

## Opportunities and Challenges: The Spread of Marxism in Contemporary China

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### Abstract

To promote the spread of Marxism is a long-term mission of the Communist Party of China, who has achieved the improvement both on the depth and width of spread of Marxism, expanded distribution channels, achieved a high degree of public recognition, but also faces challenges like the weakening of demonstration effect of propagation, correlation between content of dissemination and audience is not prominent, communication channels interfered by the “noise”, spread object is lack of self-awareness, and urgent needing to improve the dissemination effect. This requires to deeply analyze the reasons for the formation of the challenges, strengthen demonstration effect of party cadres’ “unity of sincere and behavior”, promote Marxism theory into concrete policies and institutions, create a Marxism network communication platform with sound regulatory mechanisms, enrich ordinary people’s material and culture life, and thus enhance the attractiveness, influence and vitality of Marxism.

**Key words:** Marxism; Dissemination; Challenge; Countermeasures

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### INTRODUCTION

Report of the Seventeenth Party Congress and Eighteenth Party Congress emphasized to promote the popularization of Marxism, continue to expand the scope of the spread of Marxism, and improve dissemination effect of Marxism. What is the spread status of Marxism? This is the question need to be answered first for promoting the popularization of Marxism. Chongqing is one of the earliest regions affected by the Marxism, which established “Chongqing communism organization of Sichuan Province” as early as in 1920, and was the “General organization” and “Formal organization” of Sichuan Province. Thus, the survey is mainly carried out in Chongqing area, covering 14 counties, distributing 3348 questionnaires, collecting 3079 valid questionnaires, and the effective rate is 92.0%. Questionnaires were analyzed by using SPSS17.0 and by reliability and validity testing, can be used for scientific research, providing rich first-hand material to understand the dissemination of Marxism in contemporary China.

### 1. THE STATUS OF SPREAD OF MARXISM IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Data analysis based on field research shows that the spread of Marxism in contemporary era presents the coexistence of opportunities and challenges, achievements and problems, which must be analyze objectively and discussed deeply.

#### 1.1 Opportunities for the Spread of Marxism in Contemporary China

First, the width and depth of spread of Marxism are good. The width and depth are two basic scales to determine the effect of the spread of Marxism in the mass. The so-called width of spread of Marxism, is the spread range of Marxism and how much is it being understood by public; the so-called depth of spread of Marxism, is the degree

of public understanding of Marxism. Results of survey show that 75.0% people said they've received varying degrees of Marxism propaganda education; 59.6% said they have different degrees of understanding of Marxism; 61.9% said they believe in Marxism. Chongqing locates in the west, with the reality of cultural infrastructure lagging behind, mass still has not high quality, so it is a remarkable achievement that Marxism cover 75.0% of the population. Meanwhile, in the premise that only 75.0% of the public have received varying degrees of Marxism education, there are about 60.0% of the people "know" and "believe" Marxism, which indicates that the overall effect of the spread of Marxism is good.

Second, spread channels of Marxism further expand. Channels of information dissemination are also called CID, is the channel through which information flows from the subject of dissemination to the object of dissemination. In mass communication mode, whether

the flow of dissemination channel is impeded or not, and the strong or weak interference of information suffered in the process of flowing through "CID", directly restrict the final results of dissemination. Research results show (see Table 1), "Radio and Television", "books and magazines" and "school or training", etc. become important channels for the spread of Marxism in contemporary China.

Meanwhile, the network as a new virtual communication channel for Marxism, although its cases occupies only 15.3%, has great impact on the public below 30 years' old, and becomes an important new channel for spread of Marxism with the rapid popularization of computers in the public. It is clear that, communication channels of Marxism in contemporary show a variety of development trend, which gradually shape the three-dimensional propagation network of "the combination of virtual and real", not only expand the coverage of Marxism, but also enhance the dissemination effect of Marxism.

**Table 1**  
**Communication Channels Status of Marxism**

Program	Frequency (people)	Percentage (%)	Percentage of case (%)
School education or training	1260	20.5	42.0
Radio and TV	1479	24.1	49.3
Book, newspaper and magazine	1407	22.9	46.9
Internet	459	7.5	15.3
Elder and family	584	9.5	19.5
Friends	308	5.0	10.3
Conference	505	8.2	16.8
Others	147	2.4	4.9

Third, Marxism obtains a higher degree of recognition among the general public. Since reform and opening, the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics has made great achievements, social productivity has improved steadily, people's material and cultural life continue to improve, these facts prove that scientificness of Marxism, and increase the convincing and appealing of theory to the masses. Survey results show that most people believe that Marxism can guide China to develop healthily and stably, and prospect future of Marxism optimistically. Especially in the face of confusing Western social thought and feudal remnants in Chinese traditional culture, most

people choose to support Marxism, and believe Marxism is the best theory to solve major practical problems of current China.

