

“One Core, Two Sources”: The Endogenous Logic of China’s Path to Develop Human Rights from the Perspective of “Two Integrations”

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Abstract: *The development of China’s human rights path is driven by both external and internal factors, influenced by general principles of human rights worldwide while also following China’s own endogenous logic. The concept of the “Two Integrations” reflects the continuous theoretical innovation of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) based on China’s national conditions, significantly illustrating the endogenous logic of China’s human rights path. Among these, the “basic principles of Marxism” occupy a “core” position within the endogenous logic of China’s human rights path, and to some extent, embody an understanding of the inherent laws of human rights. Meanwhile, “China’s specific realities” and “fine traditional Chinese culture” serve as the “living water sources” for the ongoing advancement of China’s human rights. The “Two Integrations” represent an intrinsic requirement of historical materialism and practical materialism. The logical structure of “One Core, Two Sources” explains the endogenous nature of China’s human rights path, offering both an interpretation of the driving forces behind China’s human rights path and a defense of its rationality.*

Keywords: “two integrations” ♦ endogenous nature of human rights ♦ “One Core, Two Sources” ♦ China’s human rights path

At the ceremony marking the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2021, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, pointed out that we must adhere to the “integration of the basic principles of Marxism with China’s specific realities and with the fine traditional Chinese culture” (i.e. the “Two Integrations”). The “Two Integrations” is the “new summary” of the CPC in the new era to further promote the application of Marxism in the Chinese context, providing a roadmap for the advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics as well as Chinese modernization. As an important chapter in the process of Chinese modernization, China’s human rights cause needs to adhere to the fundamental guiding position of Marxism while proceeding from the specific realities of China and drawing nutrients from the fine traditional Chinese culture. Marxism provides a systematic interpretation of human rights in China, serving as the fundamental guidance for the development of human rights in China and occupying a “core” position in China’s human rights development. The two “indigenous sources” of the human rights cause in China are “China’s specific realities” and the “fine traditional Chinese culture.” The integration of the basic principles of Marxism with China’s specific realities and the fine traditional Chinese culture is not only the guiding ideology for the CPC to lead the human rights cause in China but also a scientific understanding and systematic summary of human rights practices in China.

I. The “Core” of the Endogenous Nature of Human Rights: Marxism

When any country chooses its path of human rights, it cannot ignore the influence of internal factors, such as the country’s history, culture, political and economic situations. These factors not only affect the rationality of the country’s choice of human rights path but also influence the rationality of its human rights path in practice. In this sense, the endogenous nature of human rights is an objective fact. The idea of “Two Integrations” demonstrates, to a

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large extent, the endogenous nature of China's human rights path and takes Marxism as the fundamental guiding ideology of China's human rights path.

A. The endogenous characteristics of the human rights path

A country's human rights path is endogenous. In other words, it is inspired and influenced by internal factors such as its traditional culture, current public political culture, and specific national conditions. In the process of a country choosing its human rights path, it is necessary to follow the endogenous logic of human rights. Different countries have different cultural foundations, historical contexts, and national conditions. These factors are not only "causal variables" in a country's choice, but also "justificatory variables" for its human rights path. In other words, the endogenous logic of the human rights path is not only an explanation of the reasons why a country chooses a certain human rights path but also an interpretation of the process of how the country's human rights path took shape, providing a defense for the rationality and legitimacy of a country's choice of human rights path. Specific historical, social, and cultural factors explain the differences in the human rights paths of different countries.¹

Following endogenous logic is the basic characteristic and inherent requirement of China's human rights path. Summarizing the experience of China's human rights path, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, "In advancing the human rights cause, we have combined the Marxist outlook on human rights with China's specific realities and the best of traditional Chinese culture, reviewed our Party's successful experience of leading the people in respecting and protecting human rights, and learned from the outstanding achievements of other civilizations. This has allowed us to forge a path that is in keeping with the times and the conditions of China."² This statement by General Secretary Xi Jinping shows the dual motivations of China's human rights path in its development and is also the specific application of the "Two Integrations" in the field of human rights. Learning from the outstanding achievements of human civilization is the external motivation for China's human rights path. Human rights are universal, and learning reasonable elements from the human rights development of all mankind is an inherent requirement of the law of human rights development. Human rights are also particular, and different countries seek human rights paths that suit their own development based on their national conditions. As a concept with high requirements for practice, human rights have more fundamental internal motivations. Unlike Western countries that emphasize the universality of human rights over their particularity, China's human rights path emphasizes the particularity over the universality.³

The statement of "integrating the Marxist outlook on human rights with China's specific realities and with the fine traditional Chinese culture" is both an explanation of the generative logic of China's human rights path and a defense of the rationality of China's human rights path. "Marxism," "China's specific realities" and the "fine traditional Chinese culture" are the basic elements that constitute the "Two Integrations." Among them, Marxism occupies a central and fundamental position in the structural system of the "Two Integrations." It is the core guiding ideology of the CPC in leading China's human rights cause. "China's specific realities" and "fine traditional Chinese culture" provide "living water sources" for China's human rights path and are a concentrated reflection of China's "local resources." "Only when Marxism is integrated with these two elements can the rationality of China's human rights path be guaranteed. The endogenous logic of China's human rights path demonstrated by the "Two Integrations" is a combination of "political nature" and "endogenous nature." "Local resources" demonstrate the "endogenous nature," while China's human rights path led by the CPC is guided by Marxism and embodies obvious "political nature."

