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The Formation, Connotations, and Construction of Modern Chinese National Civilization

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Abstract

The proposition of Modern Chinese Civilization emerges as a culmination of over 5,000 years of nurturing by China's fine traditional culture, learning from both the successes and failures of The former Soviet Union's socialist construction, drawing on the experience of capitalist nations in developing modern civilization, and evolving through the transformative practice of Chinese-style modernization. This multidimensional genesis endows Chinese modern civilization with rich and layered connotations. It is simultaneously rooted in the indigenous soil of China and oriented toward socio-economic flourishing; it embodies the pursuit of common prosperity as well as the advancement of national unity and progress. Yet, the construction of such a civilization remains a long-term and complex endeavor. It calls for the extraction of cultural nutrients across both diachronic and synchronic dimensions; the co-constitution of an autonomous knowledge system through theory-practice interplay; the deepening of civilizational foundations through international cultural exchange; and the strengthening of cultural identity through the mutual embeddedness and integration of Han and ethnic minority traditions. Only through these coordinated efforts across multiple dimensions can cultural prosperity be sustained, civilizational revitalization be realized, and meaningful contributions be made to building China into a culturally powerful nation.

Keywords: *Chinese nation, Modern civilization, Autonomous knowledge system, Cultural identity*

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1. Introduction

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has adopted major decisions aimed at further deepening reform across all sectors and advancing the construction of Chinese-

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style modernization. Within this strategic framework, the concept of a *Modern Civilization of the Chinese Nation* has emerged as a distinctive cultural manifestation of the modernization process with Chinese characteristics. Accordingly, the idea of Chinese national modern civilization is inextricably linked to the broader agenda of comprehensive reform.

The civilizational proposition of Chinese national modernity has been a long-term focus in the theoretical reflections of General Secretary Xi Jinping. Since the introduction of the concept by Xi, scholars have engaged in extensive and multidimensional discussions, producing a considerable body of research. In terms of its *formative mechanisms*, academic inquiries have analyzed the concept from various perspectives, including historical logic, theoretical logic, practical logic, temporal logic, and party-building logic (Kang, 2023; Liu, 2023; Zeng, 2023; Li, 2023; Fan, 2024). Regarding its *conceptual connotations*, researchers have elaborated on five interrelated dimensions—political, material, spiritual, social, and ecological civilization (Wang, 2024). With respect to *construction pathways*, current scholarship, situated in the broader background of the “two integrations,” has proposed strategies rooted in ideological guidance, methodological design, cultural confidence, and mutual learning (Liu, 2023). These contributions provide a robust foundation for further research.

However, despite the progress made, there remain three notable gaps. First, regarding the formative mechanisms, insufficient attention has been paid to the lessons learned from the former Soviet Union’s socialist civilization-building as well as the experiences of capitalist states in constructing modern civilizations. Second, with respect to its connotations, existing studies are largely confined to the five aforementioned dimensions, lacking exploration from other potentially enriching perspectives. Third, in terms of construction logic, existing analyses tend to focus on practical “how-to” approaches, without adequately addressing the deeper philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of civilizational development.

In light of these gaps, and building upon existing research, this study seeks to further explore the modern civilization of the Chinese nation from three interrelated dimensions: its formative logic, conceptual connotations, and construction rationale. Through this inquiry, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing theoretical development and practical construction of a modern Chinese national civilization.

2. The Formation of Modern Chinese National Civilization

As an interdisciplinary core concept, *mechanism* refers to the fundamental principles and internal laws governing how the constituent elements of a system interact under specific conditions to achieve designated objectives. Investigating such mechanisms enables a deeper understanding of the processes through which phenomena take shape, facilitates the revelation of their underlying essence, and allows for the identification of governing rules that guide their operation. The modern civilization of the Chinese nation constitutes a complex and large-scale system comprised of diverse elements shaped by multiple historical and contemporary forces. When examined through the lens of macro-history over an extended temporal scale, the formation of this civilization reveals itself as a product of layered influences. It is deeply nourished by the long-standing traditions of Chinese civilization, enriched by the experiences and lessons drawn from the former Soviet Union project of socialist civilization-building, and further shaped through a critical engagement with the trajectories of modern civilization in capitalist countries. Most crucially, it is being actively constructed and redefined through the ongoing practice of Chinese-style modernization.

2.1. It is Nourished by Over Five Millennia of Distinguished Chinese Cultural Traditions

The formation of modern Chinese national civilization is not a fictional construct born in isolation; rather, it is deeply rooted in the rich nourishment of traditional cultural heritage. It maintains a continuous and intrinsic connection with the civilizational traditions of the Chinese nation, and together, they constitute the profound and expansive fabric of Chinese civilization. In this relational structure, traditional civilization serves as the *maternal matrix*, while modern civilization represents its contemporary transformation. It is precisely through the sustained nourishment of this foundational matrix that traditional Chinese civilization has been revitalized and imbued with renewed vitality in the present era.

Traditional Chinese civilization is embodied in over five thousand years of outstanding cultural heritage. As Han (2024) observes, “Culture is the premise of civilization, and civilization is the sublimation of culture.”

Culture originates from human needs; it reflects humanity's transformation of the natural world and the resultant accumulation of symbolic and material achievements. In early China, in order to ensure the survival and reproduction of their communities, the ancestors of the Chinese nation developed organized ways to extract subsistence and productive resources from nature. This interactive process imprinted the natural world with human agency, giving rise to cultural formations such as hunting cultures, fishing cultures, and agricultural cultures.

Through generations of transmission and accumulation, the Chinese people developed a richly layered and diverse cultural system. Among the myriad cultural expressions that emerged, some were regressive or obsolete, now regarded as cultural dross, while others constituted progressive and enduring elements, now recognized as cultural essence. These essential elements can be further categorized into achievements across material, spiritual, and institutional dimensions.

In material terms, China maintained global preeminence throughout its agrarian civilization, producing astonishing achievements. These include the artistry of bronze ware, the terracotta army as a monumental subterranean military formation, the Great Wall as a defensive architectural feat, and the Four Great Inventions—such as papermaking—which exemplify ancient technological ingenuity.

In the spiritual domain, China's unique geographical context gave rise to equally distinctive cultural developments, which have become integral to world civilization. Over centuries of evolution, this yielded the crystallization of thought in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism—each representing refined streams of philosophical and moral insight.

From an institutional perspective, China's dynastic tradition fostered a centralized, unified political structure anchored in the ideal of *grand unity*. The imperial bureaucratic system that evolved across successive dynasties laid the foundation for long-term national coherence and governance.

Collectively, the progressive outcomes across these domains—material, spiritual, and institutional—constitute the core of what is recognized today as the *distinguished traditional culture* of the Chinese nation. These cumulative achievements not only sustained historical continuity but also continue to nourish the formation of modern Chinese national civilization.

The nourishment provided by China's outstanding traditional culture has played a fundamental role in shaping the formation and evolution of modern Chinese national civilization. The constructive elements embedded within traditional Chinese culture, after long-term accumulation, transformation, and refinement, have ultimately been elevated into a comprehensive civilizational system encompassing both material and spiritual dimensions. Through temporal sedimentation and historical distillation, many conceptual foundations from traditional culture have transcended their original historical contexts and continue to exert profound influence on contemporary civilizational development. For instance, the people-centered development philosophy—now a cornerstone of modern governance—is a contemporary expression of the ancient dictum *"The people are the foundation of the state; governance by virtue."* The modern articulation of *"the Chinese nation as one community"* reflects the historical unity encoded in the imperial ideal of a *"multiethnic yet integrated state"*. The patriotic sentiment of *"Please rest assured, the strong country has me!"* embodies the traditional ethos of *"practicing self-cultivation, maintaining family harmony, conducting good governance, guaranteeing peace, and shouldering one's duties to secure the future of the nation."* *"Promoting and practicing the core socialist values"* has become the contemporary narrative of the spirit that calls for *"amassing virtues to carry all things and enhancing virtues to promote righteousness."* The ethical principle of *"Pursue interests through righteousness, never seek nothing but profits."* is a modern continuation of the economic morality of *"Enriching the people and improving their well-being, balancing righteousness and benefits."* *"The CPC's ideological line"* has become a realistic sublimation of the philosophical principles of *"seeking truth from facts"* and *integrating knowledge with practice"*. The vision of *"Harmony Between Humanity and Nature"* echoes the ecological ideal of *"Harmony between humanity and nature, and all living things growing together without harming each other"*. Dialectical thinking, widely applied in contemporary strategic reasoning, mirrors the classical method of *"Grasp the Two Extremes to Apply the Middle Way; Uphold Centrism to Achieve Harmony"*. *"Building relations with neighboring countries based on amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness"* is a vivid modern enactment of the traditional ideal of *"Seek Amity Through Integrity; Be Kind to Your Neighbor"*. Finally, the global initiative of *"building a community with a shared future for*

mankind” resonates deeply with the civilizational aspiration of “*When the Great Way Prevails, All Under Heaven Work for the Common Good; Harmony Under Heaven Reigns Supreme.*” It is precisely through the enduring nourishment of such philosophical, ethical, and institutional resources that modern Chinese national civilization draws continuous cultural vitality, enabling it to grow from its historical roots and engage with contemporary realities in meaningful and dynamic ways.

