The Foundational Role of Historic Rural Transformations in Chinese Modernization

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Abstract: *One of the most critical foundational reasons behind the formation and globally recognized achievements of the Chinese path to modernization lies in the series of successful historical transformations within rural China over the seven decades since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. From the perspective of institutional architecture, rural transformations have exerted a profoundly foundational influence on the construction of the basic system underpinning Chinese modernization. In terms of the material foundation, rural transformations have yielded contributions of equally fundamental significance. With respect to the endogenous driving force, these transformations have played an indispensable and foundational role in generating and sustaining the momentum for modernization. Finally, regarding secure advancement, rural transformations serve as a critical safeguard for modernization. In a sense, without understanding these historic rural transformations, it is impossible to explain why Chinese modernization took its unique form, how it differs from the paths of other nations, and how it continues to advance in a sustained and healthy manner.*

Keywords: *Chinese modernization; Historic rural transformations; Basic institutions; Material foundation; Endogenous momentum; Secure advancement*

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China is an ancient civilization with a continuous history spanning 5,000 years. Compared with other countries, China has long possessed the world's most advanced traditional agricultural civilization before the emergence of modern industrial civilization. This highly developed agricultural civilization provided the material foundation that enabled traditional Chinese society to sustain its remarkable continuity. However, it must be recognized that modernization constitutes an inevitable trend in the development of human society. From the perspective of its epochal character, modern society can only be built on the material foundation of modern industry, rather than on that of a traditional agricultural economy. Therefore, actively promoting historic transformative modernization in rural areas is essential to Chinese modernization. As President Xi Jinping has noted: "Without agricultural modernization, without a prosperous and thriving countryside, and without farmers living in peace and contentment, national modernization will be

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incomplete, inadequate, and unstable insecure." (Xi, 2014)

Over more than 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), rural China has undergone a series of profound historic transformations of modern significance. Notably, these transformations include the socio-economic changes in the early years following the founding of the PRC in 1949, marked by land system reform; the socio-economic changes in the early period of reform and opening-up in the 1980s, marked by the household contract responsibility system; and the current stage of socio-economic transformations centered on rural revitalization since the 2010s.

These profound historic transformations in rural China, of modern significance, have had a foundational impact on the development of the Chinese modernization. An indispensable foundational reason why Chinese modernization differs from that of other countries, why it has achieved globally recognized accomplishments, and why it has been able to forge ahead steadily and sustainably lies in these historic transformations of modern significance in the countryside. In this sense, only through a deep understanding of these historic rural transformations can one truly grasp Chinese modernization from a vital fundamental perspective.

1. The Foundational Significance of Rural Historic Transformations for the Fundamental Institutions of Chinese Modernization

From the perspective of constructing the basic institutions of Chinese modernization, rural historical transformations have exerted a profoundly important foundational influence.

Since its founding in 1949, China has established a socialist basic system of modern significance. Importantly, the fundamental normative basis of this system lies in the core value of fairness and justice. As President Xi Jinping has emphasized, reform and development "must take promoting social fairness and justice and improving people's well-being as our starting point and the ultimate goal" (Xi, 2023a). Grounded in this value of fairness and justice, the essential connotations of the socialist basic system of Chinese modernization, under the conditions of a modern society and a market economy, are twofold. First, based on the principle of equality inherent in fairness and justice, all members of society should share in the fruits of development. As President Xi Jinping points out: "The interests of the people must always be placed in the supreme position, so that the achievements of reform and development benefit all the people more equitably and that steady progress is made toward the realization of common prosperity for all"(Xi, 2023b). Second, based on the principle of freedom inherent in fairness and justice, sufficient space should be provided for the free development of every member of society. Friedrich Engels noted that under socialist conditions, society should "provide all people with genuine and ample freedom" (Marx & Engels, 2018). President Xi Jinping further stresses that "the ultimate goal of modernization is to realize the free and all-round development of human beings"(Xi, 2023a). Thus, these two dimensions form an organic whole and are mutually indispensable. Their significance lies in guaranteeing that Chinese modernization stays on the right course, empowering the people as the principal agents of modernization, and enabling the full and free utilization and development of everyone's potential.

With respect to the construction of the basic institutions of Chinese modernization, rural historical transformations have played a critically foundational role.

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First, the transformation of the land system helped establish the basic socialist economic system that underpins Chinese modernization.

The land system constitutes one of the most fundamental institutional arrangements in any country, particularly in a society where the rural population accounts for a large share. Notably, land is the most basic means of production and livelihood for farmers. The state of the land system directly determines farmers' fundamental conditions of production and subsistence, shapes their basic perceptions and behavioral patterns, and ultimately bears on the success or failure of modernization. For this reason, the historic transformation of the land system has become a fundamental prerequisite for the success of the Chinese revolution, as well as for the formation and successful advancement of Chinese modernization.

Since 1949 — especially since reform and opening-up in 1978 — China has successfully carried out historic transformations of the land system, underpinning the initiation and steady advancement of Chinese modernization.

First, land reform enabled farmers to attain economic and social equality.

Before its founding, China was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society characterized by profound inequality, with the feudal land system predominating. For thousands of years, the most salient form of socio-economic inequality faced by farmers—who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population—was that embedded in the land system. Additionally, large numbers of land-poor or landless farmers were compelled to rent land from landlords and pay heavy rents to sustain their basic livelihoods and their families. Under such conditions, only a thorough land revolution could fundamentally resolve the prevailing social inequalities. In 1950, China launched a nationwide land reform movement. By the spring of 1953, land reform had been largely completed across the Chinese mainland, abolishing the feudal land system that had persisted for millennia and realizing the long-held aspiration of "land to the tiller". As a result, Chinese farmers, for the first time in history, attained a fundamentally equal economic and social status.

Secondly, the household contract responsibility system invigorated farmers' enthusiasm for production.

Beginning in 1958, rural China broadly implemented the People's Commune system, an institutional arrangement characterized by the integration of administrative and economic functions ("the integration of government administration and commune management"). This arrangement was compatible with the planned economic system in place at the time. However, overall, it had significantly negative effects. First, it effectively nominalized farmers' land ownership and rights of use. Although these rights were vested in the "collective"—representing all commune members—they became functionally detached from individual farmers. Second, through the strict household registration (*hukou*) system, rural residents were tightly bound to their place of residence and production, leaving farmers with virtually no possibility of mobility. They could neither move to other regions nor engage in non-agricultural activities locally (except for a limited number of sideline occupations). Collectively, these institutional arrangements stifled farmers' incentives to produce, dampened social dynamism, and hindered improvements in rural living standards.