¹ Lawrence Friedman, *The Human Rights Culture: A Study in History and Context*, translated by Guo Xiaoming (Beijing: China University of Political Science and Law Press, 2018), 116.

² Xi Jinping, "Steadfastly Following the Chinese Path to Promote Further Progress in Human Rights," *Qiushi* 12 (2022): 5.

³ Qi Yanping, "The Tension Balance Structure of China's Human Rights Development Path," *Human Rights* 3 (2021): 8.

The “political nature” plays a leading role in the endogenous logic of China’s human rights path and is an important feature of China’s human rights path. From the generative perspective of human rights concepts, the human rights concepts of a country are often the result of the competition and integration of multiple cultures and ideologies and even present a certain degree of diversity and competitiveness at the social level. Different from the generative logic of human rights concepts, a country’s human rights path is a combination of mainstream ideological concepts and human rights practices, which to a large extent reflects the will of the ruling party and the entire country. In other words, the ruling party elevates its human rights ideology to the state will and guides the country’s human rights practice. As the mainstream ideology of the CPC and the country, Marxism occupies a fundamental position in the formation of China’s human rights path. Mainstream ideology reflects the fundamental interests of the ruling class and is widely accepted and consciously recognized by the majority of members of society.⁴ In this sense, the Marxist outlook on human rights constitutes the mainstream ideology of China’s human rights path.

B. The core position of Marxism in China’s human rights path

Marxism is the fundamental guiding ideology of the CPC. The Chinese human rights path upholds the fundamental guiding role of Marxism. It is determined by the CPC’s leadership in the development of human rights in China. It is also closely linked to the Marxist understanding of the human rights law. Moreover, the historical practice of the Chinese human rights path has continuously confirmed the scientific nature of Marxism.

First, Marxism is the fundamental guiding ideology of China’s human rights path, which is determined by the CPC’s leadership in China’s human rights path. General Secretary Xi Jinping points out that one of the features that China’s human rights path has been primarily defined is upholding CPC leadership.⁵ CPC leadership over China’s human rights path is mainly reflected in two aspects. First, the CPC is the main planner and leader of China’s human rights path. Unlike the human rights paths of Western countries, China’s human rights path is not a “bottom-up” decentralized governance model, but a top-down intensive governance model. The top-down CPC leadership and the strong executive capability of the Chinese government are the main driving forces behind China’s human rights path.⁶ The Party and the state coordinate and promote China’s human rights endeavors from top to bottom by releasing national human rights action plans and government work reports and other undertaking. In addition, the history of the CPC has always been closely linked to China’s human rights cause. As General Secretary Xi Jinping points out, throughout its century-long history, the Party has united the people and led them in a tireless effort to fight for and to respect, protect and advance human rights.⁷ Moreover, the CPC is the main generator and interpreter of China’s mainstream human rights concepts. Guiding practice through continuous innovation of theory is the basic strategy of the CPC in governing the country. In China, the concept of human rights not only has cultural attributes but also ideological characteristics. The CPC has established dominance in the ideological field of human rights by continuously innovating human rights thinking.

The dominant position of the CPC in the ideology of human rights is mainly achieved through the guidance of Marxism. The report to the 20th CPC National Congress points out that Marxism is the fundamental guiding ideology upon which our Party and our country are founded and thrive. Marxism is not only the guiding ideology of the CPC and the general program in the field of ideology but also the fundamental guarantee for the CPC to lead the people of the whole country to achieve victory in various undertakings. The mainstream human rights ideology in China is the Marxist outlook on human rights, which determines that the human rights path led by the CPC is a Marxist path. Guided by Marxism, the CPC

⁴ You Guozhen, *The Advancement of Ideological Security and the Building of Model Capitals from a Comparative Perspective between China and Foreign Countries* (Beijing: Intellectual Property Publishing House, 2018), 13.

⁵ Xi Jinping, “Steadfastly Following the Chinese Path to Promote Further Progress in Human Rights,” *Qiushi* 12 (2022).

⁶ Qi Yanping, “The Tension Balance Structure of China’s Human Rights Development Path,” *Human Rights* 3 (2021): 8.

⁷ Xi Jinping, “Steadfastly Following the Chinese Path to Promote Further Progress in Human Rights,” *Qiushi* 12 (2022).

regards respecting and protecting human rights as the goal and mission of the Party and the country. “Upholding CPC leadership is the fundamental guarantee for advancing the cause of protecting human rights with Chinese characteristics.”⁸

