

## Exploring the Paths for the Popularization of Marxism With New Media in China

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**Supported** by the Special Task of Humanities and Social Science of Chinese Ministry of Education (the Sinofication, Modernization and Popularization of Marxism) “Researches on the popularization of Marxism Under the Condition of New Media” (12JD710055); Southwestern University in 2013 “The fundamental Research Funding Project of Central Universities” (SWU1309112).

Received 12 March 2014; accepted 25 June 2014

Published online 28 July 2014

### Abstract

The popularization of Marxism is a major political and academic topic in China. It has attracted a lot of Chinese scholars’ attention in recent years because of its association with the stability of the Chinese society, the establishment of harmonious society in China, and the construction of the Chinese core values and belief of its people. The new social media of Internet and mobile technology have played important roles in the popularization of Marxism and become the dominant position in promoting it. This paper explores the popularization and dissemination processes of Marxism in China and the various ways of being utilized to popularize Marxism with new media.

**Key words:** Paths; The popularization of Marxism; New media

Tan, Z. M. (2014). Exploring the Paths for the Popularization of Marxism With New Media in China. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 7(1), 46-50. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/5167>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/5167>

### INTRODUCTION

The promotion of the popularization of Marxism is a major research topic for the Chinese scholars. This topic matters greatly to the stability of the Chinese society, to the government’s goal of establishing a harmonious society, and the development of global values and spiritual belief among its people. It also matters to the Marxism’s striving for more influences in the world.

At the same time, the new media has increasingly become more “ubiquitous” and “mainstream” in China. With its powerful communication capabilities, internet and mobile technology are playing important roles in China’s political, economic, and cultural lives. It is becoming an important force to influence public opinions and an important channel for the popularization of Chinese Marxism. Through strengthening and promoting the development of new media research, we try to construct a platform with which we use to develop and popularize Marxism in China.

This study explores the roles new media could play for the development of the Marxism. It focuses on the analysis of influence of new media on Marx’s popularity. The research questions are: (a) How to use new media to communicate Marx’s theory in order to reach mass population? (b) How to make Marx’s theory more easily accessible and acceptable so that Chinese people can effectively use it as an ideological weapon to transform the world? This paper focuses on the effects of the new media on the popularization of Marxism, aim to build a developmental platform and practice paths for the popularization of Marxism under the condition of new media. The main contents of this paper include the popularization and dissemination of Marxism, the Marxism as the important ideology with which the

Chinese know and transform the world, and the ways by which the popularization of Marxism are preceded with the new media.

## 1. THE SCIENTIFIC CONNOTATION OF THE POPULARIZATION OF MARXISM IN CHINA

The Report from the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) puts forward a strategic task “to promote the popularization of Marxism of contemporary China”<sup>1</sup> This was a turning point in the study of the popularization of Marxism in China. Chinese scholars have studied the popularization of Marxism of contemporary China from various levels and perspectives.

### 1.1 The Scientific Connotation of the Popularization of Marxism

The popularization of Marxism refers to the process that makes the basic principle of the Marxism from abstraction to concreteness, from abstruseness to popularity, and from being understood by a small number of people to be mastered by the masses. Its scientific connotation is the unification of “master the masses” and “the masses master it.” The core idea of the popularization of Marxism embodies three aspects. First, the popularization of Marxism means that the basic principles and basic concepts of Marxism need to be simplified and practical, in order for the masses to easily understand and more acceptable. Essentially, the Marxism is the theory of the masses, and we must promote the Marxism to serve the people. Popularization is not only an important goal of the theory, but also a vital part of its implication. Besides, popularization not only refers to expression or simplification, but matters the fundamental position, fundamental methods, and the attitude towards the masses. Second, the popularization of Marxism is the process that makes the Marxism from being understood by a small number of people to be mastered by the masses and makes the masses accept and choose it independently. Only when the masses choose and accept the Marxism in the complicated theoretical thoughts, Marxism can be transformed into the power to transform the world and ourselves. Third, from a qualitative perspective to understand “the masses”, it means that we should use the culture created by the masses to realize cultural popularization. From the quantitative aspect, it refers to expand the scope of the popularization and promotion of socialist theoretical system with Chinese characteristics. It also means that it goes beyond the barriers of political, economic, religious, education and other factors, such as age, gender, occupation, class, region and other

boundaries. Only when we understand the provisions of this definition of “the masses” qualitatively and quantitatively, we can study the Marxism using masses’ language, which makes it easier for the Marxism accepted by the masses.

