

# What Chinese modernization contributes to world



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## OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Modernization has long been taken as an epoch of human history that involved the rise of industrial inventions applied in social production. In Western countries, it has been made synonymous with the emergence of machines and technologies in the mid-18th century in Great Britain or the early 19th century in its European peers. Based on the great discoveries of modern mathematics, physics, and chemistry, inventions of these machines and technical gadgets boosted the social production force and produced massive industrial commodities to meet the soaring demand of expanded markets. Western Empires, like the European countries and especially Great Britain, grew to be industrial giants due to their early manipulation of steam engines, modern machines, sheer scales of colonies, paving railways, and steam vessels, greatly expanding world trade and commercial business. Great Britain was followed by her European patterners who developed comparative advantages in world trade, depending on their respective geological advantages or even world imperial hegemony. Therefore, taking advantage of industrial modernization, the Western industrial pioneers exploited the rest of the world, which made the Westerners the leaders of human modernization ever since the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the oriental continents, modernization happened rather late due to the safe and sound agricultural social production system and tact social structure embodied by the long-lasting feudalism born almost 2,000 years ago. In some way, the eastern-hemisphere countries were almost dragged into the sweeping tide of modernization by the Western countries, which seemingly have more power and more advanced technologies. China, an old empire that occupied a large land in the eastern hemisphere, was beaten by the Western industrial power allies during the Opium War in the 1840s and was forced to sign numerous one-sided treaties to cede territory and pay indemnities to major Western industrial powers. Therefore, the modernization of China in the late 19th century and early 20th century was indeed accompanied by unaccountable humiliations that left a sad historical scar in the minds of the Chinese. The old and intact Chinese civilization was therefore



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broken by the strong and sweeping industrial force from the western hemisphere.

Led by the Chinese Communist Party, which was founded in 1921, the Chinese started the modernization with their own social characteristics. First, they won their national independence by freeing the country and its people from the ruling and semi-colonizing Western industrial powers. The significant national revolution led by the communists finally established a brand-new People's Republic in October 1949.

During that period — to be exact, from 1931 to 1945 — the Chinese also fought a bitter war with Japan and suffered untold sadness. The bloody invasions of Japanese military imperialism brought great losses to China. Yet, it taught the Chinese the lesson that without national independence and national emancipation, there could never be peace and

liberty, and consequently, no modernization at all. National independence established the necessary prerequisite for independent modernization in China.

Therefore, the first contribution of Chinese modernization is to set an example and convey an indisputable truth — that is, real modernization should start with an independent and self-determined regime, with complete sovereignty and a strong government that can determine its own fate. Governments with no real independence can never make their own decisions in modernization. In this vein, modernization relies on having the sole claim to your country's sovereignty and destiny, regardless of the name of that country. From the historical lessons of facing the danger of losing sovereignty, the Chinese learned that only an independent country with complete sovereignty can guarantee a successful modernization.

Modernization in whichever country, led by whichever political party, shall create its own way instead of simply copying other patterns. In the 1950s–60s, the first generation of the People's Republic leaders attempted to borrow bits of advice and experiences from other modern countries but failed due to the unfriendly loaners who wished to take over China's sovereignty. Therefore, the founding fathers of new China determined to find their own way to modernization and did not yield to the stronger powers who still posed hegemonic requests. For the past 70 or more years, China adhered to its own way of modernization and has been seeking a model of modernization with Chinese characteristics. The success of China's modernization up till now exemplifies the correctness of this choice. To be concise and direct, any country that wishes to become modern shall find its own way and

maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity to safeguard its way of modernization. This is indeed the first contribution of the Chinese Communist Party to any country that wishes to start its own modernization.

Modernization is a thorough change in all spheres of the society. It is an overall yet gradual social construction that involves not only breaking up with the old agrarian tradition of a rather lower productive force but also eliminating the out-of-date feudal social relations, which prevent the minds of people from leading new lives or creating new things. However, the modernization of a country or a society is in fact the modernization of its people in the end because human beings are nothing if not the owners of the world, the most active factor of any social productive force. China has a massive population of over 1.4 billion people, which accounts for almost one-fourth of the whole

population of the world. So, when China's modernization focused on changing the living conditions and spiritual needs of men, it was indeed a good point in the history of modernization in terms of its effect on the population.

Since the Reform and the opening up in the 1970s, China has had its main focus on the elimination of poverty and illiteracy at the grass roots level. After half a century's worth of diligent struggle and hard work, by the end of 2021, over 770 million poor Chinese people got rid of poverty and became self-sufficient in their livelihoods. With 1.4 billion rich and prosperous people, China has led over 70% of world poverty elimination efforts, surpassing the target of the Millennium Development Goal set by the United Nations in 2000. This can be defined as the second contribution of China to the world no doubt.

Chinese modernization is in nature a combination of

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For all countries and societies wishing to become modern, China's story of modernization sets a good example or even provides a good model. Chinese experience and plan for modernization will benefit all its developing partners. However, China does not intend to impose its plan on anyone at all. The Chinese cherish friendship with all peace-loving people and hope to make friends with them. Therefore, Chinese people firmly believe that any independent country and society has the freedom, right, and sovereignty to make their own way to modernization.



City view of Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong Province  
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