

## An Examination of the Inherent Tensions in Contemporary Chinese Social Life

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### Abstract

Chinese modernization represents a dialectical movement characterized by the holistic generation, differentiation, and reconstitution of social life. Following the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), it successfully terminated the fragmented and turbulent state that had gradually emerged since the Opium Wars. During the early stages of nation-building, socialist transformation, and subsequent socialist construction achieved comprehensive consolidation of political governance and unification of social life. Post-reform and opening-up policies enabled distinct social domains to operate according to their intrinsic principles and rhythms, initiating comprehensive structural and historical differentiation and reorganization. This systemic transformation resulted in inherent tensions within social life. By addressing these inherent tensions as opportunities and driving forces to overcome challenges, Chinese modernization has thus entered a new era and ascended to a higher historical plane. The Chinese nation is now positioned to achieve great rejuvenation through its elevation to the status of a world-historical civilization and its embodiment of a global community with a shared future for mankind, grounded in humanistic principles at their most profound level.

**Key words:** Chinese-style modernization; Social Life; Inherent tensions; New era

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After half a century of reform and opening-up, the socialist market economy has achieved comprehensive development and deep integration within Chinese society. While integrating into the global historical process, China has elevated socialism with Chinese characteristics and the advanced qualities of Marxism to new heights. The dual dynamics of socialism and market economy have fully unleashed both internal potential and external synergies within Chinese society, enabling economic elements, political forces, and cultural values to interact dynamically and compete for development. This synergy has laid a profound foundation and illuminated promising prospects for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Meanwhile, the accelerated advancement of Chinese-style modernization has propelled contemporary Chinese social life into a state of pluralistic complexity, where separation, confrontation, and conflict across various domains have become fully apparent. Addressing the inherent tensions arising in contemporary Chinese social life, while preventing and defusing multiple risks and challenges, constitutes a crucial historical task and cultural mission essential for achieving scientific and harmonious development, as well as realizing a better quality of life in the new era. This dual imperative requires systematic resolution through coordinated institutional innovation and cultural enlightenment.

I  
Through topographical metaphors, Marx established the spatial framework of the “base-superstructure” model to map the interdependent dynamics of societal organization. By theorizing the “productive forces—relations of production” dialectic and its cyclical role in driving historical materialism, he revealed both the intrinsic unity and structural contradictions inherent in the evolution of social formations. Nevertheless, historical complexity transcends the reductiveness of theoretical abstraction.

The integrity of social structures and formations holds only transient, relative validity, as they remain susceptible to fragmentation under the pressures of specific historical contingencies and heterogenous sociopolitical forces. These disruptions surface symptomatically in the superficial strata of social life. In his *Contribution to The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction*, Marx identified three fundamental contradictions facing Germany's revolutionary conditions during its engagement with "the German iteration of modern problems": "The demands of German thought and the answers of German reality to these demands are in striking contradiction. If this is the case with the demands of German thought, will there not be a similar contradiction between civil society and the state and within civil society itself?" (Marx & Engels, 1975, p. 183). This analytical lineage can be traced back to classical antiquity. In *Phaedrus*, Plato's allegory of the "Chariot of the Soul" posits a tripartite struggle within the psyche: a charioteer (reason), a noble steed (spiritedness), and an ignoble steed (appetite). These forces exist in perpetual tension, each striving to dominate the soul's trajectory (Plato, 1925). By synthesizing these explicit and implicit theoretical frameworks, scholars may adopt a novel hermeneutic lens to examine sociocultural realities in contemporary Chinese society, particularly the interplay between structural cohesion and fragmentation in its modernization processes.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 concluded the prolonged period of national fragmentation and systemic disintegration that had characterized China's modern historical trajectory. This watershed moment achieved comprehensive political sovereignty while realizing dual political transformations: the politicization of citizenry through mass political engagement, and the democratization of governance through the institutionalization of popular sovereignty. This revolutionary transition fundamentally transformed China from a feudal autocracy to a modern nation-state grounded in participatory politics. The Three-Year Transition Period (1949-1952) under the "One Transformation and Three Reforms" policy framework, followed by successive Five-Year Plans, systematically enhanced socialist production relations while maintaining economic vitality. Simultaneously, the Marxism-guided socialist ideological framework fostered unprecedented cultural cohesion and theoretical consistency across Chinese society. Through synchronized political-economic regulation, this institutional architecture established comprehensive social integration under socialist principles, creating an organic societal structure where political authority, ideological orientation, and economic organization coalesced into an integrated tripartite system. This systemic transformation resolved fundamental historical contradictions between imperialist domination and national independence, as well as