### 1.2 The Development Process and the Paths of the Popularization of Marxism

The popularization of Marxism is a profound historical process in China. Since Chinese Communist Party’s creation in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party has promoted the popularization of Marxism in China no-stop. The popularization of Marxism has different tasks at different times. Its basic process can be roughly divided into four phases. The first phase is from the reform and opening up in 1978 to the 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1982. Its main task was to carry out the debate on the standard for truth and to study the “four principles.” The main goal was to break people’s thoughts from dogmatic beliefs of the Marxism, especially the thoughts from Mao Zedong era; and let the masses distinguish the differences between the real Marxism and the dogmatic Marxism. The second phase was from 1982 to 1992, symbolized by Deng Xiaoping’s “South Talks.” The main contents were to learn theory system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, with “*selected works of Deng Xiaoping*”, and carry out anti-bourgeois liberalization education. The main tasks were that let the masses understand what the real Marxism is. The third phase was from 1992 to the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China. During this period, the main tasks were to learn the spirit of Deng Xiaoping’s South Talk and Deng Xiaoping’s theory, and also carry out “three emphasis” education and “anti-falungong” education. The main tasks were to let the masses understand what the real socialism is and what the misunderstood socialism is, and let them have a firm faith in the ideal of Marxism and socialism. The fourth phase was from the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to today. The main contents have been to study the “three represents” important though, scientific concept of development. The main tasks are to let the masses master the latest achievements of Marxist Chinese and utilize the Marxism to guide the new practices.

Historically, different perspectives have different realization paths. There are several paths for the popularization of Marxism in China: First, there is the basic path of the popularization of Marxism as “six ways of communication”, that is through academic disciplines, through textbooks, through classrooms, through mass culture, through the mass media positions, and through ideologies education. Second, the four main paths of the popularization of Marxism are the inheritance of the traditional culture, the expertise of propaganda and popularization, the permeability of media, and the

<sup>1</sup>The Report of the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), 2007-10-15..

dominance of theory education. Third, considering the unification of the sinification and popularization of Marxism, some scholars have pointed out that the specific ways of the popularization of Marxism should include the following aspects. First, in the theory development, experts and scholars of the Marxism should provide academic support of the popularization of Marxism. The government leaders should firmly grasp the “popularity” direction and set good examples of putting theories into practice. Third, in the institutional environment, we should form a “systematic approach” to the popularization of Marxism. Fourth, in terms of dissemination, we should create the dissemination methods that are based on our daily lives. Fifth, the communication needs to use common people language and use examples people care about. That is to say, if the mainstream values of a society want to get acceptance by public, we usually need methods like publicity and education, social psychological influence, system specifications and public policies influence.

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## 2. THE REALIZATION PATH OF THE POPULARIZATION OF MARXISM UNDER THE NEW MEDIA

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### 2.1 The Concept and Characteristics of New Media

New media are also known as digital media and network media. It's based on computer information technology and the internet to communicate. Different from traditional media, such as TV, newspaper and radio, the new media has characteristics like interactive, instant and extensive etc. The user is not only the recipient of information, but also the provider and publisher. New media mainly include the Internet and mobile media. The Internet is the fourth generation media. As for mobile phones, especially smart phone, its function is similar to a mini computer.

The new media has the following characteristics. First, it is based on digital technology, with the Internet as the main communication means. Secondly, content is the key. The content that came with the new media has changed the connotation and extension of traditional culture. It also changes the role integration of traditional cultural production, dissemination and acceptance. It emphasizes interaction and the traditional recipient can also become an information publisher (virtual community, blog, personal information platform). Thirdly, the path of information acquisition and publishing can be highly integrated and private. Fourthly, the diversification of communication means and cross-media information communication has become the norm; the information dissemination and acceptance are highly combined with the Internet. Fifthly, the new media characterized by new information technology application, such as the Internet,

mobile phone and personal mobile digital equipment and others, is influencing the social economic, political and cultural development with a new communication means and powerful communication capability. New media are a continuously developing and controversial concept. As Professor Sadie Ryan, the former staff of Birmingham University culture research center said in his research “*Mobile Phone*”, “mobile communications will affect social organization mode and private life. At the same time, it will also create a new cultural field.” (Zhang, 2009) Thus, we believe that new media is different from traditional media, such as radio, TV and movie at the conceptual level.