Survey results show ( see Table 2 ), although the " democratic socialism" and other Western social thoughts make negative impacts to some extent in the masses in the name of " freedom" , "democracy" and other highly deceptive banner, Marxism still obtains the highest degrees of recognition in the mass, with cases reaching 44.4% . It is clear that, Marxism dominates in the ideological field, leading the development of a variety of thoughts in social transition.

**Table2**  
**Mass' Identification Situation of Current Thoughts or Trends**

Option	Frequency (people)	Percentage (%)
Religion	143	2.9
Superstition	252	5.1
Marxism	1327	26.6
Chinese traditional culture	913	18.3
Sorts of western thoughts	1677	33.7
Others	670	13.4

The purpose of the spread of Marxism is both making the public understand and agree with Marxism, and guiding the mass away from the non-erroneous ideas of Marxism, and actively participate in a variety of communication activities of Marxism. The findings show that the majority of the public can correctly recognize superstition and religious activities and strongly require banning all types of illegal religious activities and feudal superstition. Meanwhile, the majority of public express “support” on a variety of current educational activities of Marxism, in particular to support a variety of benefit policies that the party and the state enacted since the reform and opening up. It is clear that, there is a higher degree of public recognition of Marxism, which creates good opportunities for the spread of Marxism.

### 1.2 Challenges of Spread of Marxism in Contemporary China

First, the behavior demonstration effect of the subject of the spread is weakening. “The Constitution of the Communist Party of China” clearly defines the obligations of Party members and cadres, first is studying and mastering Marxism, the second is using the standpoint, viewpoint and method of Marxism to analyze and solve practical problems, and play vanguard and exemplary role in production, work, study and social life. It is clear that, party members and cadres are not only important disseminators of Marxism, but also plays a role of exemplary. This is true that, the public treat cadres as live “carrier” of Marxism, and experience, percept and understand Marxism through their words and deeds.

**Table 3**  
**Independent Sample t Test of Comparison Between Party Cadres and Masses’ Sincere and Behavior Situation**

Topic	Catalog	Frequency	Mean	S	R	T	P
Believe in Marxism	Party Cadres	794	1.56	.893	0.25	-23.347	-0.258
	Mass	1448	1.57	.914			
Participate in religious activities	Party Cadres	794	0.05	0.219	0.035	-1.701	1.672
	Mass	1448	0.07	0.251			

Second, the correlation between content of dissemination and audience is not prominent. The audience is target of spread, the audience of Marxism is the masses. From the point of view of communication, for achieving good results of information dissemination, the information itself must be able to trigger the audience’s attention, evoke interest of the audience, gain audience’s recognition, to stimulate the audience’s support or practical acts (Chen, & Yan, 2007, p.6).

In order to achieve this goal, we must highlight the correlation between the spread of the “information” and the audience, which is to say, only the information closely relate to and influence the audience may draw their attention, interest, identity and support; contrary, it will lead to block or interruption in information dissemination process to reach audiences. Survey results show that 24.8% of people think that Marxism is no use for personal

However, the survey results show that a small number of party members and cadres have “separation” of faith and practice in the practical work, and they do not fulfill the duties of being servant of the people, serve the people wholeheartedly, but taint bad style of bureaucracy and formalism, even live away from the faith. In research, we made the following assumptions based on the nature and purpose of the party: the Communists only treat Marxist as belief, do not participate in religious activities; some ordinary people believe in Marxism, and some others believe in religion; Communists’ beliefs and behaviors are significantly different from ordinary people.

Compare sincere and behavior conditions of the Communists and the general masses (Table 3) we found that the P value of comparing Communists’ and ordinary people’s Marxist beliefs is -0.258, less than 0.01, indicating that the two groups have significant difference of faith in Marxism, the proportion of Communists believing in Marxism is much higher than ordinary people; the P value of comparing Communists and the general public participating in religious activities is 1.672, greater than 0.05, indicating differences between the two groups was not significant in participating in religious activities, that is Communists’ participation in religious activities is not significantly different with ordinary people. It can be seen that minority of Communists do not insist on a high degree of unity in the faith and practice of Marxism, which not only damages the party’s image, but also weakens the convincing and appealing of Marxism.

and social development, 46.5% of people deny or uncertain about Chinese Marxism can guide the country develop healthily and stably, 55.6% of people think that Marxism is not the best choice to solve China’s current significant practical problems, 33.7% of people think the biggest problem of Marxism is it can not solve practical problems. It can be seen that, the close relationship between Marxism and the general public has not been fully demonstrated, it is difficult to stimulate their theoretical interest and enthusiasm, and hamper effective dissemination of Marxism.