2.2. Informed by the Experience and Lessons of Soviet Socialist Construction

While the nourishment of China’s outstanding traditional culture is indispensable, it is by no means sufficient on its own. The construction of modern Chinese national civilization must also engage critically with the experience and lessons derived from the former Soviet Union—the first socialist state established under the indigenized application of Marxism in Russia. Emerging from a weak link in the imperialist chain, the former Soviet Union marked the first historical instance in which Marxist theory was transformed from abstract scientific doctrine into concrete political practice. Following its founding, the former Soviet Union undertook ambitious and initially successful efforts to construct socialist civilization. These initiatives significantly enhanced its national strength, elevating the USSR to the status of a superpower rivaling the United States. However, despite its early achievements, a confluence of structural, political, and ideological factors ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet state, relegating it to the annals of history. From this trajectory, it becomes evident that the Soviet experience offers both instructive achievements and sobering failures. The successes provide valuable reference points for socialist development, while the failures offer cautionary lessons that demand serious reflection and critical adaptation. Engaging with both dimensions enables a more balanced and historically grounded approach to building a resilient, forward-looking model of Chinese national modern civilization.

The achievements of the former Soviet Union in constructing a socialist civilization have served as a valuable point of reference for the development of modern Chinese national civilization. Grounded in the integration of Marxist theory with the concrete realities of Russia, the former Soviet Union established a Bolshevik-dominated political party—the Communist Party of The Soviet Union (CPSU). Under the guidance of Leninism, the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union implemented the policies of War Communism and the New Economic Policy (NEP), laying a crucial foundation for the development of the former Soviet Union. Following Lenin’s death, the former Soviet Union, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin and other key figures within the CPSU, adopted a highly centralized planned economy. Through the mobilization of domestic resources for industrial development, the USSR achieved rapid industrialization and established a comprehensive industrial system that capitalized on the advantages of state-led coordination. Agricultural collectivization further enabled the transition to large-scale farming, transforming traditional production methods and providing material support for industrial expansion. Heavy industry was prioritized in the industrial structure, which significantly enhanced the level of industrialization and bolstered national defense capacity. Institutionally, the Soviet model emphasized the centralized leadership of the Party and unified governance, which served as a political and organizational guarantee for domestic stability and rapid industrial growth. These institutional mechanisms were viewed as key pillars of the Soviet developmental model. The victory of the October Revolution had a profound impact on China. Under its influence, the Communist Party of China (CPC) was founded and initially functioned as a branch of the Communist International. Guided by the Comintern (Communist International), the CPC advanced China’s revolutionary process. The former Soviet Union had been China’s model for learning until 1956, when Mao Zedong delivered *On the Ten Major Relationships*, marking a turning point. With Soviet assistance and inspired by its developmental experience, the CPC led the Chinese people in overthrowing the “three great mountains” of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, founding the People’s Republic of China. The CPC further carried out the Three Major Socialist Transformations—of agriculture, industry, and commerce—thus establishing a socialist economic system. These foundational achievements laid the institutional groundwork for socialism with Chinese characteristics and, more broadly, for the ongoing construction of modern Chinese national civilization.

The disintegration of the former Soviet Union stands as a cautionary tale—a negative exemplar—for the construction of modern Chinese national civilization. While the former Soviet Union’s socialist experience once served as a valuable reference for China, contributing materially and spiritually to the early stages of China’s own socialist development, its eventual collapse marked a profound setback for the international

communist movement and posed significant implications for the trajectory of socialism in China. The unexpected dissolution of the USSR sent shockwaves across the globe, prompting speculation that other socialist states would fall in a domino-like sequence. A retrospective examination of the Soviet collapse reveals critical causes that merit serious analysis, with important lessons to be drawn for contemporary socialist construction. First, the former Soviet Union abandoned the guiding role of Marxism. During Mikhail Gorbachev's tenure, the promotion of ideological pluralism led to ideological fragmentation and a lack of cohesive national purpose, ultimately weakening the Party's ability to mobilize and unify the population. Second, the Soviet economy suffered from structural imbalances. Heavy industry was consistently prioritized at the expense of agriculture and services, resulting in long-term stagnation in living standards. The inability to improve the material conditions of the people gradually eroded public support for the ruling regime. Third, the political system became increasingly rigid. In its later years, the Soviet state failed to reform its economic and political institutions to align with changing social conditions. As the superstructure failed to adapt to its economic base, it lost its developmental vitality and institutional responsiveness. Fourth, the Cold War antagonism drained national strength. Rather than recalibrating its foreign policy to reflect shifting international dynamics, the former Soviet Union engaged in an exhaustive arms race with the United States. This strategic miscalculation consumed vast domestic resources and significantly weakened the national economy. Fifth, to practice great-power chauvinism. It attempted to impose its development model on other socialist states, denying them the agency to pursue paths suited to their national conditions. This engendered resistance and resentment, notably from figures such as Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, who opposed Soviet domination. Taken together, these five interrelated factors—ideological disorientation, economic imbalance, political rigidity, strategic overreach, and external imposition—contributed decisively to the former Soviet Union's downfall. For China, this historical experience serves as a critical mirror. In building a resilient and enduring modern Chinese national civilization, these cautionary lessons underscore the necessity of ideological coherence, institutional adaptability, people-centered development, and respect for national particularities within the socialist framework.

2.3. Drawing on the Experiences of Capitalist States in Developing Modern Civilization

Following the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, the global geopolitical landscape underwent profound shifts. The number of socialist countries declined sharply, and their collective influence was significantly diminished. Faced with this new international reality, the leader of the ruling CPC confronted a critical dilemma: should China adopt an inward-looking, self-contained development strategy, or should it remain open to the world and learn from the experiences of advanced capitalist nations? The Communist Party of China, recognizing the global transformations, responded with strategic foresight by adjusting its foreign policy to maintain an open posture. Rather than retreating from global engagement, China pursued active trade relations and diplomatic exchanges with capitalist countries—including the United States—seizing opportunities to learn from their advanced management practices, scientific and technological innovations, and other valuable developmental achievements. These external resources have served as important reference points in China's own path of socialist development. They have enriched the toolkit available for constructing a modern Chinese national civilization and provided international benchmarks to guide and inform domestic reforms. In this way, the selective appropriation of global modernity has been transformed into a complementary force—an "external reservoir"—supporting the indigenous evolution of China's socialist civilization.

The transformation of the capitalist mode of production has exerted a dual impact on global civilizational development. While Karl Marx acknowledged the progressive role that capitalism played in historical advancement, his overall assessment remained deeply critical. On the one hand, capitalism broke the fetters of feudal society, ushering in the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie and the widespread implementation of machine-based mass production. Under the aegis of this bourgeois production mode, humanity's capacity to transform nature was significantly enhanced, leading to an unprecedented expansion of productive forces and a flourishing of science and technology. The intensification of productive capacity enabled the subordination of rural areas to urban centers and incorporated previously unconnected regions into a unified global order. As Marx observed, capitalist development "subjugates the countryside to the city, uncivilized and semi-civilized nations to civilized nations, peasant nationalities to bourgeois nationalities, and the East to the West" ([Central Compilation & Translation Bureau, 2009](#)). Driven by the imperatives of capitalist production, the world ceased

to be a patchwork of isolated systems; rather, it was restructured into a single global framework. Local literatures became part of "world literature," and individual economies were absorbed as integral components of the world market. On the other hand, this mode of production, animated by the pursuit of profit and personalized through the figure of the capitalist, brought with it profound contradictions. Domestically, capitalists engaged in the overt or covert exploitation of labor, reducing vast numbers of workers to lives of poverty, unable to sustain basic livelihoods. Internationally, capitalist expansion took the form of global investment, industrial implantation, and resource extraction, often cloaked in the rhetoric of development but driven by the logic of accumulation. Rather than aiding other nations, capitalist expansion frequently inflicted widespread suffering. In the service of capital accumulation, colonial regimes engaged in the plunder of natural resources, the trafficking of human beings through slavery, and the imposition of foreign political control. These processes imposed enormous burdens on colonized societies, trapping their populations in conditions of structural deprivation and political subjugation. Thus, while capitalism contributed materially to technological and productive advancement, it simultaneously exported modes of domination and exploitation. For modern Chinese national civilization, this contradictory legacy must be critically appraised: to draw selectively from its technological innovations while firmly rejecting its exploitative logics and hegemonic ambitions.