Second, Marxism provides a scientific and systematic understanding of human rights. For a long time, human rights have been considered a product of Western culture, stemming from European Enlightenment and bourgeois revolutions. However, this concept of human rights, originating from Western culture, lacks universality and cannot claim a monopoly on the scientific understanding of human rights. In fact, it inherently contains significant limitations. From the perspective of historical materialism, Marx criticized the hypocrisy and pseudo-scientific nature of bourgeois human rights and developed a scientific understanding of human rights. Firstly, Marx regarded historical nature as the foundation of human rights, and replaced the “theory of natural rights” of Enlightenment philosophy with the “theory of historical rights.” Enlightenment philosophy and bourgeois revolutions in Europe and the United States both regard human rights as “innate” and “natural rights.” However, this metaphysical concept of human rights is clearly “anti-historical.”⁹ Marxism maintains that “Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.” According to Marxism, the concept of human rights is a form of ideology, shaped by specific economic, political, and social conditions. Secondly, Marx replaced the “atomic” human rights in Enlightenment philosophy with “relational” human rights. Enlightenment philosophy regards individuals as the value subject of human rights and emphasizes the supremacy of individual freedom. Marx believed that individuals are only valuable in a community. “Only in a community can individuals obtain the means to fully develop their talents, that is, only in a community can there be individual freedom.”¹⁰ Finally, Marx replaced the bourgeois “privileges” with true “universal and equal human rights”. In Marx’s view, human rights in capitalist countries are purely individual private rights, which are individual rights separated from others and the community. The right to freedom in the civil society of capitalist countries is “the freedom of isolated, self-enclosed individuals.” “Freedom as a human right is not based on the integration of people but, on the contrary, on the separation of people from each other. Such a right is the right of separation, the narrow right of the individual confined to himself.”¹¹

Based on the critique of the bourgeois concept of human rights, Marx developed his scientific and systematic understanding of human rights. On the one hand, Marx criticized the way of arguing the universality of human rights from the perspective of abstract concepts in the Western human rights tradition and advocated that human rights are historical and we must respect the specific economic, political, and cultural realities of different countries. On the other hand, Marx views the foundation of human rights from the perspective of the relationship between the community and the individual, which not only implies the idea of coordinating individual rights with collective rights but also points out the way to achieve individual equality, freedom and human liberation. These two aspects of Marx’s concept of human rights, based on historical materialism, reflect the scientific understanding of human rights and also provide value guidance and path direction for China’s human rights practice today. Marx’s scientific interpretation of human rights represents a certain universality and regularity for the entire human society. “The Marxist outlook on human rights pursues freedom for everyone based on equality. The realization of the specific freedom, rights, and interests of individuals is undoubtedly the purpose and destination of all human cooperation

⁸ Bao Hu, “Respect and Protection: The Marxist Outlook on Human Rights and Its Centery-long Practice in China,” *Journal of Northwest Minzu University* 3 (2021): 10.

⁹ Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2015), 16.

¹⁰ Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2009), 571.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

and political actions, as well as the ultimate purpose and destination of all political and legal systems."¹²

Third, the historical practice of China's human rights path has confirmed the scientific nature of Marxism. Practice is the basic character of Marxism, and verifying the scientific nature of ideas through practice is an inherent requirement of Marxism. Marxism occupies a "core" position in the endogenous logic of China's human rights path. The most fundamental reason is that "Marxism works," which is the result verified by China's century-long practice. The CPC has always regarded respecting and protecting human rights as a basic goal of governing the country. Especially since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core has continuously developed the Marxist outlook on human rights. Under the guidance of Marxism, the CPC has led the people of the whole country in achieving remarkable progress in areas such as the rule of law, poverty alleviation, and social security, continuously advancing China's human rights cause. Especially for a big country such as China with a population of over one billion, issues such as poverty and food security have been longstanding challenges that have plagued China for thousands of years. In 1978, there were still 770 million people living in poverty in China. However, by the end of 2020, China had achieved complete extreme poverty alleviation. This is a victory for China's human rights path and a significant contribution to the global human rights cause.¹³

II. "Two Sources": the "Local Sources" of China's Human Rights Path

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that human rights are concrete, rooted in history, and based on current realities. We cannot mouth empty words on human rights regardless of the social and political conditions and the historical and cultural traditions of a country.¹⁴ The historical, specific, and practical nature of human rights reflects the CPC's basic value cognition and thinking logic of human rights.¹⁵ First, human rights are rooted in history. The historical nature of human rights mainly refers to the fact that human rights concepts and practices evolve and develop over time. In Western cultural traditions, human rights are often seen as absolute and unchanging and exist beyond time and space. In contrast, the Marxist outlook on human rights sees them as products of history that continuously evolve through practice. Second, human rights are concrete. The specificity of human rights means that both human rights concepts and practices are specific to particular spaces and contexts. Western mainstream human rights perspectives tend to regard human rights as abstract and universally applicable across all situations. However, the Marxist outlook on human rights holds that a country's human rights concepts and practices are fundamentally determined by its specific circumstances. Last, human rights are based on current realities. The realistic nature of human rights mainly refers to the formation of a country's human rights concept and the choice of its human rights path, which are primarily aimed at addressing its real human rights issues. This practicality of human rights is determined by the historical nature and specificity of human rights.

A country's mainstream human rights concepts and thinking logic determine the logic of its choice of human rights path. "China's specific realities" and "fine traditional Chinese culture" are realistic reflections of the three thinking logics of human rights: historical nature, specificity, and realistic nature. They are conditional and situational analyses of China in the process of choosing a human rights path that suits itself, and provide a rational defense for the particularity of China's human rights path. The logic of situational analysis is to extract the different elements and prerequisites of the paradigm comparison objects in the genetic sense. One of the foundations of concept construction is the specific context. "Any concept construction is inevitably the product of a specific occasion and specific intention. It is all for

¹² Qi Yanping, "The Generative Logic, Value Orientation and Practical Mechanisms of China's Human Rights Development," *The Jurist* 6 (2022): 16.

