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UNDERSTANDING CHINA: POVERTY ALLEVIATION

HU FUGUO, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

CHINESE WISDOM AND SOLUTIONS
UNDERSTANDING CHINA



China International
Publishing Group
中国国际出版集团



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Where have we come from, and where are we going? In this day and age for China, I am always reminding myself to maintain this sense of history.

– Xi Jinping

From Xi's speech when meeting with foreign attendees of the Second Understanding China Conference in Beijing, *People's Daily*, January 5, 2016

UNDERSTANDING CHINA

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PREFACE TO THE “UNDERSTANDING CHINA” SERIES

Zheng Bijian

This series of books covers the topic: Understanding China.

But why is “Understanding China” an important question?

At present, the world around us is going through unprecedented changes and nowhere more so is that the case than in China.

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in the mid-20th century, and particularly over the past 40 years, a poor and backward country in East Asia with a population of over 1.3 billion has achieved incredible growth to become the world’s second largest economy.

It is therefore natural that people should ask: What exactly is going on in China, and what is the secret behind such rapid development?

It is also entirely natural for people to wonder: How can a rising China get along with the rest of the world?

As a result, misgivings about the country abound. All kinds of theories such as the “China threat”, the “Collapsing of China”, the “Thucydides’s Trap” and the “middle income trap” have been directed toward China.

There is no doubt that China should unflinchingly follow its own path and deal with its own matters well. That in itself means that in order to respond to people’s concerns, questions and misgivings, one thing must be done – Understand China.

It was precisely for this reason that the China Institute for Innovation & Development Strategy (CIIDS), which I co-founded, joined together with the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA) and the world-renowned 21st Century Council think tank to hold two Understanding China conferences in November 2013 and 2015.

These two important international meetings received the close attention and support of the General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and President of China, Xi Jinping, who personally attended and held informal discussions with distinguished overseas participants; and Premier of the State Council Li Keqiang and Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, who gave the opening speeches at the first and second conferences respectively. Top leaders of departments in the Central Committee of the CPC and State Council also participated alongside senior political figures, experts and scholars from all over the world to undertake face-to-face meetings and answer questions.

The main lesson from the conferences was that confronting questions head-on, being sincere, seeking the truth from facts, and telling the stories of China, the CPC and China's relations with the world, in lively and detailed ways, greatly helps those who care about China to gain new knowledge, and gradually allays the misgivings of those who are uncertain about China.

To achieve this goal we are moving the "Understanding China" international conference to books, videos and online, in order to respond to people's concerns, questions and misgivings on a bigger scale and in more lively forms.

This series has not only received the enthusiastic support of relevant government departments, China International Publishing Group and the Foreign Languages Press, but also the full backing of experienced practitioners, experts and scholars, as well as government leaders.

This is the first set of books in the series. Whilst these are concerned

mainly with the works of Chinese writers, future books will also feature writers from other countries.

This is also not simply a collection of books – it will be accompanied by television specials and online videos for people to enjoy.

In our opinion, “Understanding China”, including “Understanding the CPC” and “Understanding China’s Relations with the World” are all grand undertakings.

Let us passionately follow and participate in these undertakings together.

March 2018

Introduction

Poverty is a common challenge and a major global issue all countries have to face in their economic and social development. The fight against poverty is crucial for the Chinese people who are going all out to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Over the past millennia, helping those in need and improving people's well-being has remained a highly valued pursuit in the Chinese culture. From the ideas of "Benevolence" (Ren'ai), "People-oriented Doctrine" (Minben), "Universal Love" (Jian'ai) and "The Great Harmony" (Datong) advocated by the pre-Qin philosophers, to the mission of the Communist Party of China to eliminate poverty and improve people's livelihood, the Chinese nation has come ever closer to the ideal of eliminating poverty.

In 1921 when it was founded, the Communist Party of China took on the mission of pursuing happiness for the people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. As the leadership core, it led the Chinese people in their effort to shake off the shackles of poverty and backwardness. In 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded, opening a new chapter of poverty relief. In 1956, China established socialism, laying the political and institutional foundation for eliminating poverty. In 1978, the Reform and Opening up was launched. The following years saw the fast, sustained and steady economic development of the country and

remarkable results in poverty alleviation. Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core has placed poverty alleviation and development high on its agenda, incorporating it into the overall plan for promoting economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress and the four-pronged comprehensive strategy. Having waged an all-out war against poverty, China has achieved the best results in poverty alleviation and created a miracle in the history of human development.

The book tries to answer the following three questions: where did China's poverty alleviation initiative start and where will it go, and what is China's solution to poverty. It introduces to readers Xi Jinping's thought and practices on poverty alleviation, reviews China's poverty alleviation in the past and today, summarizes China's theory and practices of tackling poverty and demonstrates the pursuit and wisdom of the Chinese Communists represented by Xi Jinping in reform and development and in poverty eradication, thus helping the readers understand China's poverty alleviation effort, success stories and solutions.

