

Modernization of the People's Republic of China: History and Complexities

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Abstract—The aim of this paper is to investigate a process of modernization of the People's Republic of China. The theme of scientific research is interesting, first, because the Chinese model of development is recognized as successful and most dynamically developing. They are obliged by these successes of the modernization spent in the country. Economy modernization as the basic motive power of progress of the country is a priority direction of development in the Republic of Kazakhstan. So the example of successful development modernization processes in China can be rather useful to use in working out of the Kazakhstan national reforms.

Keywords—Modernization, the People's Republic of China, social and economic development.

I. INTRODUCTION

ECONOMICAL upturn in China became one of the most important events in the world at the end of the last century. Within 30 years of system-structural and social and economic transformations in the context of socialism with Chinese specificity the People's Republic of China (PRC) has achieved massive success in socio-economic development and has created a highly competitive economy, which even in conditions of global crisis provides high rates of economic growth.

On this round of development when many countries get in the way of modernization and reforms, specific experience of China attracts attention not only by virtue of its peculiarities, but also by virtue of preliminary results of modernization, which has put this state to the first five of world leaders on many indicators. The experience of conduct of policy of modernization in the PRC causes the huge interest based on real achievements of China within the shortest time, even by historical standards, in the context of comparison of Chinese model with reforms in countries of the former Soviet Union and other states. In the premises, it may be said that theoretical and practical relevance of research of the PRC modernization consists of possibility for scientific and public institutions, departments to use its conclusions and proposes in order to increase efficiency of economic transformations and foreign

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economic policy of developing countries. In our opinion all this is related to the fact that its model of modernization and development is more adapted to the solving of problems of developing countries, than models imposed by the West and practiced in the developing world.

Many scientists and researchers raise a question as to whether it is possible to use Chinese experience at carrying out of nation-wide reforms in other countries of the world. Thus, opinions are completely different on this point – beginning with recognition of the need to use this experience, especially in economic area, up to complete negation of possibility to use it due to differences in social and economic life, in political system of different countries, etc. In our opinion, studying of modernization process in the PRC should not be limited by the description of procedure for its carrying out, but should include search of a set of unified approaches applicable as a whole and for other states, getting in the way of modernization and reforms, which, no doubt, are available. Discovering the essence of social and economic processes in modern China, we dare to hope on formation of adequate ideas about the Chinese experience of reforms and its application in the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as in many other developing countries.

II. EVOLUTION OF THE THEORY OF MODERNIZATION IN CHINA

If we want to understand better the modernization of China, we should consider it as a process, process of changes, long-term transition from one position of society to another one. In relation to the modernization of China, this is the process of transition from the traditional agricultural society to the modern industrial society. At the same time, we should take into consideration that the modernization of China occurred in certain environment not similar to the western.

In spite of the fact that idea of progress is put today into question in number of concepts, the progress of China and, partly, India, bring changes in theoretical positions of those, who got used to associate the progress only with the development of the West. The concept of progress, in general, affirmed as derivative from western concept of progressive advance. It assumes a development of mind and freedom, production and material resources. But today progress gains civilization dimension, which rejects consistent model and universalization of anybody's experience, including western.

As one of inseparable components of progress, the concept of "modernization" is a very popular term, widely used in different contexts and allotted with different meanings. For example, for residents of developed countries the modernization is associated with innovations and leadership, and for residents of developing countries – aspiration to

achieve world level of development. For average citizens the modernization is an achievements, development, “the last word in science and technology”, and for officials of the country is an urbanization, informatization and even national goal. Scientists by it mean various phenomena, global movements, subjects for researches and theoretical reflections [1, 77].

As noted in the teamwork “Survey report on the modernization in the world and China”, in 1998 Chinese professor He Chuanqi offered a theory of secondary modernization as transition from industrial society to era of knowledge. In his opinion, “If the first (primary phase) is a classical modernization, which involves industrialization, urbanization, democratization and rational approach, so the second (secondary) is a “neomodernization”, for which concepts of scientific knowledge, information, globalization and environmental protection are getting a sense. Harmonious development of both phases means an integrated modernization” [1,18]. Emphasizing historical sequence of both phases of the modernization, he considers the way of integrated modernization to be important for China as a method of combination of primary and secondary modernization tasks.

