

Connotation of Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization in the New Era

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Abstract Xi Jinping's thought on ecological civilization construction is an important part of the socialist ideology with Chinese characteristics in a new era, which inherits and develops the ecological theory of Marxism and Sinicized Marxism based on the reality of the national conditions and the ecological wisdom rooted in traditional Chinese philosophy. In this paper, the basic connotation, significance, goals, requirements and realization ways of ecological civilization construction are expounded profoundly. This is of great significance to move toward a new era of socialist ecological civilization and promote the construction of beautiful China.

Key words New era, Socialist ideology with Chinese characteristics, Ecological civilization construction

1 Introduction

The report of the 19th CPC National Congress formally put forward the concept of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and wrote it into the Party Constitution as the common guiding ideology of the entire party and the people of the country. The Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is rich in content, among which, "to adhere to the harmonious coexistence of man and nature" is one of the fourteen basic strategies. The report of the 19th CPC National Congress pointed out that "building an ecological civilization is a millennium-long plan for China's sustainable development" and "resolutely taking the good development path of production development, affluent life, and ecological civilization to build a beautiful China". Since the 18th CPC National Congress, Comrade Xi Jinping has put forward a series of new ideals, new viewpoints, new judgments and new requirements, emphasizing putting ecological civilization construction in a more prominent position and integrating into economic construction, political construction, cultural construction, social construction and other aspects and the whole process. This fully reflects the deepening understanding of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core of the building of the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics, and also highlights the spirit of the Chinese people responsible for future generations and the world.

2 Background

Ecological civilization is a new form of human civilization development after industrial civilization. It is a social form based on the basic aim of the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, man and man, and man and society, virtuous circle, all-round

development and sustained prosperity. Faced with the severe situation of severe environmental pollution, tight resource constraints, and degraded ecosystems, we must establish a new concept of civilization that respects the nature, conforms to the nature and protects the nature, unswervingly take the road of sustainable development and vigorously promote the construction of ecological civilization. Xi Jinping's thought on construction of ecological civilization is based on the fact that China's resource consumption and environmental destruction are increasingly serious, conforming to the trend of sustainable development and green development, summarizing the lessons learned from the development of other countries, and responding to environmental issues in the context of globalization.

The first is based on the basic reality of China. China is still in the initial stage of socialism. As a large developing country, its gross domestic product and overall national strength have been enhanced. But in the process of advancing industrialization, a lot of energy, especially non-renewable resources such as coal and petroleum, has been consumed. The conflict between the extensive economic development model and energy supply has become increasingly prominent. Environmental pollution is not only a pain in people's livelihood, but also a major constraint that restricts China's future economic development. The Communist Party of China has carefully analyzed and summed up and explored this issue and proposed to firmly establish the concept of green development and transform the mode of economic development. The report of 17th CPC National Congress first proposed the concept of ecological civilization. The report of the 18th CPC National Congress incorporated the construction of ecological civilization into the five-in-one overall layout of the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics. The report of the 19th CPC National Congress put forward "accelerating the reform of the ecological civilization system and building a beautiful China". This reflects the continuous deepening of the CPC's understanding of the construction of ecological civilization. Xi Jinping's thought on construction of ecological civi-

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lization is a clear understanding of the protection of the ecological environment and the control of environmental pollution at the current stage. It is an important guarantee for promoting the healthy and sustainable development of the economy and enhancing the governance capability of the state.

The second is a summary of experiences and lessons learned from other countries, especially developed countries. Many developed countries have gone through the path of five pollution then governance at the beginning of development. The cost paid is far more than the wealth created in the previous period. Many incidents of pollution have brought challenges and threats to the lives of the people. The painful lessons made countries realize the importance of ecological environmental protection for future sustainable development. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at the end of last century, Agenda 21 was adopted. It symbolizes that the concept of sustainable development has been universally recognized throughout the world and opened the prelude to the era of ecological civilization. General Secretary Xi Jinping repeatedly pointed out in an international statement that the construction of ecological civilization is related to the future of mankind, calling on the international community to join hands and work together to build a global ecological civilization and adhere to the green, low-carbon, cyclical and sustainable development path. China will continue to honor its emission reduction commitment. At the same time, it will urge developed countries to shoulder their historical responsibilities and help developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change, showing a responsible international image of a rising power.