Over several centuries, capitalism has continually transformed itself by adapting the relationship between productive forces and relations of production, as well as the dynamic between economic base and superstructure. It remains an evolving and resilient system. While the trajectory of capitalist development—driven by the logic of capital—has inflicted significant harm on many countries and populations, it has also generated a vast array of material and spiritual achievements. Setting aside institutional critiques, the experiential knowledge accumulated by capitalist societies in their pursuit of modern civilization presents valuable lessons for socialist-oriented states such as China. A critical examination of the construction of modern civilization in capitalist contexts reveals several noteworthy dimensions of practice. First, there is a strong emphasis on the advancement of science and technology. Capitalist countries have made sustained investments in technological innovation, positioning science and technology as key levers for enhancing productivity. These investments have catalyzed significant transformations in living standards, infrastructure systems, space exploration, and maritime navigation. Second, there is a strategic commitment to attracting global talent. Human capital is among the most dynamic elements of the productive system. Nations that successfully attract and cultivate high-end scientific and technological talent often gain comparative advantage in global development. Capitalist states foster favorable environments for research and innovation, cultivating vibrant intellectual ecosystems that draw top-tier professionals from around the world.

Third, capitalist societies emphasize the pivotal role of the market in resource allocation. By allowing market actors to operate under the logic of supply and demand, resources are redistributed more efficiently and competitively. This system of market-driven optimization has often led to high levels of innovation and adaptability in capitalist economies. Fourth, there is sophisticated use of global media platforms to project national narratives. Countries like the United States have leveraged their expansive international communication networks to disseminate dominant cultural values and shape global public opinion. Through strategic storytelling and media diplomacy, they have advanced their soft power objectives on the world stage. In constructing modern Chinese national civilization, China has selectively drawn from these capitalist experiences, integrating them within its own institutional and cultural framework. It has prioritized the development of new quality productive forces, fostered talent cultivation systems, allowed the market to play a decisive role in resource distribution, and strategically expanded efforts to tell China's story to the world. By learning from global practices while adhering to its socialist path, China continues to shape a modern civilization that is both indigenous and globally engaged.

2.4. Evolved Through the Grand Practice of Chinese-Style Modernization

Beyond the cultural nourishment of its civilizational "matrix", the insights drawn from Soviet socialist construction, and the supportive influence of "external" resources, the advancement of modern Chinese national civilization is inseparable from the sustained progress of Chinese-style modernization. Modernization, in essence, signifies a leap in productive capacity, a fundamental transformation in ways of life, and a vital mechanism for achieving rural-urban integration. Drawing upon the developmental trajectories of industrialized nations, industrialization is widely recognized as the foundational phase of modernization,

upon which other dimensions—technological, social, political, and ecological—are constructed. China's pathway to modernization has been both complex and non-linear, marked by significant historical shifts in its developmental paradigm. Notably, there has been a conceptual evolution from the earlier formulation of "modernization with Chinese characteristics" to the more assertive "Chinese-style modernization," signifying a maturing national vision and strategic confidence. In terms of developmental goals, China has successively moved through several stages of ideological and strategic refinement: from the early emphasis on the "Four Modernizations," to the broader objective of building a "prosperous, democratic, and civilized" society; this later expanded to include "harmony," and eventually evolved into the comprehensive vision of a "prosperous, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful" socialist modern state (Zheng, 2024). This historical trajectory reflects not only the country's adaptive learning and institutional resilience but also its enduring commitment to constructing a modern civilization that is rooted in national context while responsive to global challenges.

The path to modernization in China has been a long and exploratory journey, shaped by historical turbulence and ideological struggle. To understand the trajectory of China's modern development, it is essential to revisit the nation's modern history. Beginning in the late 19th century, China found itself overwhelmed by imperialist invasions from capitalist nations that had already undergone two waves of industrial revolution. This period marked a national crisis, during which the country was "The country endured intense humiliation, the people were subjected to great pain, and the Chinese civilization was plunged into darkness" (Xi, 2023). In the face of such adversity, numerous reform-minded intellectuals and patriots sought ways to rescue the nation. Early efforts attributed China's weakness to technological inferiority. Wei Yuan, recognized as the pioneer who urged China to "The first person to see the world with openness," advocated learning from the technological strengths of Western powers—what he termed "using the barbarians' techniques to control the barbarians." This line of thought was echoed by the Self-Strengthening Movement, represented by figures such as Zhang Zhidong, who proposed "Learning advanced techniques from foreigners to subdue them," emphasizing the import of Western machinery and technical knowledge as a means to national salvation. However, these attempts soon revealed their limitations. As China engaged with Western technologies, it became clear that "Chinese learning as the fundamental structure," underscoring the futility of pursuing salvation solely through technological imitation. As this realization deepened, a shift occurred toward understanding institutional inferiority as the root cause of China's decline. Reformers such as Liang Qichao turned to Western political and educational systems; thinkers like Yan Fu sought enlightenment through the lens of evolutionary theory in works like *On Evolution*; and Sun Yat-sen, the forerunner of China's democratic revolution, proposed adopting Western democratic ideals. Despite their efforts, none succeeded in finding a sustainable pathway for China's rejuvenation.

The founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) marked a decisive turn. Under its leadership, feudal structures were dismantled, bureaucratic corruption eliminated, and foreign imperialist forces expelled. The establishment of the People's Republic of China laid a solid foundation for the country's modern development. The initial blueprint for modernization—the "Four Modernizations" (agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology)—was gradually expanded and refined into the comprehensive vision of building a "prosperous, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful" socialist modern nation.

Contemporary China is witnessing the gradual and determined unfolding of its unique path toward modernization—what is now termed "Can China achieve modernization?" Decades ago, the haunting question posed by some scholars—"Can China modernize?"—reflected the historical uncertainty and developmental anxieties of a once-impooverished nation. Today, China has responded to that question through independent initiative, self-reliance, and multidimensional efforts to construct its own model of modernization, distinct from Western paradigms. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China laid out an ambitious blueprint for building a socialist modernized country, specifying clear timelines and an action-oriented framework. It systematically articulated the leadership foundation, essential features, core requirements, and governing principles of Chinese-style modernization. As a country of continental scale and vast population, China's achievement of modernization is poised to reshape the global landscape of development. At the heart of this process are the Chinese people—over 1.4 billion citizens contributing through their respective roles and professions, each advancing the modernization cause through industry-specific innovation and labor. Recognizing its immense demographic complexity, China adopts a people-centered approach to development.

Efforts are being made to narrow urban-rural divides and regional disparities, aiming ultimately for the common prosperity of all citizens. In the pursuit of this goal, economic growth driven by “new quality productive forces” is balanced with the satisfaction of the people’s spiritual and cultural aspirations. There is a simultaneous emphasis on cultural revitalization, seeking to enhance the sense of fulfillment and happiness derived from both material and non-material life. The coordinated advancement of material and spiritual civilization is guided by an ecological philosophy—“lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”—and a systematic understanding of the interconnectedness of “Mountains, waters, forests, farmlands, grasslands and deserts”. This reflects a commitment to harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. Beyond its national agenda, China champions the concept of “a community with a shared future for mankind.” It actively promotes “Humanity’s common values,” engaging the international community through peaceful cooperation and supporting other developing nations in their efforts to pursue modernization consistent with their unique national contexts. In this light, Chinese-style modernization is not only a practical path toward socioeconomic transformation; it also represents the lived expression of modern Chinese civilization. Conversely, Chinese civilization in its modern form constitutes the cultural and civilizational framework that sustains and gives meaning to Chinese-style modernization. The two are deeply interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

3. The Connotation of Modern Chinese National Civilization

Having clarified the generative mechanisms underpinning the emergence of modern Chinese national civilization, it is imperative to further interrogate the multidimensional richness that defines its connotation. Scholarly interpretations vary depending on the analytical lens employed. A prevailing approach among Chinese academics is to define its substance through the overarching “Five-Sphere Integrated Plan” (*wuwei yiti*), encompassing material, political, spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. Some studies focus on one of these domains, especially those most emblematic of contemporary developmental imperatives (Luo, 2024). Building upon this foundation, the present analysis draws from the framework proposed by the eminent French historian Fernand Braudel, who conceptualized civilization across four interrelated dimensions: geography, society, economy, and collective mentality. This theoretical model offers an expanded perspective through which to apprehend the profound substance of modern Chinese civilization (Braudel, 2003). Viewed through this civilizational lens, modern Chinese national civilization is: first, a geographically rooted civilization grounded in the spatial and cultural realities of the Chinese land; second, a socially organized civilization oriented toward harmonious development and institutional stability; third, an economically driven civilization that aspires to shared prosperity and inclusive growth; and fourth, a civilization of collective consciousness that places emphasis on national unity, cultural confidence, and progressive values. Through this multi-scalar framework, the modern Chinese national civilization reveals itself not merely as a political or institutional construct but as a holistic socio-cultural system—a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, locality and globality, material progress and spiritual advancement. Such an approach deepens understanding of how Chinese modernization projects intersect with broader civilizational transformations, offering both indigenous rootedness and universal aspirations.