### 2.2 The Paths of the Popularization of Marxism Under the Condition of New Media

Using the new media to promote the popularization of Marxism has been the weakest link in Chinese politics. The emergence of new media is like great scourges, which causes the communist party and the government at all levels feel helpless. Without proper guidance or supervision, it will bring down people's inherent value, beliefs, and seriously impact the stability of social politics and economy. The main problem is that the new media did not adhere to the direction of the dissemination of Marxism values. Therefore, research on the Marxism and adhering to Marxism belief is the basic task and the soul of current Chinese government. Exploring ways for popularization and dissemination of Marxism are the most pressing and fundamental matter in present China. This paper attempts to establish the developmental framework for the popularization of Marxism from theoretical, technological, cultural and systematic perspectives.

A. Promoting the popularization of Marxism needs to strengthen theoretical foundation of the Marxism and clearly understand the Marxism in China over past hundred years.

The process of the dissemination of Marxism is the process of the development of the Marxism. We apply the Marxism general principles to the practice of the Chinese revolution and construction, formed “Mao Zedong Thought,” and other paths, such as the “Deng Xiaoping's Theory” and the “Thought of Three Represents,” “Scientific Outlook on Development” put forward by Jiang Zemin formed the basic dissemination paths of the Marxism in china.

From the Opium War in 1840, China was aggressed by the Western countries and Chinese people suffered great humiliation and disasters, which were the darkest history in Chinese history. Chinese actively explored the path to save the country but without success. Marxist thought was introduced to China by Li Dazhao and other Chinese revolutionary pioneers after the Soviet Union October Revolution. The integration of the Marxism and China's society realizes its Chinese localization and promotes the development of the socialist cause

with Chinese characteristics. Mao Zedong was not the first people to spread the Marxism, but Chen Duxiu, Qu Qiubai and Wang Ming etc. Although these people knew the important content of the Marxist thought by heart, they did not use it flexibly. Ultimately, it was Mao Zedong who leads Chinese people to win a great victory in the new democratic revolution. Mao Zedong combined the actual situation of China and created the Marxist thought with Chinese reality characteristics, that is Mao Zedong thought system. Building on the Marxist philosophy, Deng Xiaoping suggested "Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth" as the guideline. Meanwhile, he inherited the essence of Mao Zedong Thought, namely the spirit of emancipating our minds and seeking truth from facts, reestablishing the ideological and political route of putting the Marxism into Chinese practice and creating a new situation of the development of Chinese socialism. The creation of a set of theoretical systems whose theme is the socialist construction with Chinese characteristics, that is Deng Xiaoping Theory, is also a product of the combination of the Marxism and China's reality. Jiang Zemin thought seriously about the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Fall of Communism and other huge setbacks the socialism suffered in the world, and then put forward the important theory of "Three Representations". In 2013, Hu Jintao proposed "Scientific Outlook on Development" which "aims to adhere to the people-orientation, to establish comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development view and to promote the overall development of economy, society and people", opening up a new boundary of the development of Marxist philosophy.

The theory reflected the spirit of time. Inevitably, Marxist theory must face the important realistic issues, especially for the problems of the development of contemporary China. The current General Secretary, Xi Jinping pointed at the Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee of the CPC, theory innovation plays a guidance role in the practice innovation, and we deepen reform with the theory innovation as a guideline. The key to cope with series of challenges in the market economy, political construction, cultural construction, social construction and ecological civilization construction is to find out whether the Marxism can offer support to comprehensively, can break the practice problems effectively and reveal the value of times of the Marxism. Marx said, "People create their own history, and they create it not freely and also not under the selected condition. They create their history under the condition of established and inherited from the past."<sup>2</sup> We must advocate strongly developing the Marxism under the guidance of the Marxism; to reflect specific

theoretical problems encountered in the era deeply and solve the problems and times problems.

Mao Zedong pointed out that Marx and Engels' theory, Lenin's theory and Stalin's theory are always the truth. We shouldn't consider it as a dogma, but consider it as guidance and learn the positions and ways to observe and solve the problems. Facing modern China's practical problems to develop the Marxism, the fundamental thing is using the standpoint, viewpoint and method to study the contemporary Chinese problems, promoting the popularization of Marxism and then promoting the all-round progress of Chinese society.