When we are talking about the concept of “modernization” in China, many people consider it as a new concept. It is wrong. The period of transition of China to the modern times, its intensive modernization in scientific literature is dated to the first half of the XX century – 1900-1950. This is the time of Chinese establishment of modernity. Chinese state of this period is considered as a subject of liner development of the country, millennial history of China, during which the specific Chinese identity had been forming. [5, 19]. Actually, the concept of “modernization” in China appeared for the first time in 1919, during the “May Fourth Movement”, when some intellectuals started to talk about the future of China. They used the concept of “modernization”, and express a hope on realization of the modernization in China. At that time they meant the transition from traditional agricultural society to a modern industrial society as the modern West. Since that moment, the “modernization” became a keyword in newspapers and magazines of that time. Later this concept disappeared, and again came into use in 30th years, when Japan intruded in China. In 1975 the prime-minister Zhou Enlai used this concept in his report, and called Chinese government to realize “Four modernizations” in the field of industry, agriculture, national defense, science and equipment. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, China began to use the concept of modernization again as the slogan and as tasks, which should be achieved [2].

Professor of the East China Normal University Li Huntu in his article “Modernization of China: historical survey” divides the modernization of China into four periods, so to speak offers four different models of the modernization for each period. Let’s trace these difficult steps and different processes.

1) From 1840 up to 1910. It is the first period and the beginning of the modernization of China. Its purpose was to

rescue the country from the western intrusion. As we know, after industrial revolution the Great Britain aspired to create commercial relations with Beijing, but all efforts got nowhere. In 1840 Britain won China in the First opium war, and China was forced to open its doors for the Great Britain and other western countries. China, which got strong defeat in opium war, came up against a situation when China was not anymore a world center and did not have lapsed power, whilst the Great Britain and other western countries were powerful. China began to realize that the unique decision was to learn from the West in order to win the West and to make the country powerful. Thus, the dynasty of Qing decided to begin reforms and started to develop industry and technologies.

2) From 1911 up to 1949. It is a second model of the modernization, which corresponds to changes from reforms within federal system of dynasty to the bourgeois revolution. When the navy of China was defeated by its neighbor Japan in 1894-1895 in the Chinese North Sea, it was a big shock for China: how the big country, which has been developing within fifty years, can be defeated by a small country? The main reasons were established. And one of the reasons was that the dynasty of Qing carried out reforms within federal system of dynasty, whilst the reformers, in fact, did not want to change an ancient regime. The defeat against Japan showed that it was impossible to make China strong, adhering to the ancient regime, and that the dynasty of Qing could not pave a way to the modernization. Radical group was convinced that the revolution was an absolute necessity. It meant that the old regime of dynasty of Qing should be changed and the new political system should be created. They turned away from Japanese model to French and American models, hoping to change traditional China by the revolutionary way.

By virtue of a hard work since 1912 to 1937 the national economy was not only renovated, but also increased. In China this period is called “Golden age” [2]. But this favorable situation stopped, when in 1937 Japan intruded in China and suddenly disturbed the process of economic growth for eight years. Today when we reflect on this period, we should raise a question what if the war with Japan had not been during long eight years (1937-1945), would China have achieved economic growth comparable with advanced industrial countries? Of course, history cannot be rewritten, and we can only conjecture the causes. After eight long years of the war against Japan, there were also three years of the civil war (1946-1949), in which two parties, Kuomintang and Communist Party, fought with each other for the power. Finally, communists won the war, and new country was created. It was based on the labor class and the peasantry, as opposed to Kuomintang, which focused on the bourgeois or capitalist class. It also meant that China for the first time since 1840 has renovated national unity and sovereignty. In one word, China entered a new era of the modernization.

3) Since 1949 up to 1976. It is a third model, which corresponds to the transition from capitalist to socialist modernization. After a victory in the civil war, new leaders faced a difficult situation. China was still poor and backward

country though its industry was developing from the middle of the 19th century. There was no any real industrial revolution, as in England. Even if there were any signs and characters of present, they were limited in big cities such as Shanghai. Thus, economic development became the first task for new China. What way did the communistic management choose to achieve development? At that time, the communistic management refused from the western model, and chose the Soviet model of development. Such words as “To learn from the Soviet Union”, “Today of the Soviet Union is the tomorrow of China” were slogans of a day. Nevertheless the history showed that the Soviet model had serious disadvantages such as idealized centrally-directed planned economy, its mistaken opinion that the market economy is undoubtedly capitalist abolition of private ownership. In one word, it created “socialist” dogmas, which later turned against socialism, doing harm to the effective modernization.