3.1. A Civilization Rooted in the Expansive Chinese Terrain

In the study of civilizations, the significance of their geographic origin is often underappreciated, despite it being a fundamental dimension of civilizational analysis. Each civilization arises within a relatively fixed territorial domain, shaped by the region’s specific topography, landforms, rivers, and ecological features. As Fernand Braudel insightfully observed, “Civilizations, whether vast or modest in scale, always find their coordinates on the map. Their essential characteristics are shaped by the constraints and affordances of their geographical location” (Braudel, 2003). Modern Chinese national civilization, as a contemporary continuation of the traditional Chinese civilizational legacy, is likewise rooted in a specific spatial context—it occupies a distinct position on the world map. The expansive territory of more than 9.6 million square kilometers provides not only the material basis but also the spatial canvas upon which this enduring and evolving civilization unfolds.

The continued inheritance and modern transformation of traditional Chinese civilization have been profoundly facilitated by the relatively independent and vast territory of China, which serves as the spatial

foundation for civilizational development. Geographically situated in East and Central Asia, China is a land-sea composite state with strategic locational advantages. To the west, it is bordered by Central and South Asia and shielded by the towering Tibetan Plateau—often called the “Roof of the World.” To the east, it faces the Pacific Ocean, with an extensive coastline and numerous islands. The northern regions neighbor Mongolia and Russia, home to expansive forests and grasslands, while the south interfaces with Southeast Asia, benefiting from abundant tropical and subtropical resources. China’s unique geographical positioning endows it with vast natural resources and ecological diversity, offering a stable foundation for civilizational continuity and evolution. In terms of spatial magnitude, China ranks third globally in land area, encompassing over 9.6 million square kilometers. Its topography is remarkably varied, comprising plateaus, mountains, basins, plains, and hills. The country experiences a wide range of climate zones—from frigid, temperate, subtropical, to tropical—along with diverse climatic systems including monsoonal and continental climates. Its hydrological richness includes major rivers such as the Yellow River, Yangtze River, Pearl River, Heilongjiang River, and Yarlung Zangbo River, as well as numerous lakes like Poyang Lake, Dongting Lake, and Taihu Lake. China is also endowed with abundant natural resources, including coal, oil, natural gas, iron ore, and rich marine reserves, alongside significant biodiversity and a multitude of ecological systems harboring rare species. From a humanistic perspective, China, as one of the world’s four ancient civilizations, possesses a long and continuous historical lineage and a deeply rooted cultural heritage. Population distribution is uneven—sparser in the western interior and denser in the eastern regions—with diverse ethnic groups coexisting in overlapping residential patterns. Collectively, these geographical, ecological, and humanistic advantages have provided an essential foundation for the flourishing and modernization of Chinese national civilization.

Within the fixed territorial boundaries of China, functional differentiation across regions necessitates the strategic optimization of spatial resources to support the construction of a high-quality modern national civilization. From a long-term perspective on the sustainable development of the Chinese nation, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has prioritized both national advancement and the improvement of people’s living standards by formulating an integrated system of territorial spatial planning. This system incorporates key spatial instruments—including functional zoning, land-use plans, and urban-rural spatial frameworks—into a unified governance mechanism (Anonymous, 2019). The spatial planning process strategically integrates factors such as population distribution, economic development layouts, land utilization patterns, and ecological preservation needs. The aim is to cultivate a spatial configuration that ensures intensive and efficient production zones, livable and appropriately scaled residential areas, and ecologically vibrant natural spaces. Such planning aspires to create spatial outcomes marked by safety, harmony, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability (Anonymous, 2019). Through the implementation of national spatial plans, zones dedicated to ecology, agriculture, and urban development have been systematically demarcated. Boundaries for ecological conservation redlines, permanent basic farmlands, urban expansion zones, and protected maritime areas have been clearly delineated, safeguarding future spaces for China’s sustainable development (Anonymous, 2019). Human survival and development are inherently rooted in ecological conditions, and no sustainable trajectory is possible without ecological integrity as its underpinning. To this end, the CPC has adopted the goal of “protecting nature, serving the people, and achieve sustainable development” and has categorized natural conservation spaces into three major types: national parks, nature reserves, and natural parks (Anonymous, 2019). This tripartite framework contributes to the establishment of a stable, efficient, and healthy ecosystem that fosters human-nature harmony. Furthermore, to safeguard national ecological security and enhance the ecological capacity to support economic development, ecological functional areas are classified into the following types: Water conservation ecological functional areas; Biodiversity conservation ecological functional areas; Soil retention ecological functional areas; Windbreak and sand fixation ecological functional areas; Flood storage ecological functional areas; Agricultural product supply functional areas; Forest product supply functional areas; Large urban agglomerations; Key urban clusters (Wu, 2019). Modern Chinese national civilization will attain a higher stage of quality development through the careful orchestration and scientific governance of such rational territorial spatial arrangements.

3.2. A Civilization Committed to Social Flourishment and Development

Human beings invariably exist within structured social frameworks, and these frameworks, when categorized through the lens of productive relations, reveal distinct stages such as slave society, feudal society, capitalist

society, and ultimately, the envisioned communist society. Each historical phase bears its own socio-economic imprint, shaping corresponding civilizational forms reflective of the era's ethos and material conditions. Civilization, therefore, is not an abstract ideal detached from society, but a historical product grounded in concrete social formations. This intimate relationship between society and civilization has long been emphasized in civilizational theory. As Fernand Braudel observed, "The concept of 'society' is rich in meaning. In this respect, it closely resembles that of civilization, and the two are often interrelated" (Braudel, 2003). He further asserted that "without the support of society, and the tensions and progress that emerge from it, civilization cannot exist" (Braudel, 2003). Civilization, in this view, is not merely a cultural achievement but a structural outcome shaped by collective social momentum and institutional development. In the context of contemporary China, the prevailing social formation is that of the primary stage of socialism—defined by the theoretical and practical framework of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is within this particular stage that the modern civilization of the Chinese nation is being constructed and expressed. The institutions, values, and cultural achievements emerging today are manifestations of a socialist society in motion, responding to domestic needs while engaging with global modernity. This civilizational form is thus both historically situated and normatively driven, aiming to realize the aspirations of equity, development, and shared human flourishing.

The evolution of Chinese national modern civilization is inseparable from the societal foundation provided by socialism with Chinese characteristics. Society is constituted by its people, and the development of a society is ultimately embodied in the lived experiences and collective practices of those within it. In the context of socialism with Chinese characteristics, people are intrinsically social beings grounded in reality—realistic persons who shape society through collective practice—not reclusive individuals living in solitude, nor abstract entities detached from historical conditions. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Chinese people are actively striving toward the realization of the country's second centenary goal—transforming China into a modern socialist nation. On the economic front, workers across various sectors uphold and extend the long-standing cultural ethos of diligence, perseverance, and ingenuity. They apply their creative capacities in advancing socialist economic development, contributing to a collective material foundation for modernization. Politically, citizens actively engage in public life not merely as governed subjects but as rightful participants in national governance. Within the framework of constitutional law, they are entitled to exercise legal rights and fulfill obligations as enshrined in the *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, including the management of public, economic, and social affairs. Through continuous institutional refinement, China has gradually established a governance model characterized by the organic unity of Party leadership, the people's sovereignty, and the rule of law. Economically, China's aggregate national output has seen substantial growth, elevating the country to the status of the world's second-largest economy. Culturally, the public adheres to the guiding principles of Marxism, while simultaneously drawing inspiration from traditional Chinese cultural resources. Rooted in the praxis of socialist construction, literary and artistic endeavors are aligned with the spirit of the times, seeking to voice the collective aspirations of the people and the nation. This has given rise to numerous acclaimed cultural productions that celebrate the CPC, the people, and the era, contributing to a renewed cultural atmosphere and artistic vitality. Ecologically, the ethos of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" has gained widespread social traction. The public increasingly integrates ecological consciousness into both productive activities and daily life. These sustained efforts have brought tangible improvements to the environment—cleaner skies, greener landscapes, and fresher air. Through the unifying leadership of the Communist Party and the collective efforts of the people, China has achieved the rare combination of rapid economic development and enduring social stability. These accomplishments form the essential societal bedrock upon which the edifice of modern Chinese civilization continues to rise.