From the late 1970s to the early 1980s, practices such as "output-based contracting to households" and "all-responsibility contracting to households",which emerged spontaneously

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from grassroots experiments in places like Anhui province, gained official recognition and were systematized nationwide as the Household Contract Responsibility System.

The household contract responsibility system exerted profound and multifaceted effects on Chinese modernization. By granting farmers effective control over contracted land — i.e., de facto use rights — the household contract responsibility system dramatically stimulated their initiative and enthusiasm, thereby boosting agricultural productivity. Empirical evidence shows that "between 1978 and 1984, China's grain output increased from 300 million tons to 400 million tons; 43.6% of the growth in crop output was attributable to productivity gains, and 94% of this productivity growth resulted from the reform of the household contract responsibility system" (Yan, 2022).

Thirdly, the "separation of ownership, contract rights, and management rights" in land management ensured that farmers became long-term beneficiaries of land contracting.

Through contracting, farmers obtained actual use rights to land from rural collectives. Given the relatively long contract duration, these use rights came, in a certain sense, to function as "quasi-ownership rights", and were therefore widely recognized and accepted by farmers. Nevertheless, reliance solely on land use rights proved increasingly inadequate in adapting to the requirements of modern agricultural production and farmers' evolving livelihood needs. First, modern agriculture is characterized by large-scale operations and cannot be sustained on small, fragmented household plots. Given the limited per capita arable land available to Chinese farmers, large-scale production is inherently difficult to achieve. Second, the process of urbanization has generated new challenges. An increasing number of rural residents have migrated to cities and taken up non-agricultural employment, rendering them unable to engage in agricultural production on the land contracted in their names and limiting their ability to benefit directly from such land. Consequently, this creates a need to transfer land management rights to others while retaining a share of the returns. Furthermore, as urbanization advances, growing amounts of capital flow into rural areas and agriculture in pursuit of profit maximization. Such capital, given its scale and strength, may give rise to large-scale land mergers. Under these conditions, the policy framework centered solely on the household contract responsibility system is insufficient to address these emerging issues effectively.

It is in this context that, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), China has introduced the system of separating ownership rights, contract rights, and management rights for rural land (the "three-right separation" system), representing another major institutional innovation following the household contract responsibility system. As President Xi Jinping pointed out: "We must, on the premise of upholding collective ownership of rural land, facilitate the separation of contract rights and management rights; this will create a framework in which ownership, contract, and management rights are separated, and management rights can be transferred." (Xi, 2022)

The "separation of ownership rights, contract rights, and management rights" land management system represents an important institutional innovation in rural China under new historical conditions. Importantly, it is rooted in the principle of common prosperity and in keeping with the laws of the market economy and thus carries significant implications. First, it not only accommodates the requirements of large-scale modern agricultural operations but also

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enables farmers to benefit from the land contracted in their names. Through the compensated transfer of their contracted land management rights to collectives, agribusinesses, or specialized farmers, rural households not only gain a stable income source but also enable the development of modern, scaled agriculture. This, in turn, enhances land productivity and creates a virtuous cycle where increased efficiency reinforces the value of the transferred rights. Moreover, as land values continue to rise, farmers' returns increase correspondingly, making this arrangement a win-win for farmers. Second, it effectively prevents land annexation. Ordinary farm households are relatively weak and vulnerable, lacking the capacity to cope with various natural disasters and economic risks. Historically, when confronted with such risks, households often resorted to selling their land and becoming destitute. At the current stage of China's modernization, uncertainties are increasing, and individual households face growing socio-economic risks. Without appropriate institutional constraints, the likelihood of large-scale land concentration would rise. Thus, the land system under the household contract responsibility system was likewise unable to adequately address this issue. By contrast, under the three-right separation system, land ownership remains vested in the rural collective rather than in individual farmers, thereby effectively ruling out large-scale land annexation.

Second, the implementation of a series of social policies has helped effectively consolidate the basic socialist system of Chinese modernization.

Following its founding, China implemented a range of social policies in rural areas. These policies have strongly promoted the realization of the core values of fairness and justice and have contributed to the establishment and consolidation of the basic socialist system underpinning the Chinese path to modernization.

First, rural women achieved emancipation.

In traditional society, rural women in China lacked equal economic and social status and did not enjoy equality within the family. In this sense, the history of Chinese women is one of suffering and subjugation.

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the State enacted and enforced a series of policies to emancipate rural women. The scope and determination of this drive were remarkable, even rare, for a developing country at that time, leading to fundamental advances in women's liberation. First, rural women obtained equal status within marriage and family life. The first basic law promulgated and implemented after the founding of New China in 1949 was the *Marriage Law of the PRC*, establishing a neo-democratic marriage system characterized by freedom of marriage, monogamy, equality between men and women, and the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women and children. Through strong state mobilization, this implementation enabled rural women to emancipate themselves from the shackles of the feudal family system. Second, rural women gained equal rights to participate in economic and political activities. For example, the State adopted a range of effective measures to promote women's participation in the economy and placed a strong emphasis on equal pay for equal work. These policies enabled rural women to attain equal rights and dignity, thereby unleashing their productive and creative potential, as they constitute half of the rural population.

Secondly, mass education policies raised the population's cultural and educational attainment.

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In pre-1949 China, rural education was, on the whole, severely underdeveloped. Between 1929 and 1933, the illiteracy rate among the rural population aged seven and above reached 83.1% (Zhao, 1989).

In the three decades before reform and opening up in 1978, the Chinese government implemented mass education policies and launched large-scale literacy campaigns in rural areas, achieving remarkable results. Substantial efforts were also made to develop rural primary and secondary education. Given severe fiscal constraints at the time, rural education adopted a "two-pronged approach", combining State-run and collectively run schools. In 1964, there were 585,400 collectively run primary schools in rural China, far exceeding the number of State-run primary schools (Zhang et al., 2016). These rural mass education policies yielded fruitful outcomes. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, rural illiteracy in China had fallen to 34.7%, compared with 67.3% in rural India and 46.3% in rural Brazil—both major developing countries (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 1991).

Thirdly, the gradual establishment of the rural cooperative medical system and the rural social assistance system provided a bottom-line safety net for the basic subsistence of rural residents.

The most basic dimension of fairness and justice concerns people's minimum subsistence line; among these, the most important are basic medical security and basic subsistence guarantee. In these areas, China has made significant progress and achieved important accomplishments.

