, Sino-US relations broke the ice, and both countries signed the "Sino-US Joint Communiqué". China's development of foreign relations, especially economic and trade relations, has led to a sharp increase in China's trade and economic volume, reaching 10.976 billion US dollars in 1973, 2.4 times the US\$4.58 billion in 1970; and reaching US\$14.57 billion in 1974, 3.2 times that of 1970" [10]. In 1975, Deng Xiaoping, who took the place of the ailing Zhou Enlai, began to carry out economic rectification drastically, proposing the policies such as expanding foreign trade and absorbing all advanced technologies in the world. Unfortunately, the political climate of the "Cultural Revolution" had not yet allowed this policy to be implemented.

After the end of the "Cultural Revolution", Deng Xiaoping, who came back, realized that relying on experience and lessons could not solve the problem of socialist modernization. He must open the country, integrate into the world, and seek development on a global scale.

Opening the country means reform and opening up. Therefore, reform and opening up is a problem that Deng Xiaoping most concerned about in the late 1970s. Deng Xiaoping knows that if he wants to get his views supported by the top decision-makers at that time, he must let everyone recognize the most direct reality of China — poverty and backwardness. In that era, the best way to recognize the limitations was to "go out". In 1978, the tide of going abroad was investigated. In this year, there were 12 senior deputy prime ministers and vice-chairmen of the state visiting 51 countries in the world for 20 times. At the end of the year, when summing up the experience of studying abroad, Deng Xiaoping said that "Chinese comrades have recently gone abroad to look at it. The more they look at it, the more they know that they are falling behind". "Poor thinking leads the change". After realizing the backwardness, it is necessary to understand that many of past practices are not right. If it must change the course, you will understand that getting rid of poverty and vigorously developing productive forces are the most important tasks. Most people began to realize that the fundamental way to release productivity can only be reform and opening up. With these preparations, Deng Xiaoping naturally revealed the idea of reform and opening up at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, pointing out that it was necessary to proactively develop economic cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit with all countries in the world on the basis of self-reliance and strive to adopt world-class technology and advanced equipment" [11], thus creating a new journey and a new situation in the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. In 1985, Deng Xiaoping reiterated the importance of reform and opening up, and said: "After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, Chinese Communist Committee explored how China engaged in socialism. In the final analysis, it is to develop productivity... The goal is determined, how shall the Chinese Communist Committee start? ... It is necessary to make two opening up: one external development and one internal

opening." [2]<sup>117</sup> This not only extends Deng Xiaoping's consistent position that "poverty is not socialism", but also shows the basic idea that to build socialism with Chinese characteristics, it is necessary to vigorously develop the productive forces, which must be opened to the outside world. Deng Xiaoping believes that opening up to the outside world must be a comprehensive opening, not only open to Western developed countries, but also open to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries and the developing countries of the third world. When it is fully open, China can learn and absorb all the achievements of civilization in the world, thus winning the comparative advantage of the development of socialist productive forces. Among them, Deng Xiaoping particularly emphasized the extraordinary significance of "learning from the West". At that time, China was still relatively backward in various fields. In order to win the advantages compared with capitalism, it must boldly introduce and learn from, transform and absorb their advanced technology and management methods.

Advancing and developing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics requires a stable and orderly international environment. Only in a stable and peaceful world environment can Chinese Communist Committee concentrate on the construction and development. How to strive for and create an environment conducive to domestic development? The answer given by Deng Xiaoping is to attach importance to a wide range of international exchanges. Since the Second World War, the "hot war" is no longer the decisive factor affecting the world's pattern. International exchanges or consultations have become a universal means of resolving differences among the nations, reaching an international consensus, and appealing to world peace. No rules, no standards. To engage in international exchanges requires a fair and equitable principle. In Deng Xiaoping's opinion, "by summing up the practice of international relations, the most powerful vitality is the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." [30]<sup>96</sup> Therefore, if there is an opportunity, Deng Xiaoping will convey Chinese diplomatic ideas to the international community, saying that China is willing to establish and develop diplomatic relations and economic and cultural exchanges with all countries in the world on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

Of course, the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics is a development of worldwide significance. In April 1980, Deng Xiaoping met with World Bank President McNamara. He pointed out: "For China, we have always considered issues not from the perspective of China's own interests, but from the perspective of global strategy." [12] That is to say, the great concept of building socialism with Chinese characteristics is by no means a developmental idea with narrow nationalism or self-interest, and has global value. The reasons are as the followings: First of all, China's development is related to world peace and the stability of the international situation. China has the largest population among the third world countries, which is an important factor affecting the development of world peace forces. If China is unstable, it is an international problem.

That will be imaginable. Second, China's development path can provide some useful experience for developing countries in the world. Chinese reform is an experiment not only in China, but also in the international arena. If it succeeds, it could offer a Chinese solution to the cause of socialism in the world and the development of underdeveloped countries. In the end, the strong China is a blessing to the world. Because Chinese path is right, it may have a greater contribution to mankind. In short, building socialism with Chinese characteristics is not only in line with the interests of the Chinese people, but also in line with the interests of the people of the world. It has long-term significance not only for the third world but for all mankind.