feudal social relations and popular emancipation. In this context, Marx's 1843 analysis of revolutionary potential in backward societies offers particular relevance, as proposed by Wu:

While Germany's contemporary conditions were undoubtedly backward compared to the French revolutionary principles, which represented a more advanced and rational political framework, the potential for a distinct German path precisely lay in the impossibility of replicating the French model. This paradoxical dynamic stemmed from Germany's unique sociopolitical configuration and particular historical circumstances. (Wu, 2023, p. 15)

The Chinese Revolution achieved its historic success precisely through such dialectical innovation—transcending both capitalist developmental models and the urban-centric Russian revolutionary template, instead pioneering a rural-encirclement strategy that realized socialist transformation through indigenous adaptation of Marxist principles.

However, regarding the developmental trajectory of Chinese social life in the 1970s, which can be philosophically framed as the inherent tension between the objective necessity of form and the subjective agency of principles, we may once again reinterpret Marx's theory of social development to elucidate the Chinese Communists' renewed innovations in national governance. While socialist principles and planned economy mechanisms embody historically progressive models for societal advancement, China's developmental reality during its primary socialist phase presented unique constraints. The imperative to enhance productive forces necessitated a departure from Soviet-style political economy models, thereby establishing an essential truth: China's developmental viability resided precisely in its methodological innovation—transitioning from ideologically-driven political mobilization to institutionally-anchored socioeconomic management, from "promoting production through revolutionary campaigns" toward "adopting economic methods to resolve political and social problems" (Deng, 1994, p. 196); China has evolved beyond exclusive dependence on a planned economy, instead developing a synthesized model that strategically coordinates planning mechanisms with market principles as complementary economic governance tools. The nation has thus transcended the historical pattern of isolated socialist development through the implementation of reform and opening-up policies, to "boldly assimilate and draw upon all civilized achievements created by human society" (Deng, 1994, p. 373), which facilitates the systematic integration of progressive elements from global civilizational achievements. This strategic paradigm enables socialism to cultivate comparative institutional advantages over capitalist systems. The progressive implementation of

reform and opening-up policies has induced fundamental transformations in China's social architecture. As Sun et.al. observe, "The most fundamental transformation in China's social structure manifests as a paradigm shift from a totalistic society to a differentiated society" (1994, p.51). Concurrent with the structural differentiation and functional integration of the traditional family-state continuum and the urban-rural dual economic framework, contemporary China has cultivated a distinctive societal model that diverges from Western civil society prototypes. This evolutionary process has significantly amplified the complexity and dynamism inherent in modern Chinese social organization.

The implementation of Chinese-style modernization following the reform and opening-up policies has provoked a comprehensive societal restructuring centered on industrialization, marketization, and urbanization. This process has transformed the formerly cohesive, homogeneous social structure into a fragmented complex characterized by heterogeneous components and conflicting operational paradigms. The resultant loosely-integrated social organism manifests through three distinct structural domains governed by divergent principles: Initially, in the economic domain, "economic work constitutes the paramount political priority of the current era, as economic issues constitute the overriding political concern that takes precedence over all others" (Deng, 1994, p. 194). Economic development is placed at the core of national priorities, emphasizing the maximally rapid advancement of productive forces, as predicated on the socialist conviction that poverty constitutes ideological contradiction while sluggish development undermines systemic legitimacy. The economic domain thus adheres to the growth-oriented (supply-side) principle, advocating for the maximization and acceleration of total social wealth accumulation. This strategic approach aims to resolve the fundamental contradiction between the people's ever-increasing material and cultural needs and the underdeveloped state of social production through efficient resource allocation and productive capacity enhancement. However, this developmental enthusiasm has historically manifested problematic tendencies including productivism, materialistic excess, and GDP fetishism. Meanwhile, regions and individuals with the necessary resources and capabilities are encouraged to achieve prosperity through legal business operations and diligent work, while explicitly rejecting egalitarianism. This approach has prominently highlighted the efficiency principle of the market economy as a robust driving force for economic development, establishing a dynamic mechanism that rewards productivity and innovation within the socioeconomic system.