China's rural cooperative medical system emerged during the agricultural collectivization movement of the 1950s and became relatively institutionalized by the mid-1960s. By 1977, 85% of production brigades nationwide had implemented cooperative medical care, covering more than 80% of the rural population (Wang & Su, 2015). Notably, this system played a highly significant and positive role in meeting the basic healthcare needs of the vast rural population. The World Bank noted that by the late 1970s, China had achieved "medical insurance coverage for nearly all urban residents and 85% of the rural population—an unparalleled achievement among low-income developing countries" (The World Bank, 1993).

Since reform and opening-up, China has gradually and systematically established the New Rural Cooperative Medical Care System (NCMS). The NCMS has effectively addressed the issue of basic medical security for rural residents. Additionally, research shows that "among county-level populations covered by the NCMS, mortality fell by 20% and life expectancy rose by 4%. Participants were 13% less likely to develop serious illnesses than non-participants, and their healthcare expenditures also dropped significantly" (Xi, 2023). Importantly, the NCMS has been gradually merged with the Basic Medical Insurance System for Urban Residents, thereby fundamentally eliminating the inequity inherent in the urban-rural dual structure of medical security. Together with the Basic Medical Insurance System for Urban Employees, this has brought near-universal coverage of basic medical insurance in China. As of 2022, the basic medical insurance participation rate remained stable at 95% (Xi, 2023).

The rural social assistance system has also made tremendous achievements. Before reform and opening, due to extremely backward rural productive forces and limited State fiscal capacity, neither the State nor village collectives could provide full coverage for all eligible poor people. Under such conditions, rural areas relied mainly on family support, supplemented by collective

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assistance for specific vulnerable groups. For example, the Five Guarantees program — which guaranteed food, clothing, housing, medical care, and burial expenses for eligible rural residents — provided only a basic level of support. However, it effectively protected the most disadvantaged rural groups at that time. Since reform and opening up, with China's rapid economic development and greatly enhanced fiscal capacity, the rural social assistance system has been gradually developed and improved. Today, it effectively provides a comprehensive safety net for the basic subsistence of the rural poor.

Thirdly, the fight against poverty has powerfully reinforced the foundational basis of the basic socialist system underpinning Chinese modernization.

Although poverty alleviation has long been a major concern in rural China, it was initially regarded mainly as a form of relief within the public welfare sector. Since the 1990s, however, relevant ideas and practices have changed considerably: poverty alleviation has been integrated into national development strategies, with an emphasis on development-oriented poverty alleviation.

Since 2012, China has further recognized that the battle against poverty is not merely about addressing absolute poverty in rural areas, but also constitutes a prerequisite for the comprehensive advancement of rural revitalization. Thus, it has been elevated to a major issue of great importance bearing on the establishment and consolidation of Chinese modernization and the basic socialist system. In the decade following the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, China advanced this historic mission against poverty with unprecedented intensity, "launching and waging the largest and strongest battle against poverty in human history" (CPC Central Committee, 2021). Notably, this effort has created an unprecedented miracle in human history: "All 98.99 million rural poor people under the current standard have been lifted out of poverty, all 832 impoverished counties have been removed from the poverty list, and all 128,000 impoverished villages have been delisted" (Xi, 2023a). As American scholar Robert Kuhn noted: "When future historians write the chronicle of our times, one bright spot will surely be China's magnificent achievements over the 40 years of reform and opening. What an astonishing transformation." (Xi, 2018) In a real sense, this feat could only have been achieved in China under the leadership of the CPC.

The battle against poverty is foundational to consolidating and developing the basic socialist system that underpins Chinese modernization. The very purpose of Chinese modernization is to achieve common prosperity for all Chinese people, and the completion of this historic mission has effectively achieved this basic goal.

2. Foundational Contributions to the Formation of the Material Base of Chinese Modernization

From the perspective of the formation of the material base for Chinese modernization, historic rural transformations have made groundbreaking contributions.

Since 1949, and especially since reform and opening up, China has embarked on the construction of a genuine, independent modern industrial system and has achieved tremendous success. Among these, historic rural transformations made enormous foundational contributions to the building of China's modern industrial system.

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First, rural transformations before reform and opening up made significant contributions to China's industrialization.

In 1949, Chinese leaders possessed a profound understanding of the extreme importance of building an industrial system. The resolution of the Eighth National Congress of the CPC in 1956 stated that the central task at hand was "to transform China as rapidly as possible from a backward agricultural country into an advanced industrial country" (*People's Daily* editorial, 1956). However, China faced a grim reality at that time: "The legacy industrial foundation at the founding of the PRC was extremely backward and weak. In 1949, light industry accounted for 73.6% of the national total industrial output value, while heavy industry accounted for a mere 27.3%" (CPC Central Committee Party History Research Office, 2011). Chairman Mao Zedong clearly recognized that "what is of primary importance and can drive the development of light industry and agriculture forward is the construction of heavy industry and national defense industry" (CPC Central Committee Party History Research Office, 2011).

Therefore, the key question was how to raise the massive capital required to build heavy industry in the initial stage of China's modernization.

In the early stages of industrialization, many pioneering countries accumulated their initial capital through two main channels. One involved domestic processes whereby capitalists displaced peasant populations from the land — as seen in the enclosure movements — and extracted surplus value from industrial workers. Britain, France, and the United States, among others, followed similar patterns. The other channel relied on overseas colonial expansion, through which these countries obtained necessary capital, raw materials, and markets for dumping commodities by acquiring and economically utilizing colonies. The industrialization experiences of Britain, France, and Belgium are frequently cited as representative cases in economic history.

In the early stages of modernization, many late-developing countries started with a fragile economic base. Consequently, their ability to generate capital domestically—through limited primitive accumulation, the mobilization of agricultural surpluses, and State-led fiscal and financial measures—was constrained. They therefore relied more heavily on external channels, such as attracting foreign investment or engaging in international trade, to secure the necessary capital for launching and sustaining industrialization.

However, for the newly founded PRC, a huge, impoverished, and backward country, the sources of the massive capital needed for industrialization could not be the same as those of most early-industrializing nations or many developing countries. First, China could not copy the old Western model of modernization. The basic values and institutional nature of socialism, together with China's historic tradition of peaceful development, made it impossible to acquire industrial capital by exploiting its own people or plundering other countries' resources. Second, China was not an open country at that time. Due to various historical and practical factors in the 1950s, China was largely closed and could not attract foreign investment through opening up.