4) Since 1976 to the present time. It is a fourth period of the modernization. Facts showed that the Mao’s socialist modernization or anticapitalist modernization did not bring the desired results and it was not natural. Facing a difficulty of situation, Deng Xiaoping took measures for reforming of regime. In order to make it, he called for “liberation of mind” from old dogmas and mistaken understanding of socialism. The development of industrial forces of the country was declared to be the priority task instead of conduct of “class struggle”, which was a cornerstone of policy for Mao Zedong [2].

III. CHINESE MODEL OF MODERNIZATION

Selection of the general modernization strategy by the PRC government was conditioned mainly by three main purposes, the meanings of which could change during more than 20 years of reforms: 1) a necessity to retain the power in hands of ruling party, focusing people on the achievement of realistic purposes related to the gradual withdrawal from the situation of extreme poverty; 2) a necessity to create a wide support base within the bureaucratic apparatus for top-echelon of the ruling party (of such part, which maintained reforms); 3) a necessity to increase a political role and military power of the PRC in order to ensure the future struggles for environment resources and market outlets of export production [6, 26].

The model of development, applicable for achievement of specified purposes, could not be borrowed to the fullest extent in other countries. That is why the PRC government has applied a model of parallel development of various economic orders at preservation of the dominant role of public sector, which was provided by the strong bureaucratic apparatus, remained from the Mao period, but which has received new guidelines and tasks.

Based on the conclusion about the absence of unified model, Deng Xiaoping, who was afraid that the ideological dictate and severe determinism of Marxist theory would restrain realization of reforms, deduced the necessity to link the socialist construction with the level of economic

development of the country and its historical conditions. Comparison with the outside world enabled Deng Xiaoping to allocate characteristics of China, which distinguish it from other countries (low level of economic development, huge arrears from developed countries, large population, deficit of arable land) and which were not considered in Marxist schemes, and to justify, therefore, a realization of the “modernization with Chinese specificity”, the “modernization of Chinese type” in China. Without being able to refuse from symbols of the revolution and the existing social project, Deng Xiaoping, nevertheless, tried to give a strictly instrumental character to Marxism, by reducing its value as an imperative ideal, having formalized the provision on a “practice as a standard of truth” and having invoked “to put an ease consciousness”, to release from ruling dogmas on the 3rd Plenum of the Central Committee of the 11th convocation in December 1978. From that time, according to the official opinion in the PRC, the implementation of modern reforms was initiated.

The theory of socialism construction with Chinese specificity was declared as the official ideology in the PRC during the transformations of the state scale. The policy of reforms has received a name, fixed in the Constitution of the PRC – “socialist modernization”: “Our country is at the initial stage of socialism. The main challenge for the nation is a concentration of efforts focused on the socialist modernization according to the theory of socialism with Chinese specificity” [3]. The socialist modernization in the PRC constitutes a Chinese model of specific modernization, which is based on the theory of socialism construction with Chinese specificity, resulting from the synthesis implemented by ruling political elite of China of Marxist concepts for the development of society, Confucian socio-political concepts of harmonious social development (including building of society “of modest means” – “xiao kang”), as well as capitalist procedures and methods in field of economical reforming. In our opinion, the Confucian concept rejected by Mao Zedong was subsequently chosen by Deng Xiaoping on the basis of political goals, which allowed not only to return an authority to the PRC as a cultural leader of the East Asian region, but also gave a foundation for the future peaceful unification of the country, as the “xiao kang” concept is traditionally close and clear for citizens of both coasts of the Taiwan Strait.

The entrance of China in 1978 to the path of economic reforms and openness after ten years of the cultural revolution, which caused the crisis in the national economy and delayed a social and economic development of the country almost for two decades, showed the practicability of the use of market mechanism and large-scale cooperation with the outside world for the construction of the competitive country.