3 Theoretical basis

Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization is rooted in the ecological wisdom of traditional Chinese philosophy, inheriting and promoting Marxist theory. At the same time, it is also the development of Mao Zedong Thought and the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics with keeping up with the times.

First of all, Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization is rooted in the ecological wisdom of traditional Chinese philosophy. The study of heaven and man is an important part of traditional Chinese philosophy. The unity of heaven and man thinks that man and nature are connected together, and people should respect the laws of nature. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out "our ancestors have long recognized the importance of the ecological environment. Confucius has warned us not to use large nets to fish and not to shoot birds overnight. Xunzi said when the vegetation blooms and grows, it cannot be cut into the forest, the seedlings cannot be cut, and they cannot be cut off from their growth. The *Lu's Spring and Autumn Annals* said if we fish by pumping lake water, there will be no fish next year; and if we hunt by burning the woods, there will be no beasts next year^[1]. These thoughts about using the nature at appropriate times and at appropriate degrees are of very important practical significance".

Xi Jinping stressed that there is no substitute for the ecological environment. Once resources are exhausted, humans will be difficult to survive. The ancient agreement of utilizing the nature appropriately requires us to continue to practice and protect in the 21st century.

Second, Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization inherits and develops Marxist theory. Marx believes that man and nature are the dialectical relationships that interact and restrict each other. Man is a part of nature. Nature is an inorganic body of man. The survival and development of mankind cannot be separated from nature. Engels also pointed out that "man himself is a product of nature that is the environment man exists, and man develops together with this environment"; and "we together with our flesh, blood and mind belong to nature and exist in nature". Xi Jinping inherited the Marxist theory of the dialectical relationships between man and nature, and repeatedly stressed that people and nature coexist in symbiosis; harming nature will eventually hurt humans, and only by respecting the laws of nature can we truly realize sustainable development of economics. Marx thought that nature is an essential factor of labor and provides material information for labor, demonstrating the influence of natural conditions on the role of productivity. Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization inherits this theory and points out that the protection of the ecological environment is to protect the productivity, enriching Marx's interpretation of the theory of nature as productivity.

At last, Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization is in line with the thoughts of CPC's leading collectives on the construction of ecological civilization. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the first generation of central collective leadership led by Mao Zedong formulated policies such as afforestation, being diligent and thrifty, water conservancy construction and population control in response to the deterioration of the natural environment, forming an early ideal of ecological civilization construction. After the reform and opening up, the second-generation central collective leadership with Deng Xiaoping as the core actively promoted the afforestation and water conservancy and the transformation of protective forests and determined the protection of the environment as a basic national policy. At the end of the last century, the third-generation collective leadership with Jiang Zemin as the core has profoundly realized the importance of sustainable development. It is determined as a national policy, and environmental legislation has been continued to be strengthened. After entering the new century, the new generation of central collective leadership with Hu Jintao as the core proposed the concept of scientific development, defined the definition, basic requirements and construction approaches of ecological civilization, and emphasized on building a resource-saving and environment-friendly society. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping mentioned ecological civilization more than one hundred times in a series of speeches. His thought on ecological civilization construction is in line with the ecological civiliza-

tion construction thoughts of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. All of them actively practice the ecological civilization construction in response to the problems. This reflects the CPC's further understanding of the laws governing the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

4 Main content

Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization is mainly reflected in his series of important speeches. He expounded on the basic connotation, important significance, goals, requirements and realization ways of ecological civilization construction, and profoundly answered major theoretical and practical issues such as what is ecological civilization and how to construct ecological civilization, providing a scientific guide for the entire party and the people to move toward a new era of socialist ecological civilization.