Under these conditions, China had to proceed from its own national realities in mobilizing resources for industrialization. In practical terms, this meant drawing the necessary funds primarily from rural areas and from farmers. As Chairman Mao Zedong put it: "China's population is mainly made up of farmers. The revolution succeeded because of their support, and industrialization will

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also have to rely on their support." (Mao, 1950)

At that time, rural China, having undergone land reform, was able—albeit with difficulty—to bear the heavy costs associated with capital extraction. Consequently, this capacity rested on several factors. First, land reform and a series of related social policies enabled farmers to become masters of their own affairs. Under these conditions, a broad-based trust in the Party and the government took shape, and rural residents generally identified with major State initiatives. Second, under collective ownership, rural China developed an unprecedentedly comprehensive, systematic, and effective organizational structure that enabled large-scale organization of production and social activities, including the planned allocation of materials and labor. Third, in comparison with urban residents, rural inhabitants, whose livelihoods depended on land, maintained a more direct connection to the production of means of subsistence. As a result, they possessed somewhat greater latitude in livelihood strategies and relatively stronger capacities for self-provisioning.

From the perspective of industrial capital accumulation before the reform and opening-up in 1978, the rural sector made an irreplaceable and substantial contribution. It has been estimated that, "through the system of unified procurement and marketing and the 'price scissors' between industrial and agricultural products, agriculture and rural areas provided a large volume of material capital accumulation for industrialization; between 1953 and 1985, the cumulative contribution amounted to approximately 800 billion yuan" (Office of the Leading Group for Party History Learning and Education of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, 2021). This contribution becomes even more evident when viewed in the context of China's fiscal capacity at the time. Back then, China's national fiscal revenue amounted to only 12.496 billion yuan in 1951, 57.229 billion yuan in 1960, and 87.446 billion yuan in 1977 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2023). Without this substantial transfer of resources from the rural sector, China's industrialization would not have been possible.

Before reform and opening up, two additional contributions of rural China to industrialization should not be overlooked. First, rural areas provided the essential grain supply required for industrialization and urbanization. Following land reform, rural China played an indispensable role in ensuring national grain security. Grain output reached 164 million tons in 1952, increased to 214 million tons in 1966, and further rose to 305 million tons in 1978 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2023). Second, rural areas absorbed surplus urban populations that cities were unable to sustain. During this period, China's industrialization strategy prioritized the development of heavy industry. Unlike the light industry, the heavy industry has a relatively limited capacity to absorb labor, which distinguishes China's experience from that of many other countries. During periods of economic contraction, large numbers of "surplus" urban residents were redirected to rural areas. For example, in the early 1960s, a substantial number of laid-off workers and reduced urban populations were largely absorbed by the countryside.

Second, historic rural transformations since reform and opening-up have provided a powerful impetus for China's industrialization.

Since the reform and opening-up, historic rural transformations have significantly promoted China's industrialization, with particularly notable contributions in the supply of labor and land.

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First, rural areas have provided a vast labor force for China's industrialization.

Industrial development requires a large and mobile workforce. Following the implementation of the household contract responsibility system and the gradual relaxation of the household registration (*hukou*) system, a substantial number of rural residents were released from agricultural constraints. Moreover, they were engaged in non-agricultural employment, either locally or elsewhere. This process gave rise to China's distinctive group of rural migrant workers, who are predominantly concentrated in the secondary and tertiary sectors, accounting for more than half of total employment in these industries.

Second, rural areas have supplied large amounts of land for China's industrialization and urbanization while transferring substantial land value gains.

The historic experience of most modernizing countries indicates that industrialization and urbanization generate rapidly increasing demand for land for industrial use, urban expansion, and public infrastructure. Such land typically originates from rural areas and tends to appreciate significantly in value.

Since the inception of the reform and opening-up, the collective ownership of rural land—coupled with the active alignment of grassroots organizations with national developmental objectives—has facilitated the efficient mobilization of land resources. As such, this institutional arrangement has enabled the State and enterprises to secure the vast tracts of land essential for large-scale industrialization, rapid urban expansion, and critical infrastructure development. Between 2008 and 2015, urban built-up areas in Chinese municipalities directly under the central government, provincial capitals, prefecture-level cities, and county-level cities expanded by 29.70%, 40.02%, 47.51%, and 35.65%, respectively (Liu, 2018).

The State and real estate enterprises have primarily obtained these land resources through the transfer of collectively owned rural land. Simultaneously, the appreciation of land value has generated substantial revenues. From the perspective of public finance, national land transfer revenues amounted to only 50 billion yuan in 1998 but rose to over 5 trillion yuan by 2017 (Wang & Jiao, 2021), representing a hundredfold increase within two decades. These revenues have played a crucial role in financing industrialization, urban development, and infrastructure construction, and have also supported the fiscal functioning of many local governments. Meanwhile, real estate enterprises have utilized land acquired from rural collectives to drive rapid expansion in the property sector during a certain period.

It is crucial to recognize, however, that this large-scale provision of land—and the enormous value appreciation associated with it—came at a substantial cost to the interests of rural residents. As President Xi Jinping observed: "In recent years, the rapid pace of industrialization and urbanization has consumed vast tracts of arable land; despite the State's rigorous 'requisition-compensation balance' requirement, systemic malpractices remain widespread—notably the requisition of land in excess of compensation, the substitution of high-quality acreage with inferior soil, the replacement of proximal land with remote plots, and the conversion of paddy fields into dry land; of particular concern is the extensive requisitioning of even high-standard farmland, which was developed at significant public expense to ensure stable yields regardless of drought or flood." (Xi, 2022)

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Since 1949 and especially since reform and opening-up, China has "completed in a few decades the process of industrialization that took developed countries centuries, creating the twin miracles of rapid economic growth and long-term social stability" (CPC Central Committee, 2021). A fundamental reason for these achievements lies in the contributions of historic rural transformations.

From a global perspective, among large developing countries, China stands out as the only case in which national industrialization has been successfully advanced through profound rural transformation. In sharp contrast, in some other major developing countries, unsuccessful rural reforms have constrained industrialization and led to lagging development in associated public infrastructure. India provides a salient example. One important factor behind the slow progress of its industrialization is the constraints imposed by its land system. According to official Indian statistics, as cited by Yao & Liu (2015), approximately 70% of bottlenecks in industrial development are attributable to land acquisition issues. Although land costs typically account for only 1% to 4% of total industrial project costs, the slow pace and procedural complexity of land acquisition often drive these costs to exceed 20%.