Moreover, political operations adhere to an entitlement framework emphasizing distributive justice and equality. The paramount political objective of socialism lies not

only in prioritizing economic development and rapid economic growth, but more fundamentally in eradicating exploitation, eliminating polarization, and ultimately achieving common prosperity. This constitutes the thorough realization of authentic individual dignity and democracy. Consequently, common prosperity serves as the critical benchmark for evaluating whether socialism and market economy can achieve organic integration. The current severe situation of widening wealth disparity reflects the confrontation and estrangement between economic and political domains, indicating a disconnection between economic mechanisms and political value orientations.

Ultimately, the modern industrial production system's relentless pursuit of discipline and efficiency has imposed rigidly defined roles and functional constraints on human participants, manifesting the suppression and dissolution of individual personality by mechanized systems and automated production processes. This phenomenon eventually serves or yields to the maximization of productive functionality within economic profit-seeking activities. As a counter-response to the homogenizing logic of industrial production, the cultural sphere has emerged as an experimental terrain for self-actualization and individual expression. Various cultural forms engendered by cultural industries strive to transcend this uniformity logic by foregrounding the authenticity and uniqueness of individual existence. The human impulse toward self-realization within cultural domains fundamentally challenges and proposes alternatives to the homogeneous life patterns imposed by collective or generic social frameworks.

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## II

From a historical analysis of the formation and differentiation of the integrated nature of Chinese social life, it becomes evident that there exists a certain degree of misalignment and contradiction in the actual operations of the three major spheres of contemporary Chinese society. This situation has thereby generated structural and historical inherent tensions, which inevitably manifest as developmental challenges and significant risks confronting modern China, with these tensions fundamentally shaping both the current transformations and future trajectories of social life. The inherent tensions caused by the differentiation and disintegration of social life's integral character can be categorized into two primary types.

The first major category of tension refers to structural contradictions between the political, cultural, and economic spheres. This structural tension can be examined through three dimensions: the first aspect to consider is the inherent conflict between core principles of political and economic domains—the prioritization of entitlements versus growth imperatives. During the pre-reform and

opening-up era, entitlements received disproportionate emphasis and fulfillment despite underdeveloped economic growth and material supply, reaching its extreme manifestation in the Cultural Revolution's "grand democratization". In the post-reform period, rapid economic growth became the paramount priority, while entitlements failed to achieve commensurate realization and satisfaction. Moreover, certain regions and historical periods have witnessed dual deficiencies in both entitlements and economic development. Under conditions of imbalanced economic distribution and widening wealth disparities, fundamental survival rights and developmental entitlements for vulnerable populations in underdeveloped border regions and impoverished areas remain inadequately guaranteed and comprehensively addressed. This paradoxical coexistence highlights the structural incompatibility between political egalitarianism and economic efficiency within transitional societies.

Furthermore, the tension between the individuality principle in modern culture and the reification principle of market economy manifests as a contradiction between cultural advocacy for free individuality/self-realization and the highly regimented physical-mental discipline in economic domains. This symptomatic manifestation is exemplified by phenomena like Foxconn employees' "serial suicides" (N jumps), which reveal an intrinsic conflict between the pursuit of personalized cultural expression/self-fulfillment and economic homogenization controls coupled with purely profit-driven functional orientation. Such self-destructive acts essentially constitute corporeal protests against self-interest obsession, instrumental rationality, and the automated production system, paradoxically expressed through life-endangering behaviors.

