



CONTEMPORARY
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By Li Wen



China Intercontinental Press

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Foreword

In the 20th century, two historic events in China have affected the entire world. One is the founding of the People's Republic of China under a socialist system, which fundamentally changed the political landscape in East Asia and the world. The other is China's reform and opening up, upon which a socialist market economy has been built, enabling its economy to enjoy sustained rapid development and fundamentally rebuilding the economy of East Asia and the globe. Both events are of historical significance in achieving the great "Chinese Dream"- realization of national rejuvenation, national prosperity and people's well-being.

In the 21st century China has maintained its development momentum from the previous two decades. It has actively dealt with profound changes in the international situation while maintaining fast development at home and overcoming all sorts of risks, hardship and challenges to achieve an historic economic leap. It has made a series of new historic achievements to offer a solid basis for building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way. China's GDP has rocketed from the world's sixth-largest to the second-largest.. Social productivity, economic strength and scientific and technological strength



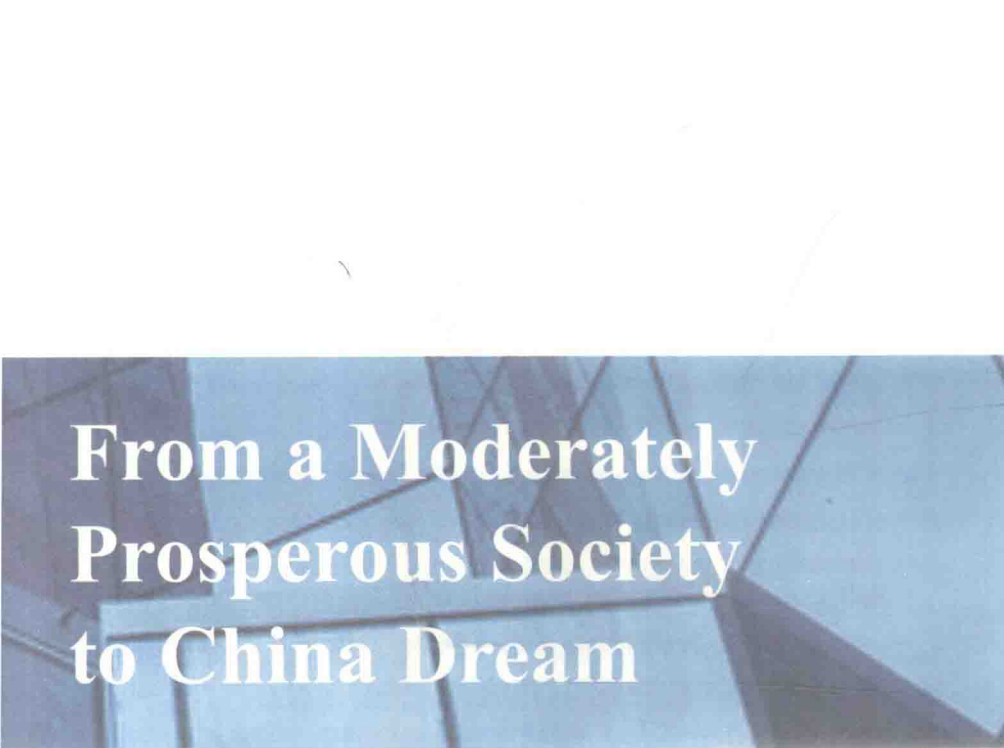
Tian'anmen Square in Beijing on the evening of the National Day.

have made a big step forward. In the meantime, living standards, income levels and social security have undergone unprecedented progress. What's more, comprehensive national strength, international competitiveness and international influence have increased dramatically. China is displaying a new historic look. As is widely recognized, this is a time during which China's economy, democracy, culture and social stability are experiencing constant development. It is a time when people's livelihoods are guaranteed and improved through great efforts with more tangible benefits available. At the same time, China's economic structure is facing deep-rooted problems, such as economic development severely restricted by resources and environment, unbalanced economic and social development, an expanding gap between the rich and the poor, intense and frequent explosions

of interest disputes and social contradictions. Due to the slow recovery of the global economy and increasing pressure on the domestic economy, more contradictions and problems have become increasingly pronounced during China's development.