3. The Catalytic Role of Rural Transformations in Fostering the Endogenous Momentum of Chinese Modernization

From the perspective of internal dynamics, historic rural transformations have played a crucial role in generating the endogenous driving force of Chinese modernization.

A key to the remarkable success of Chinese modernization has been its sustained, robust endogenous driving force. The historic transformations in rural China have been an indispensable source and a foundational catalyst for generating this very force.

First, historic rural transformations have brought about an organic integration between the improvement of rural residents' everyday needs, their immediate material interests, and the broader process of modernization.

The fundamental principle of Chinese modernization is to remain people-centered, that is, to take the people as the focus and continuously meet the growing aspirations of the Chinese people, including hundreds of millions of farmers, for a better life. As President Xi Jinping has pointed out: "If more than 400 million people in rural areas are left behind in the course of modernization, the result would be 'prosperous cities on one side and declining rural areas on the other,' which would neither accord with the Party's governing mission nor with the essential requirements of socialism."(Xi, 2022)

During the planned economy era, the overarching principle of "taking class struggle as the key link" prioritized political struggle as the era's paramount task. Consequently, people's practical livelihood concerns were marginalized. Furthermore, under this command system, farmers lacked productive autonomy; no matter how much effort they exerted—even at high personal cost—any improvement in their daily lives or material interests remained fundamentally decoupled from their labor input. Over time, this inevitably stifled labor enthusiasm and creativity. The phenomenon of "shirking" while on the job became increasingly widespread, leading to the gradual erosion and eventual dissipation of the endogenous momentum required for modernization.

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Following the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC in 1978, the central task of the Party and the State underwent a fundamental shift—from taking class struggle as the key link to focusing on modernization. The strategic objective was to shift the focus of the entire Party and the nation to socialist modernization (Party Literature Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, 1982). More importantly, with the advancement of modernization and market-oriented reforms, greater emphasis has been placed on improving individual welfare and on the self-initiated nature of such improvement. Material interests are the foremost concern for all members of society. As Karl Marx observed, "all that people strive for is related to their interests" (Marx & Engels, 1956). In rural China, the implementation of the household contract responsibility system fundamentally transformed the relationship between effort and reward. Farmers were able to pursue their material interests through self-initiated efforts and, with full justification, improve their material well-being. As a result, improvements in livelihoods became directly linked to individual effort. This institutional change substantially strengthened production incentives, thereby stimulating labor effort and creativity on a broad scale and contributing to the formation of a sustainable internal driving force for Chinese modernization.

Second, rural transformation played a pivotal role in the emergence of China's market economy.

The generation of endogenous momentum for modernization hinges on two levels: micro-level individual initiative and macro-level efficiency in allocating the essential factors of production. It is the synergy between motivated individuals and an efficient allocative mechanism that provides a self-sustaining internal impetus for development.

In this regard, the market economy constitutes a fundamental institutional foundation. The integration of modern productive forces with market-based resource allocation represents the standard configuration of a modern economy. Although market mechanisms cannot resolve all social and economic problems, they remain essential for sustaining efficiency in modern economic systems. As President Xi Jinping emphasized: "Both theory and practice have proved that the allocation of resources by the market is the most effective means to this end; it is a general rule of the market economy that the market decides the allocation of resources, and a market economy, in essence, is one in which the market determines resource allocation." (Xi, 2023)

The gradual establishment of a market economy has been a key factor behind the remarkable achievements of Chinese modernization since reform and opening up. Notably, this systemic transformation was first ignited in the rural sector.

Before reform, China operated under a planned economy. It should be acknowledged that, under the specific historical conditions of the early days of the PRC, the planned economy played a positive role in strengthening social integration and mobilizing limited resources toward key national objectives, including industrialization. However, over time, deep-seated, insurmountable drawbacks of the planned economy gradually emerged. Under the planned system, rural production was characterized as "large in size and collective in nature", with limited attention to input-output efficiency. Agricultural production units were highly homogeneous, with virtually no competition among them. As a result, agricultural labor productivity stagnated. Measured at current prices, the net value of agricultural output per worker increased only from 225 yuan in 1957 to 343 yuan in

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1978 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 1989).

Evidently, from a long-term perspective, the endogenous driving force of Chinese modernization can only be formed upon the foundation of a market economy. Since the beginning of reform and opening-up, in a certain sense, it was precisely the implementation of the household contract responsibility system in rural areas and the closely related development of township and village enterprises that initiated and propelled the formation and development of China's socialist market economy. "China's reform began with a breakthrough in the rural areas through the household contract responsibility system before it was gradually extended to the cities and rolled out across the board. The direction of reform was set toward establishing a socialist market economy, so that the market would play a basic role in the allocation of resources to a greater extent and in a wider scope, and the basic economic and distribution systems would be upheld and improved."[1]

In rural areas, the household contract responsibility system dismantled key institutional constraints of the planned economy and laid the foundation for market-oriented development. By separating land ownership from contract rights, the system clarified property relations and expanded farmers' decision-making autonomy. This institutional arrangement provided farmers with greater flexibility in occupational choice, labor mobility, and the allocation of productive resources. As a result, the rigid structure of the planned economy in rural areas was fundamentally weakened, and market mechanisms gradually emerged and expanded.

Third, historic rural transformations have facilitated the coordinated advancement of Chinese modernization.

Modernization should be characterized by the mutual reinforcement and coordinated development of all social domains, levels, and sectors. The efficacy of this coordinated development determines, to a certain extent, the expansion of a nation's endogenous momentum and its capacity for sustained and stable growth.

From the perspective of various social domains, coordinated development encompasses the symbiotic synergy among modernization efforts across the economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological spheres. From a spatial distribution perspective, such coordination entails the synchronized development and symbiotic linkage of urban and rural modernization.

It must be acknowledged that although rural China has made substantial progress since reform and opening-up, a significant gap remains compared with urban areas. This disparity is reflected in several structural constraints. Agricultural production remains dominated by small-scale, fragmented land operations, limiting productivity gains. At the same time, key production factors—particularly capital and human resources—have experienced persistent outflows, contributing to rural hollowing out. In addition, the level of public service provision in rural areas remains markedly lower than in urban areas.

From a spatial distribution perspective, the protracted lag in rural development is a formidable bottleneck, constraining the holistic advancement of Chinese modernization. As President Xi Jinping noted: "If we only focus on one side while neglecting the other—resulting in increasingly

[1] Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century. *People's Daily*, November 17, 2021, p. 5.