Lastly, there exists a tension in the operational rhythms among the economic, political, and cultural spheres. Contemporary Chinese society demonstrates a rhythmic disarray in the functioning of its three major domains: While economic reforms have generally unfolded rapidly under planned leadership and systematic implementation, political reforms—entering the "deep-water zone" of systemic transformation—have experienced prolonged hesitation and vacillation. Meanwhile, the realm of popular culture has become mired in ceaseless superficial innovation, exemplified by the mass production of historical dramas featuring whimsical reinterpretations and court intrigue dramas obsessed with lavish displays of power dynamics. The imaginative reproduction embedded in such categorized and stylized cultural works parallels the thematic essence captured by American novelist J.D. Salinger in *The Catcher in the Rye*, where the protagonist's inability to establish authentic connections with historical reality leads to immersion in introspective delusions and fantasies. It must be acknowledged that contemporary China faces a developmental imbalance

characterized by discordant tempos across social domains: Economic construction occasionally manifests irrational adventurism and herd mentality, losing both the will and capacity for rhythmic modulation; Whereas political institution-building and cultural cultivation fail to achieve commensurate progress, equally lacking the determination and capability for necessary acceleration where synchronized advancement is required. This asynchronous development pattern reveals systemic deficiencies in coordinating multidimensional modernization processes.

The second major category of tensions mainly refers to the strained relationships between various developmental stages or components within the economic, political, and cultural spheres. This category primarily pertains to diachronic changes in operational principles and value orientations across these domains, highlighting the inherent tensions between the "present state" and "historical trajectories" within each field. To begin with, from an economic perspective, contemporary Chinese society has undergone profound transformations in both objective orientation and distribution mechanisms. Regarding developmental objectives, there has been a paradigm shift from addressing basic survival needs—eliminating hunger and poverty in earlier periods to fulfilling wealth accumulation demands—catering to desires and enhancing material enjoyment in the current era. This progression extends further toward the comprehensive satisfaction of aspirations for improved quality of life in the new epoch, thereby vividly illustrating the historical trajectory of human needs. In terms of distribution principles, with the intensification and overextension of market mechanism spontaneity, the principle of distribution according to labor has been inevitably weakened and marginalized. Capital claims its share based on its inherent profit-driven logic, while power structures obtain additional gray income through covert rent-seeking practices. Within this transformative context, the core dilemma confronting policymakers lies in prioritizing economic strategies: Whether social resources should primarily be allocated to establish fundamental societal safeguards. If this proposition is negated, contemporary Chinese society risks cultivating destabilizing elements through a paradoxical dynamic—suppressing the essential needs of the majority to accommodate the extravagant demands of a minority. The emergence and proliferation of wealth resentment in modern China can be interpreted as symptomatic of this growing imbalance. Crucially, this antagonism stems from the inherent contradiction between labor and capital—not from the superficial dichotomy between propertied and propertyless classes. As Marx incisively observed:

The antithesis between propertylessness and property, so long as it is not comprehended as the antithesis of labour and capital, still remains an indifferent antithesis, not grasped in its active connection, in its internal



relation—an antithesis not yet grasped as a contradiction. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p. 277)

Moreover, two significant tensions have emerged in the political sphere. On one hand, there exists an evolving transformation of the state's role and functions. In its positioning and operationalization within the market economy, the state, as a coercive force, has occasionally been overtly instrumentalized as a means of capital accumulation. Public power increasingly serves the narrow interests of specific interest groups and privileged classes through power rent-seeking mechanisms, thereby generating tension among the subjects of public power ownership. On the other hand, there is escalating friction between bureaucratic systems and citizens' demands for democratic participation. A prominent issue affecting the harmonious political ecology of contemporary China lies in the institutional barriers hindering the expression and fulfillment of public opinion. Beyond the artificial manufacturing of public sentiment, intermediary functional departments and representative forms sometimes degenerate into systemic obstacles for the upward transmission of public opinion and feedback mechanisms. This phenomenon has given rise to the circumvention of normal channels through cross-regional online real-name whistleblowing. Consequently, the Party Central Committee consistently emphasizes that Party members and cadres must engage with grassroots communities and stay grounded in reality, resolutely overcome aloof bureaucratism, vigorously promote investigative research practices, and resolve urgent difficulties and pressing concerns affecting ordinary citizens. Fundamentally, both aspects relate to the legitimate exercise of public power. The prevalent anti-official sentiment in contemporary China—where anti-corruption campaigns targeting “tigers” (high-ranking officials), “foxes” (fugitives), and “flies” (low-level bureaucrats) consistently attract intense online scrutiny and even carnivalesque public reactions—manifests, to some extent, a collective unconscious protest against the alienation of public power.