B. promoting the popularization of Marxism needs to create a platform integrated with Chinese traditional culture.

The reason why the dissemination of the Marxism in Chinese enjoys popular support is that the Marxism has been integrated into Chinese traditional culture. The Communist Party of China (CPC) borrowed the core content of "rites, moderation, morality, righteousness, and peace" of the Confucian benevolent governance idea to explain the viewpoint of historical materialism of the Marxism. Marx thinks that the history of social development is the history of human social relations and the masses are the fundamental driving force for promoting social progress and development. We need to deeply integrate the Marxism theory with Chinese traditional culture according to the characteristics of the times development to constantly create new theoretical results. Mao Zedong advocates that, "letting the masses of working people emancipated", "serving the people whole-heartedly". Deng Xiaoping promotes that we should vigorously develop productive forces to meet people's growing material and cultural needs. Jiang Zemin advocates constantly improving people's lives embodies our party's goal of serving the people wholeheartedly our party wholeheartedly and the requirement of "Three Representations". Hu Jintao Stresses Scientific Outlook on Development which means development is for the people, by the people, and the people sharing in its fruits. Scientific Outlook on Development fully reflects the advanced thought in Chinese traditional culture, namely the basic principle of administering the country by "peace". The Analects of Confucius says: "The rites should be just right. This is a valuable point of national governance by the King. Everything should be just fine whether big or small" (Yang, 2006). It expresses the simple state-governing theory of the Chinese pre-Qin era thinkers.

With the new media, the development of Marxism must be more closely combined with Chinese traditional culture. Only when highly integrated with Chinese traditional culture can the Marxism be developed. To hold the Marxism is a currently urgent matter in Chinese ideology, an ideological game between the East and West

<sup>2</sup> *Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels, Volume 1* (1995, p.79). Beijing: People's Publishing House,.

and also a game of eastern culture and western culture. During the 30 years since the China's reform and opening up, there has been a huge boost to the economy, while a relaxation on the long-standing Marxism's position construction.

We also need to use the mass media, such as digital TV, mobile TV, internet TV, mobile multimedia, news portals, search, vertical portals, maps, video, instant messaging, APP, social software to spread the latest achievements and thoughts of the Marxism.

C. promoting the popularization of Marxism needs to set up a correct public opinion guidance mechanism of Marxism.

The rapid development and wide use of technology promote a revolutionary leap of human communication, the new way of communication, and also deeply affect the social public opinion and the formation of people's thinking quality and values. The popularization of Marxism is the process that the Marxism is widely spread, and the effect is relevant the realization degree of the popularization of Marxism. Under the background of new media technology widely used, because the audiences have more power to control information and the diversified forms of information etc, it makes the spread of the popularization of Marxism faced with stern challenges.

New media can affect the practice of the popularization of Marxism to a large extent, and it has a qualitative relationship with the practice of the popularization of Marxism in deep levels. Therefore, in the era of new media, we must highlight the dominant position of new media propaganda the Marxism, and also establish a whole set of public opinion guidance mechanism. With the correct public opinion guidance and healthy new media environment, we can inspire the masses to identify with the Marxism.

D. promoting the popularization of Marxism needs to set up a socializing new media platform to spread the Marxism.

Different from the traditional media, the new media

is based on progress of science and technologies and the application of digital technology. It's also the most effective way to spread the Marxism through the internet and mobile internet. Therefore, promoting the popularization of Marxism needs to set up a new socializing media platform to spread the Marxism. At the same time, we also need to use the mass media, such as digital TV, mobile TV, internet TV, mobile multimedia, news portals, search engines, vertical portals, maps, video, instant messaging, APP, social software, to spread and share the suggestions, opinions and experiences on the Marxism and realize the popularization of the Marxism.

Establishing a new media platform to make the Marxism socialize needs to integrate and guide new media, such as instant messaging, video music, blog, micro blog, social network, forums, mobile social network, social life and e-commerce. In addition, we also need to use these channels, such as QQ, Alitalk, Fetion, Youku, Tudou, BBS, IQIYI, Sohu Videos, Kugoo, XiamiMusic, Kuwoo, Sina Blog, Sina Webio, Tencent Weibo, Renren, WeChat and other public comment platforms to spread the Marxism timely and effectively, and then realize the popularization and dissemination of Marxism.

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