#### V. PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOOD: ACHIEVING THE VALUE LOGIC OF BEING RICH FIRST PROMOTING COMMON PROSPERITY

Paying attention to the survival and development of people is the value orientation of Marxist theory. Deng Xiaoping adhered to the value principle of Marxism. With deep feelings for the people, Deng Xiaoping paid great attention to people's livelihood, and actively improved people's livelihood, and infiltrated the concept of "people's livelihood" into a series of discussions and great designs on socialist construction with Chinese characteristics. A unique theory of people's livelihood value is formed.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese Communist Committee upholds the commitment of building the party for the public and governing for the people, and actively explores the correct way to solve the people's livelihood. Due to lack of experience, the process is also "full of complications". During the period of the democratic revolution, the Communists adhered to the concept of "revolution for the people" and regarded the improvement of the people's living conditions as their fundamental task. Just as Mao Zedong thought about the relationship between revolution and construction, "organizing the revolutionary war and improving the masses live are two major tasks." [5]<sup>139</sup> With the establishment of the Republic, the people began to be the masters of the country, but they also encountered historical challenges of material deprivation and hardship of people's livelihood. The improvement of the people's livelihood became the general voice of the people at that time and the primary task of the ruling party. As Liu Shaoqi said, "They urgently need to improve their living standards and live a rich and cultural life. This is the greatest requirement and expectation of the most people in the country, and it is also the most basic task that the Communist Party of China and the people's government are striving to achieve. [6]<sup>1</sup> In order to achieve this task, it is necessary to do basic work. Matter is the foundation of people's livelihood. From 1949 to 1953, the Party Central Committee with Mao Zedong as the core put the restoration and development of the national economy and land reform at the center of its work. Through the confiscation of bureaucratic capital, unified financial and rational adjustment of industry and commerce, China's industry, agriculture and commerce have been rapidly restored and developed. In the meantime, in accordance with the deployment of the Third Plenary

Session of the Seventh Central Committee, China has carried out a large-scale and stable and orderly land reform movement. About 300 million farmers across the country have their fields, which greatly liberated rural productivity, developed agriculture, and provided a material basis for improving people's livelihood. In order to ensure the institutional guarantee of people's livelihood construction, the central government timely proposed the general route of the transition period in September 1953, began to carry out socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce in a step-by-step manner, and successfully established the socialist system, providing institutional prerequisites for solving the people's livelihood.

However, all socialist construction ideas aimed at improving people's livelihood have not been consistently implemented. They have quickly been squeezed out of the "high accumulation, low consumption" policy under the heavy industry priority development strategy and the people's livelihood construction has relegated to subordinate status. According to relevant research, during the "first five-year plan" to the "fourth five-year plan", the productive accumulation is high compared with the non-productive accumulation. For example, during the "first five-year plan" period, the productive accumulation accounted for 59.8%. During the "Great Leap Forward" period, it soared to 87.1%, and dropped to 65.5% during the three-year economic adjustment period. However, it rebounded to 75.4% and 77.4% during the "third five-year plan" and "fourth five-year plan", up to 83.2% in 1976 [13]. High accumulation has accelerated the industrialization of China. However, the people's living standards have not been improved as much as possible, and there have some degree of decline. For example, "China's total industrial output value increased from 70.4 billion yuan to 423.7 billion yuan in 1957-978. It has increased by 6 times, but the average annual wage of urban workers has dropped from 624 yuan to 615 yuan, and real wages have dropped by 13.8%" [14]. The livelihood during the "Great Leap Forward" and "Cultural Revolution" period was even more difficult, and the people's living standards fell sharply. This shows that the "high accumulation, low consumption" policy has brought industrialization, but at the expense of the improvement of people's living standards or the neglect of the satisfaction of individual interests. In other words, what accompanied by the violent industrialization is the common people's livelihood poverty.

In response to the reality of people's livelihood and poverty, Deng Xiaoping asked sharply in September 1978: "Why do we need socialism when we are still so poor with efforts of more than twenty years?" [3]<sup>130</sup> Based on the answer to this question, Deng Xiaoping decisively put the people's living standards at the core of the socialist development cause, and then conceived a kind of socialist values of people's livelihood development with Chinese characteristics, including goal, foundation, motive force, path and system guarantee.