¹³ He Zhipeng, "The Action Logic of China's Human Rights Development: Three Dimensions," *Human Rights* 3 (2021): 39.

¹⁴ Xi Jinping, "Steadfastly Following the Chinese Path to Promote Further Progress in Human Rights," *Qiushi* 12 (2022).

¹⁵ Lu Guangjin, "History, Concreteness, Reality: The Threefold Construction Logic of the Contemporary Chinese Outlook on Human Rights," *Journal of Human Rights Law* 3 (2023): 1.

the purpose of solving specific problems. Trying to understand the concept beyond its specific context is naive.”¹⁶ In this sense, “China’s specific realities” and “fine traditional Chinese culture” as two “local sources” of Chinese human rights, are two preconditions for the construction of Chinese human rights concepts and the choice of human rights path. A human rights path that is detached from these two contextual conditions is like “water without a source.”

A. “China’s specific realities”: the realistic source of China’s human rights path

General Secretary Xi Jinping points out that human rights “cannot be separated from the social and political conditions of different countries,” further clarifying the specific connotation of “China’s specific realities” in China’s choice of human rights path. In other words, the choice of China’s human rights path is constrained by China’s specific political and social conditions. A country’s specific political and social conditions determine the formation of its human rights concepts and the choice of its human rights path. The human rights concepts and paths formed by major capitalist countries in the 17th and 18th centuries were merely responses to the political, social and cultural conditions in the specific temporal and spatial context of Europe and the United States at that time, rather than a universal model of human rights. In this sense, “human rights are not an eternal and unchanging concept that transcends time and space, nor are they abstract rights that override the history and current status of economic, political and cultural development of different nations and countries of mankind, nor are they rights that can be fixed once and for all and will not change at all once discovered by thinkers.”¹⁷

China’s specific political and social conditions underpin the realistic starting point and constraints of China’s human rights path. The historical nature and specificity of human rights determine that the relevant political and social conditions will differ in different historical periods. Even in the same historical period, the political and social conditions will be diverse and complex. Therefore, when explaining the endogenous factors of the human rights path in a specific period, it is necessary to analyze certain political and social conditions that have a fundamental status and basic role. As China enters a new era, at least three political or social conditions determine the choice of China’s human rights path. These are the real constraints imposed by “China’s specific realities” on China’s human rights path in the new era.

First, China is a socialist country led by the CPC, which determines the socialist nature of China’s human rights path. This not only constitutes the most fundamental political condition for the human rights path with Chinese characteristics but also is the political guarantee for the Chinese human rights path. General Secretary Xi Jinping believes that it is the CPC’s leadership and China’s socialist system that have determined the socialist nature of human rights in China and which have ensured that the people run the country, that human rights are enjoyed by all people on an equal basis, and that human rights development is based on a holistic approach. This has enabled us to promote the comprehensive development of all human rights and to better realize, safeguard, and advance the fundamental interests of the greatest majority of people.¹⁸ It is a basic fact that capitalist countries are the majority in the world today. Under CPC leadership, the Chinese people have chosen the socialist path. Unlike most countries, China’s human rights path is not capitalist in nature but socialist, which determines the particularity of China’s human rights path at the political level.

Second, Chinese modernization is the modernization with “a huge population,” which constitutes one of the basic social conditions for China’s human rights path in the new era. The report to the 20th CPC National Congress pointed out the five characteristics of Chinese modernization, namely, “a huge population,” “common prosperity for all,” “material and cultural-ethical advancement,” “harmony between humanity and nature,” and “peaceful

¹⁶ Guo Taihui, “‘The Chinese Mode of Modernization’ as a Precondition for the Construction of Political Science Concepts,” *China Social Science Review* 4 (2022): 20.

¹⁷ Sun Chunchen, “The Theoretical Characteristics of the Marxist View of Human Rights,” *Studies in Ethics* 5 (2022): 34.

¹⁸ Xi Jinping, “Steadfastly Following the Chinese Path to Promote Further Progress in Human Rights,” *Qiushi* 12 (2022).

development.” These five aspects are closely linked to China’s human rights path. “From the perspective of human rights, the above five characteristics of China’s modernization are the main practice in terms of adhering to China’s human rights development path and promoting the comprehensive development of China’s human rights cause.”¹⁹ Among them, “a huge population” explains the social conditions for Chinese modernization, while the other four characteristics, such as “common prosperity for all,” explain the goals and values of Chinese modernization. China’s human rights cause, as an important component and one of the main goals of Chinese modernization, follows the social conditions and value constraints of Chinese modernization. The “huge population” also constitutes a social constraint on China’s human rights path and determines the particularity and complexity of China’s human rights path. As the report to the 20th CPC National Congress points out, “China is working to achieve modernization for more than 1.4 billion people, a number larger than the combined population of all developed countries in the world today. This is a task of unparalleled difficulty and complexity; it inevitably means that our pathways of development and methods of advancement will be unique.”