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modernized cities on one hand and increasingly dilapidated rural areas on the other—we cannot claim to have realized the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." (Xi, 2022)

China has made relentless efforts to eliminate the formidable bottleneck of rural underdevelopment. Since 2005, the nation has advanced the Construction of a New Socialist Countryside, followed by a succession of targeted policy measures. In 2017, the Rural Revitalization Strategy was formally introduced at the 19th CPC National Congress and elevated to an indispensable component for the realization of a great modern socialist country. As President Xi Jinping underscored, the essence of rural revitalization lies in "reshaping urban-rural relations and pursuing a path of integrated urban-rural development"(Xi, 2022). Specifically, this entails: "Adhering to the principle of industry supporting agriculture and cities supporting the countryside, and promoting a new type of industry-agriculture and urban-rural relationship characterized by mutual reinforcement, complementarity, comprehensive integration, and shared prosperity."

In recent years, guided by the strategic goal of rural revitalization, China's rural areas have undergone a new round of historic transformation through arduous, self-driven efforts, supported by multiple stakeholders, including urban resources. The establishment of the separation of rural land ownership, contract rights, and management rights, together with the system for the transfer of land management rights, has legally safeguarded rural residents' land rights, which underpin their basic livelihood and development. At the same time, the development of moderate-scale and diversified agricultural operations has significantly improved agricultural productivity and expanded the potential for output growth. The continuous rise in China's grain production in recent years is closely associated with these institutional and organizational changes. In particular, through the implementation of the poverty eradication campaign, the Chinese government has mobilized substantial fiscal resources and organizational capacity, leading to the establishment of a basic public service system in rural areas and a marked improvement in rural infrastructure. These efforts have effectively strengthened the basic livelihood safety net in rural China and elevated the overall conditions for development.

Rural revitalization has effectively bolstered the endogenous momentum of Chinese modernization. For a long period, including much of the post-reform era, rural China was cast in the role of a "one-way" supplier, funneling capital, labor, and agricultural produce to fuel urban modernization. This sustained outflow fundamentally depleted the countryside's own endogenous driving force. Through the integrated urban-rural development of the rural revitalization strategy, however, rural areas have begun to receive unprecedented reciprocal support from industry and cities—support that continues to intensify. As a result, a baseline for rural living standards has been secured, a fundamental platform for development has been established, and the countryside's endogenous driving force has been restored and strengthened. This shift marks a historic departure from the decades-long role of rural areas as mere sources of outward factor flows. Most importantly, this historic transformation of rural China is indispensable to strengthening the overall endogenous momentum of Chinese modernization. As President Xi Jinping emphasized: "The modernization of hundreds of millions of farmers will unleash colossal creative energy and consumption potential, injecting strong impetus into economic and social development." (Xi, 2023)

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4. Rural Transformations as a Guarantee for the Steady and Sustained Advancement of Chinese Modernization

From the perspective of advancing Chinese modernization securely, the historic transformations in rural areas constitute an indispensable and major guarantee.

Whether a nation's modernization can be successfully navigated, stabilized, and sustained depends not only on the correctness of its trajectory, the effective accumulation of its material foundation, and the vigor of its endogenous momentum, but also on whether the security of its modernization process can be fundamentally guaranteed. Since the start of reform and opening-up, a crucial, non-negligible factor underpinning the "steady and sustained progress" of Chinese modernization is that the secure advancement of this process has been consistently and effectively ensured.

From a global perspective, all countries undergoing modernization inevitably face increasing and increasingly normalized risks from both domestic and external sources. This reflects a general pattern of modernization. Domestically, the modernization process itself generates new risks. First, it leads to increasing social complexity, where traditional and emerging elements coexist. This is accompanied by a diversification of interests, rising expectations, and varied behavioral patterns among different groups, which overlap and intensify social frictions. The proliferation of digital technologies further amplifies these divergences and the potential for conflict. Second, as social tensions multiply, they are often compounded by non-rational factors like herd mentality, exerting multifaceted pressure on the relatively fragile order of modern societies and generating significant social risks that can, in severe cases, escalate into crises (Wu, 2023). Third, the sheer scale of a country like China magnifies these challenges, as greater size implies more inherent diversity and coordination difficulties, thereby increasing the overall spectrum and the likelihood of socio-economic risks.

From the perspective of international relations and the external environment, the deepening of economic globalization has fostered intricate interconnections among nations while simultaneously exposing them to multi-dimensional economic, social, and political risks. The heightened interdependence inherent in globalization means that adverse economic conditions in one country—particularly a major systemic power—can trigger rapid cross-border spillovers. In certain instances, major powers, such as the United States, in pursuit of their own strategic interests, may adopt unilateral policies that externalize domestic economic burdens or impose various forms of economic sanctions. Furthermore, actions such as geopolitical interventions or direct military engagements can escalate international risk to unprecedented magnitudes, thereby posing severe threats to the modernization trajectories of other nations.

China has responded with considerable success to a wide range of domestic and international socio-economic risks. Since reform and opening-up, Chinese modernization has consistently adhered to the principle of prioritizing security. As President Xi Jinping has emphasized: "We must never make strategic or catastrophic mistakes."(Xi, 2018) To this end, China has adopted a series of effective policy measures to safeguard social security and stability. An important reason why Chinese modernization has sustained rapid economic growth while maintaining overall social stability since reform and opening-up lies in the historic transformation of rural areas. In this

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sense, the historic transformations of rural China have made a significant contribution to the secure advancement of Chinese modernization.

First, rural transformations help secure the national survival baseline.

For any country, grain production—especially the capacity for self-sufficient grain production—is fundamental to safeguarding the basic lifeline of its population. As President Xi Jinping has pointed out: "Agriculture remains the foundation of national security; it underpins life security and subsistence security and is of paramount importance to national security." (Xi, 2023)

Since the start of reform and opening-up, the widespread implementation of the household contract responsibility system has significantly incentivized grain production among farmers. At the same time, the more recent rural revitalization strategy has substantially bolstered rural productive capacity. Concurrently, the State has enforced a stringent "red line" policy, mandating that the national total of arable land must not fall below 120 million hectares—a rigid constraint that has secured the bedrock of national food security. Collectively, these factors have facilitated a profound increase in China's agricultural output. Despite being a fellow major developing nation with less arable land than India, China produces nearly twice as much grain. These extraordinary agricultural achievements are inextricably linked to the historic transformations of rural China. Furthermore, the government has placed increasing strategic importance on grain reserves, China's current strategic stocks are now sufficient to withstand major economic and social disruptions.