This book consists of 11 chapters in total. Proceeding from China's historic achievements in the battle against poverty, the first three chapters review the process of poverty alleviation and development and expound Chinese theory on this issue in an attempt to trace the origin of China's poverty alleviation initiative. Chapters Four to Nine summarize and present China's scheme for the fight against poverty, focusing on Xi Jinping's thought and practices in this area. Chapter Ten introduces China's international cooperation in poverty alleviation. Chapter Eleven discusses the prospect and looks ahead to future work on poverty alleviation.

Chapter One summarizes China's internationally acclaimed achievements in poverty alleviation. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, particularly the establishment of the socialist system

in China, a solid institutional foundation was laid for poverty eradication. Since the launch of Reform and Opening up, China has lifted over 700 million people out of poverty, contributing enormously to poverty alleviation in the world. Following the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China made great achievements in the battle against poverty, winning high praise from the international community.

Chapter Two reviews in a chronological order the practices of the Chinese people in the fight against poverty under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. It presents the theories and practices of the CPC-led poverty alleviation and eradication efforts in different stages, by setting 1949, 1978, and 2012 as the timeline nodes, in the hope of exploring the origin of China's poverty alleviation initiative.

Chapter Three chronicles Xi Jinping's thought on poverty alleviation, and introduces its theoretical origins, development and profound contents. It summarizes the new poverty governance system built under the guidance of the thinking – a collective manifestation of China's wisdom in poverty alleviation and the key to understanding the country's fight against poverty.

Chapter Four introduces the top-level design of China's poverty eradication program and fully demonstrates the national poverty governance system consisting of seven parts - the responsibility system, policy system, input system, mobilization system, organization system, supervision system and assessment system. The system provides the institutional guarantee for the scheduled high-quality victory in the battle against poverty.

Chapter Five expounds the essentials of "targeted poverty alleviation", revolving on the "six targeted measures" addressing the "four questions". Precision in selecting beneficiaries answers "to whom poverty alleviation is directed"; precision in sending the right personnel to impoverished villages addresses the question of "who will carry out

poverty alleviation”; precision in project arrangements, fund utilization and tailoring measures to individual households, the question of “how to eliminate poverty”; and precision in delivering outcomes of poverty alleviation, the question of “how to exit poverty elimination measures” when necessary.

Chapter Six, on the basis of the case study of various local practices to reduce and eliminate poverty, demonstrates diversified means and methods employed in the fight against poverty in China in the new era, such as development of businesses with local features, guided labor export, relocation from inhospitable areas, ecological protection, education, medical insurance and assistance, rural subsistence allowance system, and increase of asset-based income. In line with the central leadership’s decisions, local governments have implemented targeted measures in light of actual conditions and made all-out efforts to put in place the categorized measures in an orderly way, jointly drawing up an inspiring blueprint and a vivid picture of targeted poverty alleviation and eradication.

Chapter Seven tells the story of the Chinese government’s extensive mobilization of social forces for the purpose of poverty alleviation in five areas: fixed-point poverty alleviation, East-West cooperation and assistance in poverty alleviation, assistance from non-public organizations, enterprise participation, and China’s social poverty alleviation network, and provides a general picture of CPC-led poverty alleviation with participation of multiple stakeholders.

Chapter Eight provides answers to two crucial questions in the use and management of poverty alleviation funds. First, funding in various forms provides a guarantee for poverty alleviation. Second, supervision and management of poverty alleviation funds are strengthened to increase the transparency and efficiency of these funds.

Chapter Nine analyses the special circumstances of deep-poverty

areas, introduces the poverty-relief policy system and practical strategies combining universality and specificity which target deep-poverty areas. Then it examines how the Chinese government strengthens the endogenous dynamics of the poverty-stricken population from the perspective of empowerment, and summarizes the service policies and aid & support mechanisms devised by the Chinese government targeting special poor groups such as left-behind children, women, the aged and people with disabilities in the deep-poverty areas.

Chapter Ten shares the story of China's interaction with the rest of the world in poverty alleviation. It looks at how China has learned from its partnerships with other countries, and how it has moved from learning from others to becoming a leader in poverty alleviation. The great achievements of China's efforts towards poverty alleviation and development have contributed greatly to the global fight against poverty, and provided Chinese wisdom and solutions for global practice. China is even more vigorously pursuing the initiative to build a community of shared future for mankind.

Chapter Eleven is the concluding chapter. It points out the key areas of work in targeted poverty alleviation in the future three years and looks ahead to China's work on poverty alleviation after 2020. While Chapter Two focuses on the origin of China's poverty alleviation initiative, this chapter tries to answer where the poverty alleviation initiative will go.

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