Third, the main contradiction in Chinese society has transformed into “the contradiction between the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life and the unbalanced and inadequate development,” which constitutes another basic social condition for China’s human rights path in the new era. The realistic nature of human rights requires that the state prioritize the most pressing issues of the people when choosing the path of human rights. On the one hand, as China enters a new era, the need for a better life has become the primary concern for the vast majority of the people. On the other hand, unbalanced and inadequate development restricts this goal of the people and even becomes the biggest problem affecting China’s human rights cause. “The unbalanced and inadequate development of Chinese society is the biggest problem affecting the development of China’s human rights cause. Protecting and promoting the right to survival and development of the vast majority of the Chinese people is the starting point and goal of China’s socialist construction.”²⁰ The current situation of unbalanced and inadequate development is reflected not only in different classes, regions, and urban and rural areas but also in the content and structure of human rights. On the one hand, “a better life” is based on material needs and income. The right to subsistence and development is the primary content of a “better life.” “According to the fundamental perspective of Marxist dialectical materialism, addressing the issue of survival is paramount, and the production of material resources must always take precedence.”²¹ On the other hand, the ultimate goal of the socialist human rights path with Chinese characteristics is to achieve the all-around development of people, and “a better life” also includes human rights requirements in terms of civil rights, cultural rights, political rights, etc. The “people-centered” human rights concept emphasizes the all-around and free development of people or “human prosperity.”²² The balanced and full development of different types of rights is not only an inherent requirement for resolving the major contradictions in Chinese society but also a necessary principle of the human rights path with Chinese characteristics.

The above three aspects constitute the “specific realities” or “national conditions constraints” of China’s human rights path in the new era. Among them, CPC leadership and its socialist nature are the “political conditions” for choosing China’s human rights path. The characteristics of China’s modernization path and the transformation of the main contradictions in Chinese society constitute the “social conditions” in the new era. These three aspects more concentratedly reflect what General Secretary Xi Jinping mentioned that a country’s human rights “cannot be separated from the social and political conditions of

¹⁹ Lu Guangjin, “The Logic of Human Rights Justification in Chinese Modernization,” *Human Rights* 3 (2022): 10.

²⁰ Bao Hu, “Respect and Protection: Marxist Outlook on Human Rights and Its Centery-long Practice in China,” *Journal of Northwest Minzu University* 3 (2021): 8.

²¹ Lu Guangjin, “The Logic of Human Rights Justification in Chinese Modernization,” *Human Rights* 3 (2022): 22.

²² Liu Zhiqiang, “Legal Interpretation of the ‘People-centered’ Human Rights Discourse System,” *Academics* 1 (2022): 151-153.

different countries.” In a certain sense, these three social and political conditions constitute the first “local source” of China’s human rights path in the new era, influencing its generation and realization. The practical nature of Marxism and the realistic nature of human rights determine that China’s human rights path in the new era needs to align with China’s “specific realities,” which is also a key aspect of the endogenous nature of human rights in China.

B. “Fine traditional Chinese culture”: the historical source of China’s human rights path

General Secretary Xi Jinping’s assertion that human rights “cannot be separated from the historical and cultural traditions of different countries” constitutes another important aspect of the endogenous nature of human rights. A country’s historical and cultural traditions have an important influence on the formation and specific content of its human rights concepts, as well as on its choice of human rights path and the degree to which human rights are realized. From the perspective of etymology, the concept of human rights originated in Europe around the 17th century. However, this does not mean that the specific concept and content of human rights were “fixed.” To a large extent, mainstream Western concepts of human rights are derived from Europe’s unique religious and cultural traditions.²³ China has a cultural tradition that is completely different from that of Western countries. Exploring human rights resources from the “fine traditional Chinese culture” is an inherent requirement of the endogenous nature of human rights and constitutes another “local source” of China’s human rights path.

China is a country with a 5,000-year history of civilization. Many elements of the fine traditional Chinese culture are consistent with today’s concept of human rights.²⁴ On the other hand, the core feature of modern human rights is the unity of particularity and universality. Whether the universal elements of human rights can be discovered from a specific traditional culture is a necessary prerequisite for determining whether a country’s traditional culture can be integrated into the modern concept of human rights. The universality of modern human rights is mainly reflected in three aspects: conceptual basis, form requirements, and content requirements. From the perspective of conceptual basis, the universality of modern human rights concepts requires a universalist understanding of “human nature.” Human rights are about the rights of individuals and are rights that everyone should enjoy, which requires the concept of human rights to be based on a universal understanding of “human nature.” Besides, from the perspective of form requirements, the universality of modern human rights concepts requires universal concern for all of humanity. Human rights are not limited to a certain country or culture, but concern the entire human race and every individual human being. Last, from the perspective of content requirements, the universality of modern human rights concepts requires attention to the most pressing interests of any individual.

The “fine traditional Chinese culture” not only embodies a unique understanding of human rights under the Chinese national conditions but also contains universal characteristics of modern human rights to some extent. First, from the perspective of concept, the fine traditional Chinese culture contains a universalist understanding of “human nature.” The mainstream human rights concept in the West is based on the assumptions of human nature such as “rationality” and “individuality.”²⁵ It is a universalist understanding of “human nature” in Western culture. On this basis, Western countries have established the concept of human rights that puts individual freedom first. In contrast, traditional Chinese culture emphasizes the human nature of “benevolence” and the unity of “individuality” and “sociality.” For example, Mencius said, “Benevolence without love is not enough to

²³ Liu Ming, “The Human Nature Basis and Limitations of Liberal Human Rights View: A Perspective of Historicism,” *Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy* 3 (2020): 156-158.