In 1956, when answering the question of the international youth delegation, Deng Xiaoping said: "after the completion of the democratic revolution, it is now necessary to build

socialism and develop it into communism in the future. This will lead the Chinese people to a society completely free from exploitation and oppression. Then, it can build a happy life of communism." [15] That is to say, in Deng Xiaoping's vision, the prosperity and happiness of the people is the fundamental symbol and the fundamental goal of the socialist cause. Taking this as a concept, when Deng Xiaoping met all the comrades in the enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the Navy Committee of the Communist Party of China in July 1979, he said that "if socialism is always poor, it will not stand." [3]<sup>191</sup> In different occasions, he pointed out that "poverty is not socialism" [2]<sup>64</sup>, or "the long-term cessation of people's lives at a very low level cannot always be called socialism" [3]<sup>312</sup>. In January 1983, Deng Xiaoping regarded the satisfaction of people's happiness as one of the criteria for judging the correctness of work. He believed, "all work must contribute to the building of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is necessary to measure whether it is conducive to the prosperity and well-being of the people, or whether it contributes to the prosperity of the country. This will be the measure of whether it is right or wrong." [2]<sup>23</sup> In the southern talks in 1992, Deng Xiaoping re-examined the fundamental goals of the primary stage of socialism and the people's livelihood through the scientific definition of the nature of socialism. The principle is to eradicate poverty and move towards common prosperity.

To eradicate poverty and guarantee and improve socialist people's livelihood must be based on the development of the economy. When Deng Xiaoping summed up the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, he said: "In the past 30 years, after several twists and turns, we have never shifted our work to the socialist construction. Therefore, the superiority of socialism has been played too little. The development of productive forces is not fast, unstable, and uncoordinated, and the people's lives have not been greatly improved." [2]<sup>249</sup> In other words, the fundamental task of socialism is to let the masses of the people live a better life, otherwise socialism will lose the value of its own existence. In order to improve the people's lives, it is necessary to vigorously develop productive forces and shift the focus of the party and the state to economic construction. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping warned that every party member and cadre does not vigorously develop the economy and does not work hard to improve the people's lives. It can only be a dead end.

To improve people's livelihood and liberate and develop productive forces, it is necessary to take reform and opening up as the basic driving force. After smashing the "Gang of Four" in 1976, China faced a historical choice of where to go: continuing to follow the old path of "class struggle as the key link" or opening up new paths. Deng Xiaoping prevailed over all dissenting views and pointed out that "taking path and building socialism with Chinese characteristics" [2]<sup>197</sup>. Undoubtedly, the distinctive feature of the socialist road with Chinese characteristics is reform and opening up. For the purpose of reform and opening up, Deng Xiaoping's views are quite clear. "All of Chinese reforms are aimed at one purpose, that is, to remove obstacles to the development of the socialist productive forces [2]<sup>134</sup> and improve the

material and cultural life and spiritual outlook of the people." Practice has proved that the reform and opening up that China carried out has promoted economic and social development and improved people's lives.

To realize the shift of the focus of economic construction work, and to solve the people's livelihood issue in the course of reform and opening up, it is necessary to take the path of "first rich promoting mutual prosperity". Deng Xiaoping believes that the old method of activating the economy, liberating and developing productive forces and relying on egalitarianism will not work. It is necessary to adopt a new method of "letting some people get rich first". The "old method" actually brings the common backwardness and common poverty. The Chinese people have suffered such a loss. Deng Xiaoping believes that only the "new approach" is "a policy that can influence and drive the entire national economy" [3]<sup>152</sup>, which is the only way to promote the solution of people's livelihood and move toward common prosperity. "The Chinese Communist Committee advocates that some regions are rich first, so as to motivate and drive other regions to become rich, and to make the first rich areas help the backward areas to develop better. It is the same reason to advocate that some people get rich first." [2]<sup>111</sup> This kind of development is Deng Xiaoping's new exploration of the development path of people's livelihood based on the general law of economic and social development, the overall planning of unbalanced regional development in China, and the consideration of efficiency and equity. The importance lies in the followings: first, releasing the social productive forces and mobilizing the enthusiasm of the main workers; secondly, adhering to the essential requirements of socialist common prosperity and avoiding polarization; third, relying on the masses of the people to liberate themselves and liberate the common prosperity of all workers.

To follow the road of development of socialism with Chinese characteristics and realize the ideal of people's livelihood with common prosperity, it is necessary to guarantee the system with four basic principles. At the beginning of the reform and opening up, in order to remove some people's doubts and doubts about the adjustment of China's development strategy, and to respond to some erroneous thoughts gradually appearing in the society, Deng Xiaoping put forward the four basic principles of adhering to the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, namely the people's democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the communist party and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought. In October 1992, the 14th national congress of the communist party of China (CPC) incorporated the four cardinal principles and reform and opening up into the party constitution as two basic points. If reform and opening up is the internal driving force for improving people's livelihood, adhering to the four basic principles is the political superiority and institutional guarantee for realizing the goal of people's livelihood — the common prosperity.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Of course, the four logics of Deng Xiaoping's socialist construction thoughts are not isolated and self-existing. They

are intrinsically linked to each other and are a dialectical and unified organic whole. In this whole, "practical logic" is the theoretical cornerstone of Deng Xiaoping's socialist construction thought. "Historical logic" is the internal mechanism of Deng Xiaoping's socialist construction thought. "Development logic" is the overall goal of Deng Xiaoping's socialist construction thought, and "value logic" is the fundamental purpose of Deng Xiaoping's socialist construction thought.

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