Second, rural transformations ensure the stable advancement of economic modernization.

From the upstream of the industrial chain, the historic transformation of rural China is fundamentally significant to the overall secure advancement of Chinese modernization. The stable supply of grain and other agricultural products serves as an indispensable upstream guarantee for modern economic development. Any shortage of grain and other agricultural products at the upstream of the industrial chain will inevitably trigger inflation and other disruptions in the middle and downstream sectors. Importantly, the negative impacts are pervasive and far-reaching and, in severe cases, may even cause widespread social panic.

Since reform and opening-up, sustained high yields and bumper harvests of grain and other agricultural products brought about by rural transformation, combined with the country's substantial strategic grain reserves, have ensured the sustained stability of agricultural product prices in China. From the source of agricultural supply—i.e., upstream in the industrial chain—this has ensured the relative stability of labor costs for industrialization and of prices for many related industrial products in China. It has also guaranteed the normal basic livelihood of urban residents, thereby rendering economic modernization secure and predictable.

Third, rural transformations help sustain China's social stability.

The historic transformations of rural China play an indispensable role in fostering social security and stability required for the advancement of Chinese modernization.

First, rural transformations help create a secure and stable social environment.

For the secure advancement of Chinese modernization, rural social security and stability are foundational pillars. As President Xi Jinping underscored: "With a solid agricultural foundation, a harmonious and stable countryside, and a rural population that lives and works in peace and contentment, the overall national situation will be well-secured, providing us with greater initiative

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in all areas of our work."(Xi, 2022)

The historic transformations of rural China have significantly contributed to this outcome. For rural residents, the top priority is maintaining their basic subsistence. Therefore, having land that can support their families is their most fundamental concern. Building on the land reform of the early 1950s, China's rural land system, established since the reform and opening-up—characterized by collective ownership, the household contract responsibility system, the separation of rural land ownership, contract rights, and management rights, and the transfer of land management rights—has successfully resolved rural land issues. This institutional framework has effectively granted farmers de facto access to the land-derived benefits of ownership. The fulfillment of this core subsistence interest for farmers has bolstered their social and political allegiance, which in turn has led to a significant reduction in land-related conflicts and disputes.

In contrast to the Chinese experience, other major developing nations—such as India, Brazil, and Argentina—have contended with persistent social friction and periodic nationwide unrest originating in their rural sectors. A primary cause is the absence of comprehensive agrarian reform, leaving rural and farmer-related issues unresolved. Notably, without thorough land tenure reform, these nations face stark inequities in land distribution. This has triggered localized and sustained agrarian resistance driven by fundamental subsistence grievances, which in turn creates significant structural impediments to the steady advancement of their modernization processes.

Second, rural transformations help maintain social stability in urban areas.

In many developing countries, rapid urbanization has forced large numbers of landless farmers to migrate to cities in search of work. With no land to return to in rural areas, many congregate in vacant, mostly illegal areas, forming slums—a persistent urban malady that remains difficult to cure. In the 1970s, poor smallholder farmers and landless peasants from some Latin American countries migrated to cities in large numbers, causing slum populations to grow by 10%-15% annually (Yin, 1999). These slums became persistent sources of insecurity in cities; during economic downturns, social insecurity in these cities becomes even more evident.

China's experience presents a distinct trajectory. From the perspective of systemic security, rural transformations have generated significant positive spillovers: they have not only fostered enduring social stability within rural communities but have also served as a vital anchor for urban stability. Long-term secure land contract rights give millions of rural-to-urban migrants a continued sense of belonging to their hometowns, helping alleviate the rootlessness often felt in urban life. Moreover, if they encounter economic risks in cities, they can temporarily return to rural areas and use their land to tide them over temporary financial hardships. This makes them far less likely to engage in activities that threaten urban social stability. This constitutes a unique advantage for China, enabling it to effectively maintain urban social stability— a clear contrast to the experience of many other developing countries.

5. Concluding Remarks

Based on the foregoing analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, the historic transformations of the rural sector have been of foundational significance to the successful advancement of Chinese modernization. Two principal reasons justify characterizing

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the impact of rural historic transformations on Chinese modernization as "foundational".

The first is that,the historic transformations of the rural sector carry immense systemic weight in the trajectory of Chinese modernization. At the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the rural population—the vast majority of whom were engaged in agriculture—accounted for more than 80% of the total; today, it remains significant at approximately 35%. Furthermore, the territorial extent of rural areas vastly surpasses that of urban centers. Clearly, the "agrarian triad"—comprising agriculture, rural areas, and farmers—represents a decisive variable in the success of Chinese modernization. Consequently, the historic transformations of the countryside inevitably exert a foundational influence across all dimensions of the nation's developmental path.

The second is that the historic transformations in rural areas have profoundly impacted Chinese modernization across four critical dimensions. Importantly, the success of a country's modernization depends on its performance in these four areas: in terms of direction, whether it has established sound institutional arrangements; in terms of foundation, whether it has built an increasingly robust material base; in terms of vitality, whether it has generated sustained endogenous driving forces; and in terms of sustainability, whether it possesses the necessary capacity to ensure security. These four elements are all indispensable, each with its own distinct emphasis. Together, they determine the success or failure of a country's modernization. As analyzed earlier, since 1949, and especially since 1978, China's historic rural transformations have made foundational contributions in precisely these four dimensions, thereby driving a qualitative leap in Chinese modernization. Between 1978 and 2022, China's per capita GDP increased from 385 yuan to 85,698 yuan; the country has built the world's most complete industrial system; and its economy now ranks second globally. Meanwhile, rural China has undergone a profound transformation: total agricultural machinery power rose from 117.499 million kW to 1,105.972 million kW in 2022; absolute poverty has been fundamentally eradicated; and rural residents' per capita disposable income increased from 134 yuan to 20,133 yuan. Furthermore, by 2022, China's per capita expenditure on education, culture, and recreation had reached 1,683.3 yuan (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2023). Notably, in recent years, the income gap between urban and rural residents has continued to narrow, and the trend toward integrated urban-rural development has become increasingly evident.

Without the foundational role of historic and successful rural transformations, the overall trajectory of Chinese modernization would have been constrained by insurmountable structural deficits and acute social maladies originating in the countryside, rendering its current remarkable success unattainable. Thus, the future trajectory of Chinese modernization will, to a considerable degree, depend on the efficacy with which rural revitalization is advanced. This constitutes a core experience of Chinese modernization. In contrast, many other developing nations—particularly large developing countries—continue to face protracted developmental bottlenecks, primarily because they have not implemented the kind of comprehensive rural reforms that have characterized the Chinese model.