The construction of modern Chinese civilization not only reflects the trajectory of national development but also reciprocally reinforces the advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The multifaceted civilizational outcomes generated throughout this process—both material and spiritual—serve as vital drivers of sustained progress. Tangible economic achievements lay a solid foundation for improving the quality of life for the Chinese people, enhancing national resilience, and bolstering the country's capacity to respond to global uncertainties. A robust economic base enables the nation to stand with confidence in the global arena, empowers its people with a sense of dignity, and earns international respect. Meanwhile, intangible spiritual

achievements act as a unifying force, fortifying the ideological and moral consensus necessary for national cohesion. Through the sustained exploration by generations of Chinese Communists, Marxism adapted to the Chinese context and the needs of our times has become China's long-standing guiding ideology and a theoretical instrument for unifying thought. As contemporary Chinese Marxism and 21st-century Marxism, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era has sharpened into a powerful ideological weapon uniting the entire Party and the Chinese people. Under the guidance of this newest theoretical achievement in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of our era—Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era—the people are united in thought and purpose, forging a mighty epochal strength for building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The dialectical interplay between material and spiritual achievements generated through the construction of modern Chinese civilization fosters a stable and resilient societal environment. Such stability constitutes a critical condition for the deepening of socialist modernization. Within this secure context, the state is able to pursue development with strategic focus, while the people devote themselves wholeheartedly to their respective roles in construction and innovation. As a result, Chinese society exhibits a distinctive capacity for coordinated progress, national prosperity, and sustainable development.

3.3. A Civilization Oriented Toward Common Prosperity for the People

The development of civilization is invariably contingent upon a stable and sufficient material foundation. As Braudel aptly observed, "Each society, each civilization, depends upon its environment—economic, technological, ecological, and demographic. Material and ecological conditions always play a decisive role in determining the fate of a civilization" (Braudel, 2003). Scarcity in material accumulation tends to restrain civilizational progress, while material abundance acts as a crucial engine propelling societal advancement. The trajectory of modern Chinese civilization exemplifies this principle. Through sustained development, China has transformed from a nation where "400 million people suffered from food shortages" in its early days to one where "1.4 billion people enjoy ample and nutritious food"; from "starting from scratch" to achieving "moderate prosperity in all respects"; from "being unable to produce a single car, airplane, tank, or tractor" to becoming "the world's second largest economy with a comprehensive industrial system"; and from "a latecomer to modernization" to "a major driver of global modernization". By ensuring that the dividends of growth are equitably distributed, China has positioned itself on a path toward common prosperity, thereby reinforcing the material backbone essential for sustaining and enhancing modern Chinese civilization.

The realization of common prosperity is fundamentally rooted in the nature and mission of the Communist Party of China (CPC). As articulated by Xi (2023), "Common prosperity is the essential requirement of socialism with Chinese characteristics." In the tumultuous course of China's modern history, myriad proposals for national salvation emerged, competing ideologies clashed, and various political parties were established. Through a process of historical comparison, differentiation, and selection, the Chinese people ultimately chose the CPC—an entity grounded in Marxist ideology and dedicated to securing the interests of the people. Since its founding, the CPC has, through long-term practical engagement, clarified its essential nature and core mission: it is the vanguard of the Chinese working class, as well as of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation at large. Its central mission is to serve the people wholeheartedly. This foundational identity necessitates that the CPC guide the nation toward common prosperity as a crucial step in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the CPC led the Chinese people in eradicating the vestiges of the old feudal society and initiated socialist construction from a new historical starting point. Despite facing blockades and suppression from international imperialist forces, China, guided by the principle of self-reliance, overcame unimaginable difficulties to establish a relatively independent and comprehensive industrial and national economic system—thereby laying the groundwork for shared prosperity. Following the launch of the reform and opening-up policy, China shifted its strategic focus to economic development. This pivotal move unleashed and advanced productive forces, yielding significant economic gains and accelerating the pursuit of common prosperity. In the new era, China's developmental foundation has become more robust, with heightened emphasis on coordinated growth between urban and rural areas and across regions. The state has committed to advancing high-quality development in all sectors, ensuring that the fruits of reform and growth are equitably shared among all citizens. Whether during the revolutionary struggle, the period of socialist construction, the reform era, or the contemporary phase of modernization, the

CPC has consistently oriented its efforts toward fulfilling the multifaceted aspirations of the people. Its ultimate goal remains unchanged: to enable all citizens to lead affluent and dignified lives.

The significant achievements in China's economic development have laid a solid foundation for the realization of common prosperity. As Xi (2023) emphasized, "Common prosperity is the shared aspiration of the Chinese people." Through sustained effort and long-term planning, China has experienced a historic leap in economic power. It has emerged as the world's second-largest economy, surpassed only by the United States, and has made substantial contributions to the global economic system. This strong economic base has enabled China to steadily advance its pursuit of common prosperity. The goal of achieving common prosperity reflects the essential requirement of socialism. It is not an instantaneous result but a gradual historical process. On the basis of liberating and developing the productive forces, China has, through its unique modernization trajectory, promoted comprehensive progress across all dimensions of public life—material, political, cultural, social, and ecological. This multidimensional advancement paves the way for the free and well-rounded development of individuals. China's developmental model has intentionally avoided the severe wealth polarization observed in many capitalist countries. Instead, it ensures that the benefits of growth are equitably distributed among all its people. Successive generations of Chinese Communist Party (CPC) leadership have, based on the prevailing domestic and international conditions during their respective periods in office, endeavored to create conditions conducive to improving the lives of the people. Poverty, which had plagued the Chinese nation for centuries, has been systematically eradicated under the guidance of the CPC, marking a globally significant achievement in poverty alleviation. China has built the world's most extensive social security and healthcare systems, ensuring that the elderly receive proper care and that healthcare services are accessible to all. These efforts have alleviated major sources of social anxiety. Moreover, China now boasts the largest education system in the world. Access to early childhood care and comprehensive educational opportunities has dramatically improved, significantly enhancing the nation's overall educational level. Coordinated regional development strategies have also been implemented, particularly targeting ethnic minority regions, border areas, and former revolutionary bases, thereby reducing regional disparities and promoting balanced national development. In light of these transformations, it becomes evident that the modern civilization of the Chinese nation is deeply rooted in a people-centered ethos. It is a civilization driven by the ultimate goal of realizing common prosperity for all.

3.4. A Civilization That Emphasizes National Unity and Collective Progress

Collective mentality plays a decisive role in shaping both social progress and the trajectory of civilizational development. As Braudel aptly observed, "In every historical period, there exists a prevailing worldview and a collective mindset that dominates the entirety of the masses in society" (Braudel, 2003). When such a mentality is oriented positively, it can mobilize social cohesion, inspire civic engagement, and channel collective energies toward nation-building. Conversely, a fractured or negative collective consciousness may lead to social fragmentation, undermining societal synergy, obstructing development, and impeding cultural renewal. As a multi-ethnic country, China comprises diverse groups characterized by different languages, customs, traditions, and cultural systems. A central challenge lies in harmonizing these differences while fostering a unified national endeavor toward socialist modernization. The Communist Party of China has organically integrated Marxist ethnic theory with China's specific realities, forging new achievements in adapting ethnic theories to the Chinese context and the needs of our times. The latest of these achievements is Xi Jinping thought on Strengthening and Improving Ethnic Work. This important thought emphasizes forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, which constitutes the prevailing collective mindset of the Chinese nation today.