The first is about the basic connotation of ecological civilization construction. Xi Jinping pointed out that "ecological civilization is a major achievement of human society" and "ecological civilization is a product of a certain period of development of industrial civilization and a new requirement for the harmonious development of man and nature"^[2]. This reflects the latest human understanding of the relationship between man and nature. The most essential connotation and value orientation of ecological civilization is to realize the harmonious development of man and nature. In order to solve the contradiction between the infinity of economic development and the limited nature of natural resources, we need to take the path of sustainable development, adhere to the concept of green development, establish the overall outlook and long-term outlook, adhere to protection priorities, adhere to the basic national policy of resource conservation and environmental protection, integrate the construction of ecological civilization into all aspects of economic construction, political construction, cultural construction and social construction, build beautiful China and strive to create a new era of socialist ecological civilization.

The second is the importance of ecological civilization construction, which is mainly reflected in the following three aspects. First, "eco-environment protection is a cause that will benefit our future generations"; "all party comrades must clearly understand the urgency and arduous nature of protecting the ecological environment and managing environmental pollution, and are truly determined to improve environmental pollution, in order to create a good production and living environment for the people"^[1]. Xi Jinping's "two clear understandings" reflect his strong sense of urgency and responsibility. He believes that properly handling the relationship between ecological environment protection and development is an inherent requirement for achieving sustainable development, and it is also a major principle in promoting modernization. Second, Xi Jinping stressed that "protecting the ecological environment means protecting the productive forces and improving the ecological environment means protecting the productive forces"^[2]. As a kind of productivity, the ecological environment

includes the ability of natural ecosystems to breed everything, as well as the basic role of various types of natural resources and natural environmental conditions on social productivity. For the latter, Marx explained in *Das Kapital*, pointing out that the force of nature is used as a factor of production to enter the production process. It is a component of social production, which is common to all social production methods. Simultaneously, Xi Jinping emphasized that improving the ecological environment means developing productive forces. It means creating a good ecological environment, repairing damaged ecosystems and providing prevention solutions, and providing a guarantee for the virtuous circle of the ecological environment through human and financial investments. On the basis of conforming to nature and protecting nature, people's subjective initiative will be brought into full play, and productivity will be improved constantly in the process of improving the ecological environment. Third, Xi Jinping put forward the important assertion that "if ecology is burgeoning, civilization will thrive; and if ecology is bad, civilization will wan". There are many examples in ancient and modern China and foreign countries. The residents in Mesopotamia, Greece and Asia Minor ever deforested for land reclamation, and they have become barren lands. Therefore, the protection of the ecology is to protect the national civilization and the future. Whether the well-off is comprehensive is determined by the quality of the ecological environment. This also demonstrates that the construction of ecological civilization is the key to building a well-to-do society.

The following is the goals and requirements of ecological civilization construction, which is mainly reflected in three aspects. First, Xi Jinping has a classic metaphor about ecological protection and economic development, *i. e.*, lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. He pointed out "we need both lucid waters, lush mountains and invaluable assets; we need lucid waters and lush mountains rather than invaluable assets; and lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets"^[1], which dialectically illustrates the unity of environmental protection and economic development. Lucid waters and lush mountains are manifestation of the economic competitiveness of a region, and are also value orientation of the correct political achievements of cadres. Development can no longer take the old road. On the way forward, we must adhere to the scientific development concept and change the method of economic development. Second, Xi Jinping pointed out that "good ecological environment is an important part of the people's good life, and is also an important goal for development"; "good ecological environment is the most equitable public product, and is the most popular people's well-being". This is general secretary's accurate understanding of the needs for people's livelihood. Responding to the people's expectation for a beautiful life, it is pointed out that the concept of "focusing on the ecology meaning focusing on people's livelihood" must be strengthened. We must earnestly safeguard the people's right to life and development so that people can drink clean water and breathe fresh air, thus promoting the happiness index of people's life. Third, Xi Jinping