In addition, the cultural domain also manifests two fundamental tensions, with the first being the tension between anthropomorphic thinking and reified thinking, representing a paradigm shift from personifying nature to objectifying humanity. Anthropomorphic thinking, as a sentimental delusion, embodies humanity's ecological perception of nature as a living habitat, traceable to primitive awe or nature worship. Marx conceptualized nature as “man's inorganic body”—serving as both direct sustenance for human life and the object of theoretical cognition and aesthetic appreciation (Marx & Engels, 1975, p. 276). Conversely, reified thinking constitutes a coldly detached fallacy, reflecting capitalism's instrumental valuation of both nature and humanity as mere objects. Marx explicitly observed that “In the commodity, and

especially in the commodity as the product of capital, the reification of the social determinations of production and the subjectification of the material foundations of production, which characterize the entire capitalist mode of production, are already present” (Marx, 1991, p. 953). This epistemological transition signifies the degeneration of humanity's innate religious sensibility and the weakening of primal moral sentiments, an inevitable consequence of historical progression from “primary nature” to “secondary nature”. Another tension is that between the individual and the collective, manifesting as a dichotomy in value orientation: whether to adopt a societal orientation that emphasizes individuals' social responsibilities and universal obligations, or to embrace an individual orientation characterized by an obsessive focus on the exclusive rights and freedoms of the solitary self. For Communist Party members, this translates to prioritizing party discipline over personal disposition or vice versa. Post-reform China has witnessed a gradual shift from collective consciousness to individual self-actualization. Under market economy conditions, individual-centered values often manifest as rational or sophisticated egoism, sometimes degenerating into extreme self-interest that pursues unlimited personal autonomy.

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### III

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Based on the historical perspective of the “fracture-tension” theoretical model, we can systematically reveal the inherent tensions within contemporary Chinese social life and their historical origins. The generation and evolution of these internal tensions fully manifest the Chinese characteristics of modern issues or the localized expression of modernity in China: How an oriental agrarian nation entrenched in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society achieved national rejuvenation and contributed to building a community with a shared future for humanity through acrobatic leaps of unconventional development, while simultaneously drawing from and transcending Western modernity. In this ancient civilization, modern challenges have acquired distinctive oriental, national, and contemporary dimensions. Furthermore, a more immediate and imperative inquiry emerges: How should we dialectically assess and effectively address these intrinsic tensions permeating contemporary Chinese society?

From a theoretical perspective, a dialectical grasp of tension proves particularly essential, as the concept inherently embodies dual energies—both negative and positive. Internal tension in social life may manifest as a dual mechanism: On one hand, it can evolve into significant risk challenges and serve as a self-destructive mechanism for societal existence when contradictions between opposing forces exceed critical thresholds,

thereby rupturing the existential boundaries of unity. On the other hand, such tension may function as a generative or vitalizing mechanism when maintained within necessary parameters, serving as an indispensable dynamic force that propels the unified entity toward historical progression within its inherent developmental trajectory. This dialectical understanding of negation as substantive affirmation finds explicit validation and thorough elaboration in the works of Hegel, Marx, and Adorno. Their philosophical systems reveal that the essence of negative dialectics lies in the process of self-actualization through objectification: By externalizing inherent potentials while simultaneously assimilating the object's content and dynamic energy, the subject enriches and expands itself through the object's substantiality and veracity. A paradigmatic demonstration occurs in Marx's dialectical analysis of "private property and communism", where he establishes a relationship judgment of profound dialectical significance: "The transcendence of self-alienation follows the same path as self-alienation itself" (Marx & Engels, 1975, p. 277). This formulation indicates that communism emerges not as an abstract negation of modern civilization, but rather as the inevitable culmination of private property's extreme development. As Wu elucidates: "Only through the comprehensive movement of private property, through its heightened state of tension, and through the intensification of contradictions developed therefrom, can communism attain concrete actuality" (2022, p. 284).