The consciousness of the Chinese national community—functioning as a "collective mentality"—has taken shape through a long historical trajectory under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). This evolving awareness reflects the shared struggle for unity and common prosperity among all ethnic groups in China. It is not only rooted in a profound historical foundation but has also been consistently reinforced through robust political leadership, comprehensive legal frameworks, multidimensional cultural construction, and sustained interethnic interaction and integration. Historically, the basis of this consciousness is firmly embedded in collective national experiences. As President Xi (2023) has stated, "The vast territory of China was jointly developed by all ethnic groups; the time-honored history jointly written; the splendid

culture jointly created; and the great national spirit jointly cultivated." Politically, the leadership of the CPC has served as the institutional cornerstone for cultivating this collective identity. Under CPC guidance, all ethnic groups enjoy equal rights to development and benefit from national policies aimed at equitable progress across ethnic regions, thereby securing a material foundation for ethnic equality. From the legal perspective, the consciousness of the Chinese national community has been codified into the rule of law, reflected in key statutes such as the *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* and *Legislation Law of the People's Republic of China*. These legal instruments provide institutional guarantees for reinforcing a unified national consciousness. Culturally, the promotion of the national common language, the construction of shared cultural symbols, and the integration of this consciousness into educational curricula, textbooks, and evaluation systems have laid a firm cultural groundwork. Furthermore, frequent interactions and deepening integration among ethnic groups in everyday life have fostered mutual understanding, strengthened solidarity, and deepened the sense of belonging to a unified national collective. As a reflection of the collective identity of all ethnicities in China, the formation of the Chinese national community consciousness provides significant ideological and practical impetus for advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The consciousness of the Chinese national community, conceived as a form of "collective mentality," serves as a unifying force propelling the realization of the Chinese Dream—the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This collective consciousness is underpinned by a shared aspiration among all ethnic groups to contribute toward the early realization of national rejuvenation. Regardless of ethnic origin, all citizens are members of the broader Chinese national family. As stated in the official narrative, "To realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the Chinese people in modern times" ([Party Literature Research Office of CPC Central Committee, 2013](#)). Countless patriots and revolutionary martyrs have made relentless efforts—often at the cost of their lives—to achieve this dream. The Chinese Dream is not only the dream of the state or the nation but also the common aspiration of all ethnic communities within China. At the macro level, national community consciousness enables people of all ethnicities to align their will and actions, drawing the largest possible concentric circle of unity and achieving the broadest consensus. Specifically, this shared consciousness enhances national and ethnic identification, strengthening the spiritual bond that underpins the Chinese Dream. It promotes interethnic solidarity and builds formidable national cohesion, aggregating collective strength toward national goals. It fosters a harmonious and stable social environment, offering orderly conditions conducive to national development. Moreover, it provides ideological unity and resilience against external challenges, safeguarding national interests and ethnic dignity. In sum, the collective mentality embodied in the consciousness of the Chinese national community constitutes a vital component of China's modern civilization. Fostering this mentality contributes significantly to national unity, ethnic harmony, societal stability, and cultural flourishing—all essential pillars for the realization of national rejuvenation.

4. The Construction of Modern Civilization of the Chinese Nation

The construction of modern civilization of the Chinese nation constitutes an intrinsic element in advancing socialist cultural development in China ([Liu, 2024](#)). It is a complex, systemic undertaking characterized by wide-ranging domains and a prolonged temporal horizon. As such, clarifying its overarching framework and developmental pathways is imperative. Current academic discourse predominantly concentrates on specific, localized strategies, while relatively fewer studies engage with holistic, integrative reflections on the process as a whole. Building upon existing research, this study proposes a multidimensional analytical framework that integrates diachronic and synchronic perspectives, combines theoretical insight with practical application, and balances domestic and international considerations. Furthermore, it emphasizes the mutual embeddedness and cultural integration between Han and ethnic minority groups. This comprehensive epistemological approach aims to clarify the foundational logic and strategic trajectory underpinning the construction of modern Chinese civilization.

4.1. Drawing Cultural Nutrients from the Diachronic and Synchronic Contexts of Space and Time

Civilization is not a lofty abstraction suspended in mid-air; rather, it is a concrete and historically situated phenomenon rooted in specific temporal and spatial contexts. As a distinctive form of civilization, modern Chinese national civilization is not an accidental construct, but the product of deep historical sedimentation

and the unique geographical landscape of China. Within this spatiotemporal framework, the Communist Party of China, as the vanguard of the Chinese nation, has demonstrated a profound capacity to inherit and revitalize the rich legacy of over five thousand years of Chinese culture. It has further extended the breadth and depth of this civilizational form across the vast expanse of the Chinese territory. In doing so, it has enabled the modernization of traditional cultural elements, aligning them with the imperatives of contemporary development in China. This dynamic interaction between historical inheritance and spatial expansion underscores the situated and evolving nature of modern Chinese civilization.

As emphasized by Xi (2022), “Contemporary China is a continuation and development of historical China.” The construction of modern Chinese national civilization requires a long-duration perspective, positioning its trajectory within a cultural timeline spanning over ten millennia. The evolutionary transition from primates to early humans in China marked the beginning of humanity’s conscious engagement with nature—both in understanding and harnessing its forces. It was in this process of extracting resources from the natural world that the foundational elements of culture emerged. Over time, these cultural practices underwent accumulation and refinement, eventually elevating into a complex civilizational system. Archaeological evidence suggests that the origins of Chinese civilization were not singular, but rather emerged through the confluence of multiple cultural streams. This view is supported by two influential theories in Chinese archaeology: Su Bingqi’s “The ‘Starry Sky’ Theory” and Yan Wenming’s “The ‘Double-Layered Flower’ Theory” (Su, 2019; Yan, 1987). The former conceptualizes prehistoric Chinese cultures as widely distributed and diverse—like a constellation of stars, brilliant yet scattered—evolving independently while maintaining interactions and mutual influence. It emphasizes the polycentric origin of early Chinese civilization. Complementing this, Yan Wenming’s “The ‘Double-Layered Flower’ Theory” envisions Chinese prehistoric culture as a massive flower with layered petals: the Central Plains represent the flower’s core, surrounded by the first ring of cultural zones such as Gansu-Qinghai, Shandong, Yan-Liao, the middle Yangtze, and Jiangsu-Zhejiang; additional zones form successive outer petals. This model underscores the unity-in-diversity framework, where peripheral cultures maintain distinct characteristics while converging around the cultural nucleus of the Central Plains. Together, these theoretical perspectives articulate how multiple cultural traditions across a vast geographic landscape coalesced over time to form an integrated and continuous Chinese civilization. In constructing modern Chinese national civilization, it is imperative to draw upon this accumulated cultural wealth, identifying its essence, adapting its values to contemporary needs, and extracting intellectual nourishment to support present and future development.

“Historical and cultural heritage not only vividly recounts the past but also profoundly influences the present and the future” (Xi, 2020). Throughout the long course of history, prior to the founding of the Communist Party of China, successive dynasties operating within an agrarian-based society created numerous world-leading achievements of civilization, leaving behind a wealth of cultural heritage. After the establishment of the Communist Party of China, Chinese society gradually underwent transformation, and the historical mission it undertook also evolved in practice. In the process of leading the people to address the tasks of each historical phase, the Party created revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture, thus enriching the forms of cultural heritage. China’s cultural heritage demonstrates great diversity and can be generally classified into tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, mixed natural and cultural heritage, and cultural landscapes. Tangible cultural heritage mainly includes immovable cultural relics, while intangible cultural heritage broadly encompasses oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social customs, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning the natural world and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship. These cultural legacies not only embody the wisdom and creativity of the Chinese nation but also serve as cultural bridges linking the past with the future. The mixed natural and cultural heritage refers to those heritage sites jointly shaped by nature and human culture. Cultural landscapes include deliberately designed spaces, organically evolved environments, and landscapes integrating natural features with cultural elements. In the process of building a modern Chinese civilization, various measures should be employed to bring these heritage resources to life. Through museums, exhibitions, and cultural festivals, the unique charm of cultural heritage can be presented to the public. Cultural heritage elements should be integrated into school education and community activities to enhance public awareness and foster a sense of protection. Moreover, traditional cultural elements should be incorporated into modern design and creative industries such as animation, games, and fashion. The use of modern information technologies to digitally archive and display

heritage materials should be promoted to increase their reach and impact. International cooperation projects should also be encouraged to bring Chinese cultural heritage to the world, enhancing cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Through these efforts, cultural heritage can be effectively preserved and passed on, while also playing a greater role in the development of modern civilization.