²⁴ Chang Jian and Gao Jiexin, “The Generation and Development of Human Rights Concepts in China,” *Journal of the Central Institute of Socialism* 5 (2023): 158-160.

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by Miao Litian (Shanghai: Shanghai Century Publishing Group, 2005), 47-48.

understand others; love without benevolence is not enough to establish oneself." (Mencius, *Gongsun Chou II*). There is also "the sense of national and familial loyalty" that China has emphasized for thousands of years. Second, from the perspective of form requirements, the fine traditional Chinese culture is rich in care for the entire human race, such as the Confucian saying that "All people within the four seas are brothers" (*The Analects of Confucius, Yan Yuan*). Third, from the perspective of content requirements, traditional Chinese culture pays attention to the most pressing interests of individual human beings. For example, as mentioned in traditional Chinese culture, "When the granaries are full, people know etiquette; when they have enough food and clothing, they know honor and disgrace" (*Guan Zi, Mumin*). It emphasizes the fundamental role of material conditions in everyone's life. These universalist elements contained in Chinese traditional culture are, in a certain sense, also some universal elements in the concept of human rights in the modern world. The Chinese human rights path, which takes the fine traditional Chinese culture as its important foundation, also has global significance.

The concept and practice of human rights in any country cannot be completely separated from its own cultural foundation. Emphasizing the "fine traditional Chinese culture" in choosing China's human rights path is a respect for the above objective facts, and to a certain extent, reflects the cultural demands and psychological foundation of the general public. However, it is undeniable that human rights are the product of modern political civilization. When emphasizing the influence of "fine traditional Chinese culture" on China's human rights path, we should also avoid the misunderstanding of "cultural ontology," that is, believing that "fine traditional Chinese culture" constitutes the subject and origin of human rights. From the perspective of the modern characteristics of human rights, modern human rights are based on the modern rule of law and modern political civilization. The function of traditional culture in a country's choice of human rights path is mainly explanatory rather than constitutive. That is, traditional culture can explain the rationality of a country's choice of a certain human rights path to a certain extent, but it cannot constitute the specific content of modern human rights.

III. The Internal Mutual Construction of "One Core, Two Sources" and the Four "Specific Integrations" of Its Connotation

The human rights development of a country, to a certain extent, represents the level of political civilization of that country and is an important indicator to measure the level of modernization of it. The "Two Integrations" provide theoretical guidance for the path of Chinese modernization. General Secretary Xi Jinping's statement of "integrating the Marxist outlook on human rights with China's specific realities and with the fine traditional Chinese culture" is a specific application of the "Two Integrations" to the issue of China's human rights path, demonstrating the specific logic of the endogenous nature of China's human rights path. In short, China's human rights path is led by the CPC, and Marxism occupies a core and dominant position in the logical structure of the "Two Integrations." "China's specific realities" and "fine traditional Chinese culture" constitute the two "local resources" of China's human rights path, providing "living water sources" for the application of Marxism in the Chinese context.

A. Internal mutual construction of "One Core, Two Sources"

"Marxism," "China's specific realities" and the "fine traditional Chinese culture" are the three elements that constitute the "Two Integrations." These elements are not separate, but internally mutually constructive and logically related and supportive of each other. The "first integration" is the embodiment of practical materialism, and the "second integration" is the embodiment of historical materialism. Taking "China's specific realities" and "fine traditional Chinese culture" as the two "local sources" of China's human rights path embodies the integration of historical materialism and practical materialism.

First, "the integration of the Marxist outlook on human rights with China's specific realities" ("first integration") embodies Marxist practical materialism. Both the classical

Marxist texts and the Marxism in the Chinese context oppose dogmatism and abstract ideas and instead regard practice as the primary attribute of theory. “The only characteristic of Marxist philosophy is its practical nature. It develops in practice and is revised in practice.”²⁶ The object of practical activities is the external world, and the external world is constantly developing and changing. Only when it is integrated with the specific reality that is constantly developing and changing can the theory have vitality and practical activities can work for the good. Historically, whether it was the period of the New Democratic Revolution or the period of socialist construction, dogmatism and practical activities that were divorced from specific realities brought heavy disasters to the cause of the CPC and China. The “first integration” requires that China’s human rights path in the new era cannot be divorced from current specific realities, which is determined by the practical nature of Marxism. “CPC leadership,” “the transformation of the main contradictions in Chinese society,” “the characteristics and goals of Chinese modernization” and other “specific realities” have determined the nature and content of China’s human rights path, and in turn have shaped the Marxist outlook on human rights in the new era.