stressed that environmental governance is a systematic project. According to the idea of system engineering, we must do a good job in the implementation of ecological civilization construction. In ecological and environmental protection, we must look at macro, overall, long-term and consolidated benefits, instead of micro, partial, short-term and individual benefits, avoiding penny wise, losing the trees for the forest, advance consumer and quick success. Xi Jinping stressed the need to protect the ecological environment like eye protection and concentrate on solving outstanding environmental problems. At the same time, major ecological restoration projects must be implemented to scientifically layout production space, living space and ecological space. We must adhere to conservation of resources, work together with all countries in the world to carry out exchanges and cooperation in the field of ecological civilization, continue to open up to the outside world and build a good ecologically beautiful homeland.

Finally, it is about ways to realize the construction of ecological civilization, which can be started from the following three aspects. First, ecological civilization construction depends on institutional norms. Xi Jinping pointed out "only the strictest system can provide reliable guarantee for the construction of ecological civilization"^[3]. The report of the 19th National Congress explicitly stated that "the most stringent system of ecological environmental protection is implemented". We have also reformed and improved the ecological environment management system, establish a national space development protection system, improve the natural forest system, and realize the system of paid use of resources and the ecological protection system. Second, the construction of ecological civilization cannot be separated from the legal protection. "The most stringent legal system is used to protect the ecological environment". The essence is the use of laws to maintain the integrity and systemic nature of the ecosystem. The key lies in the adoption of scientific legislation to ensure the authoritativeness, seriousness, and continuity of the construction of ecological civilization. Through strict law enforcement, the supervision and management of construction of ecological civilization is strengthened. Through judicial justice, the authority of the institutional system of ecological civilization construction is maintained. Ultimately, the rule of law will play a leading and normative role in the construction of ecological civilization. Third, the construction of ecological civilization requires technological innovation and cultural propaganda. Xi Jinping pointed out that "increasing independent innovation, continuously improving the contribution rate of scientific and technological progress to economic development, and changing the fundamental direction of economic development in a timely manner are also important ways to achieve scientific development at a new historical starting point"^[3]. Therefore, technological innovation should guide the new production direction, the economic development mode should be transformed, and the industrial structure should be optimized and upgraded. At the same time, we must promote the concept of green development, recy-

cling development and low-carbon development from the perspective of cultural propaganda, fostering a new trend of ecological civilization.

5 Conclusions

Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization is based on the national conditions, conforms to the trend of the times, and is combined with the ecological wisdom in traditional Chinese philosophy and the development experience of other countries. It has provided new ideals, new methods and new development for the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the modernization of national governance capabilities. The ecological civilization thought has inherited and developed Marxist theory, enriched the connotation of ecological civilization theory and people's livelihood theory, expanded the practical thinking of sustainable development and scientific development concept, and provided scientific guidance for the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Simultaneously, Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization has distinctive personal characteristics. When he was educated, he built a biogas pool in northern Shaanxi; in Zhengding, Hebei, he established a tourism model of virtuous ecological cycle; in Fujian, he promoted the construction of ecological province; in Zhejiang, he promoted the building of green province; after the 18th National Congress, he strived to build beautiful China. The strong ecological sentiment runs through his political process. In a series of speeches by General Secretary Xi Jinping, some cite quotations, and some are vivid and humorous, forming a unique style of language, effectively promoting the popularization of ecological civilization thought. Finally, from a strategic point of view, Xi Jinping's Thought on Construction of Ecological Civilization integrates ecological civilization construction into economic, political, cultural and social construction from the perspective of realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. If is of great significance to transform the economic development model, lead the new normal of economic development, promote the establishment of legal and institutional systems and deepen China's exchanges and cooperation in the international arena.

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