Furthermore, the dual attitude of optimism and pessimism in confronting states of tension is also of great concern. Arnold Toynbee posits that "challenge and response" constitute the fundamental dynamic of civilizational rise and decline. The presence of challenges and the capacity for effective countermeasures typically determine the developmental trajectory of civilizations:

In the study of the growth of civilizations, we find that they can be broken down into a series of challenges and responses, and that the reason why the drama proceeds from one episode to the next is that each response not only successfully meets the particular challenge which elicited it, but also contributes to the evocation of another challenge, which in turn leads to a further response. Thus, the essence of the growth of civilizations proves to be a dynamic movement, which carries the challenged party through a state of equilibrium achieved by a successful response into a condition of disequilibrium, which betokens that the party is now confronted by a new challenge. (Toynbee, 1934, pp. 128-129).

The paramount importance of "response" as an active principle finds compelling demonstration in the decline of ancient Greek civilization. Failing to effectively address dual challenges from internal and external fronts, the Hellenic ethical world underpinned by the "oikos-polis" spiritual framework ultimately

declined from civilizational zenith, interrupting its noble trajectory and succumbing to the legalistic framework of the Roman Empire. As a profound manifestation of their inability to confront practical challenges, Greek philosophy underwent an ontological transition from a "living form" to a "moribund state": Philosophies such as Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism, while constructing a comprehensive architecture of self-consciousness rooted in freedom, inevitably gravitated towards nihilism and consciousness of alienation. These philosophical movements ultimately served as transitional conduits for the subsequent ascendancy of Christian civilization in Europe.

From a practical perspective, if the inherent tensions within contemporary Chinese society are disregarded and allowed to proliferate spontaneously, there exists a significant risk of falling into the deterministic predicaments characteristic of Western-style modernization. It must be acknowledged that the fundamental components of the Tacitus Trap, middle-income trap, and Thucydides Trap—representing antithetical possibilities to Chinese-style modernization—are gradually coalescing within present-day China. Conversely, by adhering to the historical dialectic that civilizational advancement does not originate from privileged environments, and by actively cultivating the enduring Chinese virtues of overcoming adversity through dynamic agency and combative spirit, we may transform these latent tensions into driving forces for pioneering new developmental paradigms. Such an approach would propel contemporary Chinese society into an era of modernization marked by unprecedented historical significance. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Party leadership has demonstrated unwavering determination and courage in addressing these societal tensions and mitigating their associated systemic risks. The principles and strategic approaches that warrant special emphasis in this context are as follows: First, the delineation the historical context and contemporary imperatives to formulate a sober assessment of the current paradigm shift characterized as "unprecedented transformations in a century," accompanied by corresponding strategic countermeasures. The political reports of the 18th, 19th, and 20th National Congresses systematically articulate China's modernization strategy through rigorous analysis of the "challenge-response" dynamic. These three pivotal reports have astutely identified the principal contradictions and prevalent challenges in contemporary Chinese social development, while systematically outlining the grand blueprint and implementation strategies for achieving the comprehensive construction of a moderately prosperous society, realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and building a community with a shared future for mankind. This

strategic planning framework represents the Communist Party of China's theoretical consciousness and top-level design in economic, political, and cultural dimensions regarding China's future development at this historical juncture.