Third, the communication channels are interfered by the “noise” of non-Marxism. In the Field of Communication, dissemination of general information can not process in the “vacuum” of the environment, the various “noise” interference is a normal phenomenon, but it must try to reduce the “noise” interference and

ensure the authenticity and patency of dissemination of information. Survey results show there is a greater impact of superstition and religion, some people have no clear understanding about the reality of religious and superstitious, they participate in various religious activities and superstition, with the attitude of supportive or laissez-faire for religion and superstition spread.

Meanwhile, neo-liberalism, the theory of universal values and democratic socialism thoughts, etc. have varying degrees of impact among the masses, especially democratic socialism thoughts are strongly deceptive, 28.2% of the people consider it as a choice to solve the current Chinese major practical problems. This suggests that in an open environment and multicultural background, in the process of passing Marxism from spread subject to audience through “DIC”, some anti-Marxist thoughts dressed in kinds of “coat” to deceive the public, and intentionally interfere Marxism’s spread, create “noise” pollution, and snatch the audience, which we must be highly vigilant.

Fourth, the general public is lack of self-consciousness. The Seventeenth Party’s Congress proposed to promote the popularization of Marxism, requiring not only spread Marxism in the majority of party members and cadres, but also in the general population, which requires the general public have self-consciousness as being spreading audience of Marxism. The survey results show that for the object of spread of Marxism, 15.9% of people think that is leading cadres, 16.4% of people think that is all party members, 9.6% said they “do not know”, and as high as 41.9% of people intentionally or unintentionally exclude the general public from the scope of the object

of spread of Marxism. Correspondingly, there are 12.1% interviewee think it is “not necessary” to guide the general public to establish a Marxism belief, 20.7% interviewee think it is “not necessary” to carry out the Marxism belief education for the general public. This suggests that part of the masses is lack of consciousness of understanding and acceptance of Marxism, they exclude themselves from the audience, and then mentality negative treat or refuse to participate in a variety of communication activities of Marxism as “bystander”.

Fifth, the effect of spread of Marxism is urgent to be enhanced. Dissemination effect of Marxism needs to be measured ultimately by the audience’s awareness, attitudes and behaviors of Marxism. Survey findings show that (see Table 4), there is quite a few people do not understand the content of Marxism, can not distinguish Marxism with religion, are lack of confidence for the future development of the Marxism and its practical guidance, do not believe in Marxism or shake the faith, are not educated by Marxism, and participate in various feudal superstitious activities and so on. Especially worthy of attention is, there are 10.8% of interviewee “did not believe, but now believe” Marxism, while there are 15.9% of interviewee “originally believed, but now do not believe in” Marxism, the latter is 5.1% higher than the former, and there is a situation that people who shake in believing Marxism are more than people who newly believe in Marxism. If this worrying “deficit” situation can not be reversed in time, it will weaken the mass base of Marxism, and shake the status of the mainstream ideology of Marxism. Therefore, enhance the effect of the spread of Marxism in contemporary China is an urgent task.

**Table 4**  
**The Effect of Spread of Marxism in Contemporary China**

Dimensions	Topic	Frequency (people)	Percentage (%)
Recognition	Do not know or know few about Marxism	1197	38.9
	can not distinguish Marxism and religion	2026	65.7
	Pessimistic about the future of developing Marxism	577	18.7
Confidence	Do not believe socialism theory with Chinese characteristics can guide China to develop	509	16.5
Faith	Do not believe in Marxism	871	28.3
Behavior	Do not educate by Marxism	677	22.0
	participate in ballot, divination, fortune-telling, palmistry, geomancy	466	15.1

## 2. THE ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSE OF CHALLENGES WHEN MARXISM SPREAD IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Spread of Marxism currently encountered sorts of challenges, closely relates with China’s national conditions, international situation and the Marxism theory itself, is the result of many factors working together.

### 2.1 The Rational of Marxism Theory Is Protruding

In the eye of part of the public, Marxism is very far away from them, there are four main reasons for this “sense of distance”. First, the origin of Marxism theory is Western, difference between Chinese and Western culture makes general public difficult to accept the Marxism’s forms of expression and presentation of logic. Second, as a complete theoretical system, rational and logical of

Marxism are prominent which cover Marxism with a veil of secrecy. Third, due to historical and practical reasons, some of China's public has too low cultural awareness to understand Marxism. Survey results also confirm that 13.1% of people think that people do not believe in Marxism for Marxism is difficult to understand. Fourth, Marxism reveals the general rules natural, social and intellectual development, it does not highlight the care of personal specific interests. These factors led to Marxism's "sense of distance" for the mass.