Second, “the integration of Marxist human rights views with the fine traditional Chinese culture” (“second integration”) embodies Marxist historical materialism. Historical materialism emphasizes the grasp of external objects and social development in the historical process. “Historical materialism understands existence from a historical perspective and grasps the existence of things and their concepts in objective relations and objectification processes.”²⁷ It is undeniable that there are some elements in China’s thousands of years of traditional culture that are contrary to modern human rights concepts, such as “male superiority and female inferiority” and “the concept of subjects.” The Marxist outlook on human rights represents the view of human rights of modern civilization, emphasizing that “everyone is equal.” It has a filtering effect on Chinese traditional culture, removing its dross and retaining its essence. On the other hand, a country’s fine traditional culture shapes its public political culture and national character, and determines whether its human rights concepts and human rights path can be effectively “implemented.” The Marxist outlook on human rights holds that a country’s human rights path is influenced not only by economic and social conditions but also by historical and cultural traditions. “Human rights are produced historically and manifest themselves in different forms at different stages of historical development. Human rights, as a superstructure of ideas, cannot be separated from the economic structure and cultural environment of society.”²⁸ When a country chooses its own human rights path, if it completely breaks away from its own traditional culture and simply copies the human rights paths of other countries, it will ultimately fail due to the lack of people’s psychological foundation and ground for practice.

Finally, “China’s specific realities” and “fine traditional Chinese culture” as the two “local sources” of China’s human rights path embody the integration of practical materialism and historical materialism. Marxist historical materialism and practical materialism are not separated, but have a strong internal connection. “Historical materialism is practical. The creation of historical materialism is not a castle in the air; it has both practical sources and practical functions.”²⁹ In a certain sense, “China’s specific realities” are not only a reflection of reality but also a manifestation of specific history and a part of Chinese history. The “fine traditional Chinese culture” is not only a constituent element of Chinese history but also a part of “China’s specific realities.” The integration of the Marxist outlook on human rights with “China’s specific realities” and “fine traditional Chinese culture” is an inherent requirement

²⁶ Lu Jing and Zhang Li, “The Practical Characteristics of Marxist Philosophy and the Lost State of Materialist Representation,” *People’s Tribune* 29 (2015): 220.

²⁷ Luo Qian and Wang Xiaofan, “The Four Basic Principles of Historical Materialism,” *Jiangxi Social Sciences* 3 (2023): 13.

²⁸ Li Yi and Li Zhen, “The Classical Semantics and Contemporary Significance of Karl Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’ View of Human Rights,” *Journal of Human Rights Law* 6 (2023): 78.

²⁹ Li Xiaoxiao, “The Picture of the Times and the Path of Marxist Philosophy: From Practical Materialism to Historical Materialism,” *Tianjin Social Sciences* 3 (2021): 41.

of practical materialism and historical materialism. If China's human rights path only emphasizes the "first integration," it will ignore the influence of historical factors on practice activities and separate historical materialism from practical materialism. If it emphasizes only the "second integration," it risks overstating the decisive role of history while overlooking the fact that the practical nature is the primary characteristic of Marxism, thus creating a divide between practical materialism and historical materialism.

B. Four "specific integrations" in China's human rights path

Therefore, to a large extent, the "Two Integrations" have shaped the endogenous nature of China's human rights path and determined its specific form and characteristics, namely the following six aspects explained by General Secretary Xi Jinping: "upholding CPC leadership," "respecting the principal position of the people," "proceeding from China's realities," "focusing on basic human rights, primarily the rights to subsistence and development," "protecting human rights according to the law," and "taking an active part in global governance on human rights."³⁰ These six aspects are actually the specific content of China's human rights path, reflecting the organic unity of particularity and universality. Among them, the first four aspects emphasize the particularity of China's human rights path, which is determined by China's specific national conditions; the last two aspects emphasize that China's human rights path follows the universality of human rights. The rule of law and respect for the United Nations system and the international law system are the human rights development paths chosen by most modern countries. Judging from the logic of human rights theory itself, unlike most Western countries, the characteristics of China's human rights path embody the "integration" of the following aspects.

(1) The main path to realize China's human rights path is the integration of CPC leadership and its people-oriented nature. The major capitalist countries in the West regard the separation of civil society and the state and the confrontation between individual and public power as the conditions and ways to realize human rights and establish "limited government" on this basis.³¹ This determines that there is no unified driving force in the human rights path of Western countries. In contrast, the CPC, as the ruling party, comes from the people and serves the people. The relationship between the Party and the people determines that China's human rights path is jointly promoted by the CPC and the people. The relationship between the people and the ruling party, as well as between individuals and the state, is not confrontational; rather, it is one of integration. In this regard, CPC leadership ensures the political and socialist nature of China's human rights path, and the people are the main participants and promoters of China's human rights cause. The "people-oriented" nature of China's human rights path not only emphasizes that the people are the beneficiaries of rights, but also emphasizes that the people are the promoters of China's human rights cause. Inspiring the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of the people is a characteristic of China's human rights path.

(2) The rights holders in China's human rights path is an organic integration of the individual and the collective. The major capitalist countries in the West limit the enjoyment of rights to individuals, believing that only individuals can have human rights, and thus deny the existence of collective rights. This proposition denies the collective rights of states, nations, and other collectives to peace, self-determination, development, and environment. From a historical and practical perspective, the above arguments overlook the rights of developing countries to strive for national independence, self-determination, and the choice of their own development path. Even in theory, this human rights concept in major Western capitalist countries has been questioned internally. Republican theorists believe that a free country is a prerequisite for individual freedom, and that "political independence" and "autonomy" free

³⁰ Xi Jinping, "Steadfastly Following the Chinese Path to Promote Further Progress in Human Rights," *Qiushi* 12 (2022).