The second aspect is to profoundly comprehend the dialectics between knowledge and praxis, thought and discourse. Marx positioned the transformation of the world as the philosophical core and functional imperative, asserting that when divorced from sensuous activity and worldly engagement, pure contemplation and mere interpretation of reality become directionless and value-deprived. This necessitates a dynamic interplay between theory and practice (material reality), as Marx insightfully observed: "It is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality must also strive towards thought" (Marx & Engels, 1975, p. 183). Meanwhile, when confronting inherent tensions, significant risks, and deep-seated societal challenges, it is imperative to maintain both the intellectual integrity to acknowledge problems and the philosophical depth to reflect upon them. Simultaneously, one must demonstrate the intellectual courage to articulate theoretical reflections with full transparency and thoroughness, embodying the principle of "expressing all insights without reservation, ensuring complete articulation; granting immunity to speakers while urging listeners to internalize admonitions; rectifying verifiable errors while maintaining vigilance against potential oversights" (Mao, 1996, p. 340). Based on the historical deficiencies of the modern German nation, Marx once cited Tacitus regarding the unity of thought and speech as the greatest happiness, stating that "when I can think what I want and express what I think, that is truly a state of freedom—a happiness inseparable from the nature of man" (Marx & Engels, 1975, p. 162). Confronting the inherent tensions within contemporary Chinese society and achieving the unity of knowledge and action, as well as the integration of thought and expression, constitute a dual responsibility of theoretical-practical coherence and ideological-linguistic alignment that Chinese Communists must courageously undertake through self-revolution. This necessitates an unwavering commitment to introspective reform, where the political will to "turn the blade inward" becomes the prerequisite for forging a new public ethos characterized by intellectual integrity and operational effectiveness.

Of equal importance is, constructing modern articulation mechanisms or solidarity systems to fulfill culture's mission in shaping new civilizational paradigms and a human community with a shared future. Addressing the inherent fractures and tensions in contemporary Chinese social life requires establishing multi-tiered articulation mechanisms or solidarity systems that seek unity from diversity, coherence

from fragmentation, and structural formation from practice. These mechanisms primarily involve: (a) deepening socialist-market economy integration. As the foundational articulation mechanism, economic fulfillment should orient toward common prosperity, ensuring that the legitimate satisfaction of material needs converges with equity and justice to foster cohesion; (b) modernizing national governance systems and capabilities. By confining power within institutional constraints and implementing whole-process people's democracy, state rationality becomes rooted in popular rationality and public ethos. This initiative cultivates a unified political consciousness—a shared commitment to building a People's Republic—that constitutes the intermediary tier of articulation; (c) cultural-spiritual cohesion as the supreme articulation. Residing in the realm of cultural values, the integration of Marxism with China's fine traditional culture constructs a shared spiritual homeland for all ethnic groups (Xi, 2023). This synthesis aims to establish a civilizational framework at the humanistic level, forging new cultural lifeforms that resolve tensions between socialism and market economics while transcending the limitations of capitalist modernity and private property. It inherently nurtures a new world-historical ethos—prioritizing labor, people-centered development, and collective well-being—signaling the Chinese nation's emergence as a world-historical actor embodying humanistic principles.

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Faced with the inherent divisions and cultural contradictions within the capitalist world, Daniel Bell confidently declared his intention to be "a socialist in economics, a liberal in politics, and a conservative in culture" (Bell, 1976, p. xi). This composite or eclectic social philosophy and cultural ideal, while projecting an aura of subjective composure and equanimity at the individual level, essentially constitutes a modern utopian construct. This is because the Western-style modernization process, by facilitating the unbridled expansion of desires and the accumulation of poverty, inevitably drives Western capitalist societies toward a logic of infinite regression into ethical degradation and systemic collapse. Simultaneously, within a civil society permeated by private interests and antagonisms, individuals inevitably experience anxiety and panic stemming from "rupture-tension" dynamics, along with a profound sense of fragmentation and existential unease as they navigate heterogeneous cultural values and moral frameworks. This manifests as the existential anguish of becoming "the 'other' of oneself"—a state of existential alienation and rootlessness that raises profound concerns about the possibility of attaining authentic human existence. In this context, as a reflection on and transcendence of Western-

style modernization, Chinese modernization serves as a resolution to the contradiction between the people's growing needs for a better life and the unbalanced and inadequate development. To fulfill this mission, it must not only meet the specified quantitative targets in material living standards but also provide comprehensive practical responses to alleviate the inherent tensions within social life, particularly cultural tensions, in qualitative dimensions. This approach creatively forges a Chinese paradigm for addressing modern challenges that embody distinctive national identity and temporal characteristics. Ultimately, such modernization achievements need to be systematically conceptualized and articulated through theoretical frameworks and cultural paradigms of intellectual expression.

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