Second, the historic transformation of rural China follows a trajectory of progressive deepening.

Viewed through the long lens of history, every pivotal rural transformation in China has effectively addressed the most pressing challenges facing the countryside at that time. In the early

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days of the PRC, land reform addressed the issue of equitable land distribution, the foremost concern of farmers. Dismantling the millennial feudal landownership system facilitated a historic social restructuring and established the basic socialist framework. This enabled hundreds of millions of farmers to attain agency as "masters of their own fate", to realize the age-old dream of "land to the tiller", and to secure equal rights to the primary means of production. This structural shift profoundly galvanized rural productive enthusiasm and, from a critical dimension, prepared the socialist institutional scaffolding for Chinese modernization. However, the nation subsequently deviated from the correct trajectory established by the Eighth CPC National Congress in 1956. The shift toward "taking class struggle as the key link", coupled with the gradual imposition of a command economy, altered the developmental logic. Under these conditions—and within the institutional framework of the People's Communes—farmers were precluded from pursuing their legitimate interests, as their material welfare was decoupled from their labor contributions. Furthermore, farmers suffered a loss of autonomy. Tethered to fixed plots of land and restricted from free movement, they were deprived of the space for independent development. Consequently, productive incentive and creative agency were stifled. Moreover, during this period, the prioritized development of heavy industry dominated national policy, with all other sectors, including agriculture, relegated to a subordinate, supportive role. Under this paradigm, industrialization resulted in the over-extraction of the already meager agricultural surplus. Crucially, the inward-looking nature of heavy industry at the time meant it lacked the capacity to provide reciprocal support to the rural sector. Collectively, these systemic factors gradually throttled the vitality of rural development.

A fundamental shift occurred in the early reform and opening-up period, when the national focus shifted from "taking class struggle as the key link" to modernization. In this context, the widespread implementation of the household contract responsibility system in the late 1970s and early 1980s addressed farmers' most urgent demand for greater autonomy in development. Moreover, it reignited individual production incentives, revitalized rural society, and brought about profound changes in the countryside, while also facilitating the emergence and development of the national market economy. Nevertheless, the structural limitation of rural areas as a one-way source of outflows persisted. Large-scale human, financial, and other rural resources continued to flow into cities, and the extent of resource extraction from rural areas intensified over time. Meanwhile, public services and infrastructure investment remained heavily urban-biased. Inevitably, these trends gave rise to prominent problems: a deepening urban-rural dual structure and the gradual hollowing out of rural areas in human capital, wealth, and governance. In turn, these problems severely constrained further rural development. Under these circumstances, rural modernization could not be achieved by relying solely on rural endogenous forces.

The rural revitalization strategy—conceived at the turn of the 21st century and formally institutionalized in 2017—conceptualizes rural transformation as an integral component of the holistic advancement of national modernization. It emphasizes a systemic approach, specifically through the prism of integrated urban-rural development. While previous rural reforms predominantly emphasized self-reliance within the rural sector, the current strategy underscores rural revitalization at the macro-structural level, using urban-rural integration as its primary

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pathway. This paradigm represents an effective and sustainable trajectory for rural development in the new era; it has already yielded substantial achievements and is poised to generate even greater impacts in the years ahead.

The historic rural transformations in China are not isolated events but constitute a coherent process marked by distinct historical continuity. Each phase builds upon and is preconditioned by its predecessor, while simultaneously representing an inheritance, evolution, and refinement of that legacy. For instance, as Sen (2002) observed: "Chairman Mao's land reform, the spread of literacy, the expansion of public health care, and other policies played a highly beneficial role in post-reform economic growth, the extent to which post-reform China has benefited from pre-reform China's achievements deserves greater recognition." In this sense, the land reform in the early days of the PRC fostered an egalitarian status for farmers, providing a robust pillar for the expansion of "autonomous developmental space" catalyzed by the household contract responsibility system during the early reform and opening-up period. This autonomy, in turn, established the requisite foundation for the integrated urban-rural development of recent years.

Third, the effective leadership of the CPC is an essential guarantee of the success of historic rural transformations.

The success of historic rural transformations is inseparable from the presence of proactive, capable leadership. In the trajectory of modernization, both smallholder farmers engaged in fragmented agricultural operations and rural migrant workers seeking urban employment are exposed to numerous systemic risks. As individual agents, these farmers and workers lack the requisite resources to effectively mitigate such risks in isolation; their resilience is contingent upon the State's mobilized strength. Consequently, the consolidation and integration of this State capacity to manage such vulnerabilities necessitates a modern-minded, proactive, and robust leadership core.

The CPC embodies precisely this profile of leadership, which has enabled it to guide the vast number of farmers and other social groups in accomplishing these historic rural transformations. First, the value of putting the people first ensures that the CPC can consistently serve as the defender of farmers' fundamental interests. Since its founding, the CPC has upheld its original aspiration of seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. This aspiration has remained unchanged, enabling the CPC to "always serve as the backbone of the Chinese people in the historic process of meeting various risks and tests at home and abroad" (Xi, 2023). Guided by this aspiration, the CPC not only ensures that farmers can withstand various risks but also continuously works to improve their living standards. Second, the CPC possesses a strong capacity for social mobilization. Compared with the leadership groups of most developing countries, the CPC demonstrates exceptional ability to mobilize various social groups and vast resources once a correct goal is set. Third, the CPC has a deep-rooted awareness of, and capacity to, keep pace with the times. The CPC has always regarded "seeking truth from facts" as its foundation for survival and development; at the same time, it attaches great importance to learning and emphasizes building a learning-oriented party, making it one of the ruling parties worldwide that values learning most highly. These qualities have endowed the CPC with an outstanding awareness of, and capacity to, advance with the times. From land reform in the early years after

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the founding of the PRC, to the household contract responsibility system initiated in the late 1970s, and then to rural revitalization in recent years, we can clearly observe the continuous deepening and improvement of the CPC's understanding and practical capacity regarding rural transformation. Fourth, the CPC possesses a comparatively strong capacity for systemic strategic planning. Compared to many ruling parties globally, the CPC's planning efficacy is exceptionally prominent. This capacity is manifested in its ability first to establish phased developmental milestones for modernization and subsequently translate them into integrated, systemic blueprints. In the realm of rural transformation, this planning capacity exerts a decisive guiding and supervisory influence, serving as an indispensable driver for the orderly and steady progression of rural reform.

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