³¹ John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, translated by Ye Qifang and Qu Junong (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2005), Chapter 9.

from foreign interference are rights that a country should have.³² Unlike Western countries, China's human rights path recognizes not only the existence of individual rights but also that of collective rights. This is determined by China's history and national conditions and also follows the logic of rights theory itself. On the one hand, China had long suffered from aggression by Western powers, and the CPC and the Chinese people realized the importance of national independence and autonomy. On the other hand, from the theoretical logic of rights themselves, collective rights are an important prerequisite for individual rights. Only by ensuring the independence and autonomy of the country can the people's rights be guaranteed. In addition, the concept of "collective" has always been of great importance both in the classical theories of Marxism and in China's traditional culture. Considering both individuals and the collective as holders of rights is also determined by the endogenous nature of human rights in China.

(3) The rights of China's human rights path is an organic integration of interest-based rights and choice-based rights. Rights usually refer to certain valuable things or situations that a person (or a collective) is entitled to enjoy. These valuable things or situations constitute the specific content of rights. In terms of the content of rights, there is a distinction between interest theory and choice theory.³³ In short, the interest theory holds that the content of rights is mainly substantial interests that can bring people happiness and joy, such as the satisfaction of material life and spiritual life. The choice theory holds that the content of rights is mainly human freedom and autonomy. The former mainly includes economic, social, and cultural rights related to the right to subsistence and development, while the latter mainly includes citizens' freedom and political rights. The Western human rights tradition has always emphasized that freedom is the core of human rights and even denied that economic, social, and cultural rights are basic human rights. Unlike Western countries, China's human rights path is based on China's national conditions, aims at a better life for the general public, emphasizes protecting the people's substantive interests, and regards the right to subsistence and development as the primary human rights. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that "China insists on a combination of the principle of human rights universality and the nation's actual conditions, and insists that the rights to subsistence and development are primary basic human rights."³⁴ While emphasizing the right to subsistence and development, China also advocates the coordinated realization of citizens' freedom and political rights. The organic integration of interest-based rights and choice-based rights is one of the important characteristics of China's human rights path. Whether from the perspective of the history of human rights practice or from the content of international human rights law, interest-based rights and choice-based rights constitute the two core categories of human rights, neither of which can be missing. When choosing a human rights path that suits them, different countries will inevitably place varying emphases during different historical periods, yet they should not overlook any aspect.

(4) The realization of China's human rights path is an integration of both particularity and universality. The mainstream human rights tradition in Western countries emphasizes universalism, asserting that the universality of human rights takes precedence over their particularity, and seeks to promote Western human rights concepts and pathways to countries worldwide. In contrast, China's human rights path prioritizes particularity over universality. The inherent logic of China's human rights path, as reflected in the "Two Integrations," lies in its emphasis on the particularity of China's approach. In addition, China's human rights path acknowledges the universality of human rights as well. While constantly drawing from the outstanding achievements of human civilization, China actively engages in global human rights governance through the United Nations framework and major international human

³² Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, translated by Xi Ruisen and Yafang (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2002), 26 and 76.

³³ Xu Xiangdong, *Self, Others and Morality* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2007), 761-768.

³⁴ Party History and Literature Research Institute of the CPC Central Committee, *Xi Jinping on Respecting and Protecting Human Rights* (Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 2021), 21.

rights conventions. In understanding how to realize the universality of human rights, China's human rights path emphasizes recognizing the universality of human rights within particularity, which is primarily reflected in two aspects. First, the universality of human rights does not pertain to the universality of specific content or realization methods. Different countries possess unique historical, political, and cultural backgrounds, leading to varying interpretations of the connotation of human rights and differences in the choice of human rights paths. Second, in terms of global human rights governance, the achievement of universal human rights should not involve imposing a particular view of human rights on other societies or cultures; rather, it must respect the political and economic realities of different cultures, religions, and even countries. While emphasizing the particularity of human rights, how to better understand and grasp the universality of human rights and organically integrate the two also remains a "long-term issue" in the development of China's human rights path.

IV. Conclusion

Whether as an ideology in the realm of thought or as a choice in the field of practice, the endogenous nature of human rights is an undeniable objective fact. The endogenous nature of human rights emphasizes starting from the specific political, social, and cultural context of a country to explore the elements and logic suited to its human rights path. This endogenous nature of human rights provides a defense of the driving forces behind a country's human rights path and a defense of its rationality. The endogenous nature of human rights emphasizes the particularity of human rights. Following the universality of human rights on the basis of particularity is the path to realizing the unity of the particularity and universality of human rights. The idea of "Two Integrations" is another major theoretical innovation of the CPC in promoting the application of Marxism in the Chinese context, and it embodies the endogenous nature and endogenous logic of China's human rights path. The three elements of the "Two Integrations", namely "Marxism," "China's specific realities" and "fine traditional Chinese culture," are not in an equal relationship with each other. Among them, "Marxism" is the "core," which is determined by the "political nature" of China's human rights path. "China's specific realities" and "fine traditional Chinese culture" are two "local sources." In addition, these three elements are not separate, but logically mutually constructed. The three are unified in the practical principles of practical materialism and historical materialism. The "One Core" provides principled "guidance" for the "Two Sources," and the "Two Sources" provide practical "sources" for the "One Core." The "One Core, Two Sources" in the "Two Integrations" embody the endogenous logic of China's human rights path.

(Translated by *CHEN Feng*)