However, the Chinese experience of modernization has once again demonstrated that the transition from the socialist economy to the market was extremely difficult. Incompleteness and limitation of reforms have become the reason of intractable problems, which got in the way of transition of the Chinese economy to the real market.

According to expert opinion, the main threat of further modernization comes from the public sector. 125 million out of 170 million people, occupied in the industrial production, work in this sector. However the majority of state enterprises are unprofitable. Corruption, inherent especially in the administrative economy, corrodes all echelons of power, in spite of death penalties and long imprisonments. The ethic and social conflicts do not stop in various regions. More than 100 million homeless peasants wander from one province to another one in search of job and livelihoods [7].

Implementation of the socialistic modernization in the PRC persists, and this means, that the PRC top leadership has to face and meet new practical as well as scientific and theoretical difficulties and contradictions. As can be seen from the above, the analysis of the emerging issues and application of new methods for its solving enables to outline such parameters of the Chinese modernization model as flexibility and rapid adaptation to new conditions.

Aside from that, the vector and dynamics of the further modernization development in the PRC should be mentioned. We are of the opinion that, notwithstanding the fact that the Chinese top leadership has defined the economic domain as the basis for the socialistic modernization, the implementation of political reforms, which are realized heavily and gradually in the Chinese society, is inevitable. In addition to the above mentioned changes in this domain, further perspectives for reforms in the political field of the PRC may be prognosticated.

On the new historical stage China had to introduce a number of changes to the state modernization policies, on theoretical as well as practical levels, which complied with conditions of the XXI century, though all of these are based not on denial, but on rationalization of the balanced system of stable socialism, which is built up in the PRC without alternation of regime. Provided that, restructuring process of all new systems takes place under spirit of national traditions preservation, and not duplicating any samples and development models.

Modern China, which had already reached substantial success on the modernization pass, now enters the period of creating equilibrium between economic achievements and political system balance, and with regard to this purpose it needs long-lasting peaceful and stable environment, at regional level as well as on the international scene as a whole.

Undoubtedly, the modernization affected changes and transformations of Chinese national character, by introducing a number of innovations in the politics and economics of the country, its culture and spiritual values. However; it develops gradually on the basis of harmonious development ideological concept and without demolition of common perception. Thus, it is the modernization model of China that may serve as an example for a number of developing countries of the world, which specify progressive advance grounded in economic achievements, gain of welfare for its citizens and political stability as its primary goals.

China's experience demonstrates that economical backwardness may be bridged and economic recovery along with citizens' welfare revival may be ensured. Any country of the world is well capable of surge accomplishment in national economy, if the nation's leadership is ready to undertake liability and, under this condition, perform decisive actions towards actualization of radical changeovers in the economic mechanism. These arrangements are to implement development of the effective strategy for economic redevelopment, aimed at the competitive growth of the national economy. The goals of the economic development strategy represent specific directions of growth, its motives and projected results.

It means that one should not implicitly duplicate the China's experience, but on the contrary, it has to be enrooted in the native situation, with emphasis on national specifics, socioeconomic features and cultural and moral structures.

IV. CONCLUSION

The analysis of advances and difficulties of the modernization in the PRC gives possibility to avoid mistakes in choosing the mode of restructuring required for our country. The following may be drawn out from the PRC experience: experience in the development of strategy and choice of modernization model; experience in effectivization of publicly owned enterprises; experience of the internal market protection against competitors and establishment of import-substituting manufactures; experience in the constitution of motivation for population and bureaucracy.

The most reasonable answer for the question – what will the result of Chinese modernization be, will it be socialism or capitalism – was given by G. Arrigi in his book “Adam Smith in Beijing”. He specifies capitalist development path, which is specific to the Western world, and non-capitalist market development path in China. The latter ideologically ascends to A. Smith. This path was present in China in the XVII century, and it is the one realized there nowadays, according to Arrigi's statement. He says, that, if China does not develop capitalism, it will not mean, that it has developed socialism. And in case it still builds up socialism, this will not mean that it has developed capitalism [4]. It cannot be ruled out that, it is here where the recategorization of established notions will take place, and term “capitalism”, introduced by V. Zombart in 1902 will disappear, as well as the term “socialism” which was set forward even earlier.

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