4.2. Constructing an Independent Knowledge System through the Interplay of Theory and Practice

The evolution of civilization follows its own internal logic, and through the identification of such patterns, scholars have developed various perspectives on civilizational development. When these perspectives are systematically analyzed and distilled, they form the basis of civilizational theory. Such theories are inherently derived from practical experience and, in turn, inform and guide future practice. The construction of a modern Chinese civilization must adhere to the Marxist theory of civilization as its guiding framework, while fully implementing Xi Jinping's cultural thought. It is essential to uphold cultural subjectivity and develop an autonomous knowledge system suited to China's national conditions. In the concrete process of building a modern civilization, it is necessary to attach equal importance to theoretical construction and the advancement of modernization practices with Chinese characteristics. Only through the dialectical integration of theory and practice can the development of a civilizational framework be meaningfully advanced. This interaction not only provides ideological guidance but also strengthens practical support for the advancement of a modern Chinese civilization. By doing so, it becomes possible to cultivate a civilization that is rooted in historical consciousness, driven by practical engagement, and enriched by theoretical innovation.

In their critique of capitalism and the envisioning of communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels examined the nature of capitalist civilization from the perspective of historical materialism. In works such as *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, *The Kreuznach Notebooks*, and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, they articulated a rich set of ideas on civilization that remain foundational. The core elements of their views include: the practical genesis of civilization, the developmental trajectory of civilizational forms, the universality of civilizational interaction, and the equality of civilizational values (Zhang et al., 2024). First, civilization emerges from human practice. It is not the manifestation of some abstract "absolute spirit," but rather arises from the fundamental contradictions within human society. As humans continually improve their tools and capacities for interacting with nature to resolve the tension between productive forces and relations of production, as well as between economic base and superstructure, they generate diverse civilizational achievements. Second, civilizational forms evolve over time. The progression of civilization is not random but follows inherent laws. Civilizations exhibit both holistic and developmental characteristics. Each successive civilizational stage builds upon the material and cultural accomplishments of its predecessors, advancing toward higher forms through historically extended processes. Third, civilization advances through interaction. As social beings defined by a web of relationships, humans rely on various forms of exchange—both material and cultural—for survival and development. It is through such sustained interactions that local histories become integrated into world history. Finally, inter-civilizational exchanges must be grounded in equality. Due to differing historical, environmental, and cultural contexts, civilizations inevitably display variation. However, these differences should be approached with a spirit of mutual respect rather than antagonism or hierarchy. In the process of constructing a modern Chinese civilization, it is imperative to inherit and adapt the Marxist conception of civilization, while upholding Xi Jinping's cultural thought as a strategic compass, thereby ensuring that civilizational development proceeds in a direction that aligns with China's unique historical conditions and modern aspirations.

Theoretical guidance is essential to effective praxis. In the process of constructing a modern Chinese civilization, it is crucial to integrate the core principles of the Marxist conception of civilization with China's practical efforts in civilizational development (Yan, 2023). This entails comprehensively promoting Chinese-style modernization and establishing an autonomous knowledge system for Chinese civilization. From the standpoint of many Western scholars, modernization appears as an exclusive Western project, suggesting that all late-developing countries must follow Western paths. Such views overlook the dialectical relationship between universality and particularity. In reality, modernization is not the exclusive privilege of certain countries; any nation can explore its own path based on its specific historical and cultural conditions. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and guided by Marxist theory while deeply nourished by

China's rich traditional culture, the country has successfully pioneered a distinctive, "exogenously initiated" path of modernization. This path exemplifies China's unique contributions and innovative practices within the broader context of globalization. Through continuous exploration, a theoretical system of Chinese-style modernization has been established. Modern Chinese civilization represents the civilizational form of this unique modernization process. Advancing such a trajectory requires constructing an independent Chinese civilizational system. For a long time, the West has defined the standard for what constitutes a "civilized society," typically citing written language, metallurgy, and urbanization as the core indicators (Wang, 2022). However, applying these benchmarks to assess Chinese civilization does not align with its developmental realities. Based on the findings of the "Tracing the Origins of Chinese Civilization" project, China has put forward its own civilizational criteria: the development of production and population growth leading to the emergence of cities; social division of labor and class differentiation; and the formation of kingship and the state (Wang, 2022). This indigenous framework offers a more culturally and historically grounded approach, thereby facilitating the construction of an autonomous Chinese knowledge system. As China continues to advance its modernization process, civilizational practice must remain central. Major initiatives such as "Archaeological China" and the "Project for Tracing the Origins of Chinese Civilization" must be further promoted. Academic research and theoretical development should be deepened to consolidate a sovereign knowledge system for Chinese civilization.

4.3. Consolidating the Foundations of Civilizational Development Through Domestic and International Exchanges

The development of world civilizations is inherently interconnected and mutually influential. As emphasized by the Chinese leadership, "The international community is increasingly becoming a community with a shared future in which everyone has in others a part of oneself" (Party Literature Research Office of CPC Central Committee, 2020). If a civilization isolates itself from others, it risks diminishing its internal vitality; in contrast, openness and exchange foster cultural prosperity and growth. Modern Chinese civilization, as a living civilizational entity, is both the result of a long historical evolution of traditional Chinese culture and a dynamic product shaped through continuous interaction with other world civilizations. This underscores the fact that the development of any civilization is influenced not only by domestic conditions but also by external engagements. Therefore, in the process of constructing a modern Chinese civilization, it is essential to remain grounded in indigenous culture and historical experience while actively engaging with other global civilizations. By learning from diverse cultural traditions and participating in intercultural dialogue, China enhances the vitality of its civilizational project. The mutual reinforcement of internal and external factors strengthens the foundation for development and enables modern Chinese civilization to flourish with renewed dynamism in a globalized context.

In the development of any entity, internal factors are the decisive force that drives progress. The evolution of modern Chinese civilization has unfolded on Chinese soil; thus, its construction must be firmly rooted in domestic realities, actively cultivating historical consciousness and advancing along multiple dimensions. First, it is essential to uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Over the course of its long-standing governance, the CPC has accumulated extensive experience, with the principle of independence and self-reliance being central. As stated, "Independence and self-reliance are the natural conclusion of the CPC's efforts to carry out revolution, construction, and reform based on China's realities and by relying on the strength of the Party and the people" (Party Literature Research Office of CPC Central Committee, 2020). This approach stresses the need to rely primarily on domestic capacity rather than external forces. The construction of modern Chinese civilization must fully mobilize the creativity and agency of the Chinese people, recognizing them as the primary force in shaping history. Second, the path of building and advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics must be firmly pursued. This path is not only the gateway to achieving Chinese-style modernization but also the core strategy for constructing modern Chinese civilization. Socialism with Chinese characteristics, shaped through the CPC's historical exploration and practice, deeply resonates with China's national conditions and societal needs. Advancing steadfastly along this path ensures that the modernization project remains dynamic and resilient. Third, cultural flourishing must be actively promoted. This entails developing both the cultural sector and cultural industries, leveraging their integrated development to strengthen cultural construction. Enhancing cultural soft power and fostering a culturally strong nation serve to better

satisfy the growing spiritual and cultural aspirations of the people. Fourth, promoting the core socialist values is critical. These values serve to unify and energize society, guiding the public toward higher standards of civility and morality. In doing so, they provide the ethical support and ideological momentum necessary for constructing a modern civilization with Chinese characteristics.

While internal dynamics play a decisive role in the development of any entity, external influences serve as a complementary force, acting as a secondary driver of advancement. On the foundation of domestically driven construction across various sectors, it is imperative to broaden global horizons, actively engaging in dialogue with other civilizations to foster mutual understanding and draw on their respective strengths. First, mutual learning should be pursued through international exchanges and cooperation. China advocates for the building of “a multipolar world order characterized by equality and order, and an economic globalization that is inclusive and universally beneficial” (Anonymous, 2024). With a consistent commitment to openness, China seeks to collaborate with countries across the globe in fields such as cultural heritage, educational advancement, scientific innovation, environmental protection, and artifact preservation. Through such exchanges, it can selectively adopt the strengths of other civilizations. Second, global governance should serve as a platform for intercivilizational engagement. The world today faces a “governance deficit” and urgently requires transformation of outdated governance frameworks that no longer align with contemporary global realities. China must play a constructive role in reforming the global governance system by integrating the concept of a shared future for humankind into international governance practices, thereby guiding the system toward greater equity and reasonableness. Third, the further advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers a dynamic avenue for civilizational exchange. Originating in China and benefiting the world, the BRI represents a path of development and shared prosperity. Through trade, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people links with participating countries, the initiative facilitates the outward flow of Chinese products and the inward introduction of foreign goods. Infrastructure development and commercial connectivity foster mutual cultural recognition and create a bi-directional flow of material and cultural interaction. As Xi Jinping emphasized, “Humanity is one collective body, and Earth is our shared home. No individual or nation can remain unaffected by global challenges” (Xi, 2023). In this spirit, China will continue to embrace openness and inclusivity, integrating external influences while remaining rooted in its cultural origins, thereby advancing the robust and sustained development of modern Chinese civilization.