This book mainly covers the development of Chinese society since the advent of the 21st century and references the second half of the 20th century when necessary. Except when specifically noted, the data quoted are sourced from websites of the National Bureau of Statistics and relevant ministries and commissions of China.





From a Moderately Prosperous Society to China Dream

The term “society” may refer to both “greater society”, i.e. the all-inclusive “human society” which covers economics, politics, culture etc., or the “aggregate” or “community” evolved from humanity’s interactions, and the “small society”, i.e. the “social community” opposite to government, or the territory parallel to economics, politics and culture. This book introduces Chinese society from the perspective of “small society” and covers the social structure, construction and management as well as the living conditions and thinking in society. The moderately prosperous society proposed by Deng Xiaoping, chief architect of China’s reform and opening-up, refers to “greater society”. Now let’s examine the general situation of “small society” in China from the aspect of “greater society”.



From Substeces to a Moderately Prosperous Society

The “Moderately Prosperous Society” and “Three-Step Development Strategy”

Half a century ago, the first generation of leaders of New China proposed a two-step economic development plan. First they called for the establishment of an independent, comparatively complete industrial system and national economic system. Second, they aimed to achieve modernizations in agriculture,



December 18–22, 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC was held in Beijing. This is a turning point in the Party's history since the founding of New China. Deng Xiaoping made a speech at the meeting, called on the people to emancipate the mind, to seek truth from facts, and to look ahead in unity.

industry, national defense and science and technology, in order to enable the Chinese economy to take the lead in the world. When reforms in China began at the end of 1970s, the first goal was generally achieved, but there was still far to go to achieve the second goal. The moderately prosperous society is a new concept for the second goal proposed by Deng, who used an old saying with a new connotation. During his meetings with the Japanese prime ministers in December 1979 Deng pointed out, "The four modernizations we are striving to achieve are modernizations with Chinese characteristics. Our concept of the four modernizations is different from yours. By achieving the four modernizations, we mean achieving a comparative prosperity." Meeting with Japan's prime minister in March 1984, Deng said: "If, by the end of the century, the annual gross value of industrial and agricultural output is quadrupled, and the average per capita GNP reaches US\$ 800, then we shall have a society in which people lead a fairly comfortable life. Realizing this society is what we call Chinese-style modernization."

Different from the previous "four modernizations", the "moderately prosperous society", neither affluent nor poor, is a pragmatic goal for gradual development. According to statistics of the World Bank, in 1978, China was still a low-income country. Per capita GDP was merely US\$ 155, about 7.9% of the global average, ranking 133rd out of 135 countries and regions worldwide. Per capita GNI was merely US\$ 190, about 10.2% of the global average, ranking 175th out of 188 countries and regions worldwide. The Engel coefficient¹ stood at a high 67.7% in rural areas and 57.5% in urban areas. And one quarter of the Chinese population (about 250 million people) were extremely poverty-stricken people with inadequate food and clothing.

Therefore, Deng Xiaoping proposed his three-step development strategy. "Our goal for the first step is to reach, by 1990, a per capita GNP of US\$ 500, that is, double the 1980 figure of \$250. The goal for the second step is, by the turn of the century, to reach a per capita GNP of \$1,000. When we reach that



goal, China will have shaken off poverty and achieved relative prosperity. When the total GNP exceeds \$1 trillion, the national strength will have increased considerably, although per capita GNP would still be very low. The goal we have set for the third step is the most important one: quadrupling the \$1 trillion figure of the year 2000 within another 30 to 50 years. That will mean a per capita GNP of roughly \$4,000 -- in other words, a medium standard of living."

In 1997, China quadrupled its per capita GDP ahead of schedule. By 2000, the Chinese government announced that the people had started to live moderately prosperous lives. In 2007, at the 17th CPC Congress, the Party set forth the new requirement of quadrupling per capita GDP of the year 2000 by 2020 in addition to quadrupling the GDP for the same period proposed in the 16th CPC Congress, which means that China's achievement of "a medium standard of living" would come much earlier than Deng had predicted.



The 17th National Congress of Communist Party of China was convened in Beijing from Oct. 15th, 2007 to Oct. 21st, 2007.