4.4. Enhancing Cultural Identity through the Mutual Embedding and Integration of Han and Ethnic Minority Cultures

In examining the current global landscape, it becomes evident that peace and development remain the predominant themes of the era. However, localized conflicts and persistent instability continue to challenge these ideals. A closer inquiry into the root causes of such disturbances reveals that unresolved ethnic and religious tensions are among the most intractable and influential factors. In many countries, inadequate handling of domestic ethnic and religious issues has resulted in recurring conflict, widespread unrest, and the obstruction of both public well-being and civilizational progress. For any nation, addressing ethnic and religious challenges in a prudent and inclusive manner is essential to sustaining long-term development and ensuring social stability. China, as a multi-ethnic country, has navigated a complex historical trajectory of integration and pluralism. Over time, it has shaped a unified yet diverse developmental structure, characterized by the predominance of the Han ethnicity alongside the co-existence and co-prosperity of numerous ethnic minorities. This structure owes much to the systematic implementation of ethnic policies by the Communist Party of China (CPC), which upholds the principles of equality among all ethnic groups, guaranteeing equal participation in national governance and equal access to the fruits of development. In advancing the construction of modern Chinese civilization, the principle of mutual embedding and integration between the Han majority and ethnic minorities remains pivotal. Through promoting cultural inclusion, political participation, and socio-economic collaboration, China seeks to cultivate a civilizational ethos rooted in unity and diversity. Such an approach not only reinforces interethnic harmony but also mobilizes the collective strength of all ethnic groups in the joint pursuit of national rejuvenation and cultural flourishing. Thus, the Chinese experience offers valuable insight for other nations grappling with ethnic and religious divisions. It demonstrates that fostering a shared civilizational identity through pluralistic integration and equal development is not only feasible but also indispensable to the realization of a stable, inclusive, and prosperous society.

“High-quality development is the primary task in building a modern socialist country in all respects” (Xi, 2022). It also represents an urgent requirement for fostering embedded integration among China’s diverse ethnic groups. In the context of increasing population mobility and interethnic residential patterns, promoting high-quality interethnic integration demands a multidimensional and comprehensive approach. First, sustained efforts must be made to stimulate economic prosperity in ethnic minority regions. The material abundance of goods and services forms the foundational condition for ethnic development and the realization of interethnic integration. Building upon the achievements of a moderately prosperous society, ethnic regions should continue identifying their comparative advantages and, with state support, advance holistic economic and social progress to provide a robust material basis for embedded integration. Second, the formulation of inclusive policies is essential to guide and support interethnic communication and exchange. Policymaking should adopt a holistic perspective that accounts for the specific contexts of different ethnic groups and regions. Areas such as infrastructure development, education reform, employment promotion, ethnic unity initiatives, and social integration mechanisms must be strategically addressed to provide comprehensive policy frameworks that facilitate mutual understanding and cooperation. Third, targeted programs should be implemented to foster interethnic engagement. Initiatives such as the “Interethnic Youth Exchange Program” focus on cultivating mutual recognition among young people, while the “Embedded Development Program for Grassroots Communities” encourages inclusive local collaboration. Additionally, programs like the “Ethnic Tourism Integration Scheme” (Zhang and Yu, 2023) utilize tourism as a vehicle for fostering cultural encounters and strengthening shared community identities. Through such multidimensional initiatives, ethnic interactions can be deepened across various social layers. Fourth, establishing and institutionalizing platforms for interethnic exchange remains critical. These platforms serve as practical mechanisms for sustaining embedded integration. Educational platforms can promote the use of the national common language, while cultural exchange platforms—through music festivals, dance performances, and heritage exhibitions—can celebrate shared diversity. National Minority Traditional Sports Games and similar events further enhance ethnic solidarity through collective participation. At the community level, mechanisms for joint public deliberation can facilitate meaningful interactions and foster social cohesion among residents of different ethnic backgrounds. In sum, high-quality development is not only a strategic imperative for national modernization but also a vital foundation for cultivating a resilient, inclusive, and culturally cohesive society where all ethnic groups thrive together through mutual embedding and integration.

“The advancement of ethnic affairs relies on two forms of power: material strength and spiritual strength” (Party Literature Research Office of CPC Central Committee, 2020). Constructing a shared spiritual homeland for the Chinese nation falls within the latter domain. Such a homeland provides a critical cultural foundation for the development of all ethnic groups and serves as a spiritual compass guiding their embedded integration. The historical trajectory of China is fundamentally a confluence of diverse ethnic narratives. Through prolonged historical interaction, various ethnic groups have co-created shared values, beliefs, moral codes, cultural traditions, and spiritual aspirations. These collective elements constitute the spiritual homeland of the Chinese nation, which reflects shared interests, collective emotional bonds, and a common national identity. The construction of this shared spiritual space requires the active participation and collaborative engagement of all ethnic communities. First, it is imperative to deeply thoroughly study and implement Xi Jinping thought on Strengthening and Improving Ethnic Work (Zhang and Yu, 2023). His thoughts represent the integration of Marxist ethnic theory with China’s specific ethnic context and the essence of traditional Chinese culture (Wu and Hao, 2023). Ethnic cadres and the broader populace must internalize these ideas and apply them pragmatically to drive high-quality development in ethnic work. Second, the development of an educational and promotional mechanism for forging a strong sense of Chinese national community consciousness is essential. This includes rigorous theoretical exploration of the philosophical, historical, and developmental logic underpinning the concept of national community. Based on such scholarship, ongoing outreach should be conducted through school curricula, media platforms, public lectures, and thematic education campaigns to normalize and deepen awareness. Third, the implementation of a red gene inheritance project is critical. Revolutionary sites, battlefields, and heroic legacies serve as vital cultural vehicles to pass down revolutionary traditions. By connecting the public, especially in ethnic regions, with these historical touchstones, red cultural heritage can be transformed into a potent spiritual force for contemporary development. Fourth, the inheritance and innovation of China’s excellent traditional culture must be advanced. Efforts should be made to excavate

and promote cultural legacies from all ethnic groups, thereby “encouraging the protection, inheritance, and innovative integration of ethnic cultures, establishing and highlighting common Chinese cultural symbols and the image of the Chinese nation, and enhancing cultural identity among all ethnic communities” (Party History Research Center of CPC Central Committee, 2021). Through the joint construction of this shared spiritual homeland, the vision of “people of all ethnic groups singing and dancing together, living and working together, united like the seeds of a pomegranate” (Li and Liu, 2024) can be realized. Such efforts further solidify the “five identifications” and forge the “four commonalities,” anchoring national unity and collective purpose in the spiritual life of the Chinese people.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The modern civilization of the Chinese nation represents a complex synthesis: it is the contemporary expression of China’s long-standing traditional civilization, the localized embodiment of socialist civilization, and a transcendent alternative to capitalist models. These three dimensions are unified within the broader framework of Chinese civilization. The formation of Chinese national modern civilization is rooted in the enduring historical sedimentation of China itself, while also drawing critical insights from the Soviet experience in constructing socialist civilization, assimilating lessons from capitalist modernization trajectories, and being dynamically shaped by the expansive practice of Chinese-style modernization.

Conceptually, this modern civilization is marked by multifaceted connotations. It is firmly grounded in the territorial and cultural context of China; it aims to sustain socio-economic prosperity; it embraces the ideal of common prosperity; and it emphasizes national unity and collective advancement. As a new cultural mission in the new era, the construction of Chinese national modern civilization constitutes a key civilizational chapter in the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Realizing this vision calls for expanded conceptual frameworks and pragmatic approaches.

In the process of constructing this modern civilization, several strategic imperatives must be addressed. It is necessary to absorb cultural nutrients from both diachronic (historical) and synchronic (contemporary) dimensions; to cultivate an autonomous knowledge system through the dialectic of theory and practice; to consolidate the civilizational foundation amid global competition and cooperation; and to deepen cultural identity through the mutual embeddedness and integration of Han and ethnic minority cultures.

In analytical terms, the *formative mechanisms* of Chinese national modern civilization answer the question of how it emerges; its *rich connotations* respond to the question of what it embodies; and the *construction pathways* provide insights into how it should be built. These three dimensions are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The construction of Chinese national modern civilization requires both historical retrospection and forward-looking vision—advancing in the unified temporal horizon of historical China, contemporary China, and future China. In doing so, it will not only propel the realization of Chinese-style modernization but also contribute meaningfully to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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