## **2.2 Regulatory Mechanism Is Not Fully Developed for Adverse Social Thought**

The present era is the era of the coexistence and competition of capitalism and socialism, frictions or even conflicts caused by differences between the two social systems will not end. "Drastic Change" happened in late 1980s and early 1990s result in the Soviet Union and other socialism countries changing the flags, the international communism movement temporarily trapped in downturn, some ambitious Western forces clamored to find an effective way of "win without fighting" to socialism, while China became their next object of "peaceful evolution", they tried to find living space for western social thoughts which contain western capitalist ideology and values in China. Meanwhile, China's socialism market economic system is still being improved, which provides a realistic soil for Western social thoughts' introduction to China and its growth.

In addition, in traditional Chinese culture, there are still some remnants of feudal dross affecting ordinary people, especially in relatively closed rural areas, feudal superstition, etc. have certain markets. These good and bad thoughts form "noise" interfering spread of Marxism, and the emergence of the new medium which is Internet provides a platform for them. As the network technology monitoring and management system construction is lagging behind, the non-Marxism thoughts find a swoop door, and they widely spread through the network platform, and provide different groups of people different levels of "noise pollution". It can be seen that the lagging construction of social bad thoughts regulatory mechanism is an important cause of various "noise" of blocking the spread of Marxism channels in social transition.

## **2.3 Sectors of Society Fail to Share the Fruits of Reform Equally**

Thirty years' reform and opening up, the general public truly feel the benefits brought by the western development and the reform and opening up from the improvement of their material and cultural life, which lays a solid foundation for the spread of Marxism. But with refinement of social stratification, the gap of income and other resources dominance of different social classes gradually widen, resulting in people's generate discontent and psychological imbalance who are at low

end of the social stratification. Research results show that interviewees with monthly income lower than 200 Yuan have weakest interest and emotion in Marxism, also with higher proportion of faith shaking in Marxism, a number of indicators of test results suggest that the spread of Marxism in there is far less than in the people of middle and higher income. Meanwhile, we also learned in the interview that low-income groups have more intense dissatisfaction of the society, and their attitude towards Marxism spread is more negative. It can be seen that, "be not afraid of scarcity, but uneven distribution", whether the distribution of the fruits of reform and opening up can uphold the principle of fair and equitable and benefit the mass of different social classes, is an important factor affecting the spread of Marxism in contemporary China.

## **3. PROMOTE COUNTERMEASURES OF THE SPREAD OF MARXISM IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA**

We should actively and strongly response to the challenges encountered in spreading Marxism in contemporary China in following aspects.

### **3.1 Strengthen the Party Cadres' Demonstrative Effect of "Unity of Sincere and Behavior"**

How Party members and cadres show they are backbone of believing and practicing Marxism, how to play their role as demonstrator and leader in the spread of Marxism, is key is that party cadres need to act "unity of sincere and behavior" effectively. Fourth Plenary Session of the Communist Party Congress made it clear that requiring to continue to carry Chinese Communism theory with practice, closely tie with the masses, carry good style of criticism and self-criticism, to strengthen the party's ideological construction, organizational construction, stylistic construction, system construction and anti-corruption construction, commit to build the Party into establishing for the public, ruling for the people, pragmatic, innovation, hard working, honest and clean, full of vitality, united and harmonious Marxist ruling party.

Communiqué also specially stressed the need to improve the anti-corruption work, strengthen clean politics education and leading cadres' clean self-discipline, investigate serious violations of discipline, complete control and supervision of power operation mechanism, promote innovation of anti-corruption system, to ensure that the party is always vanguard of Chinese workers and the vanguard of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation. Only by doing both ideological education and institutional norms at the same time, can effectively ensure the party cadres' "unity of sincere and behavior", to really win the trust and support of masses, and truly become the backbone, demonstrative power and leader of the spread of Marxism.

### **3.2 Promote Marxism Theory Transform to Policy and Institution**

To eliminate the mass' "sense of distance" of Marxism, the key is transforming Marxism theory into concrete and beneficial policies, regulations and institutions. Research results show that although some interviewees do not pay enough attention to grasping Marxism, but almost all interviewees have vital interests on policy, regulatory, institution and others promulgated by party and the state relating to their own benefits. For example, farmers are very concerned about the nine-year compulsory education, new rural cooperative medical care system, transfer regulations on rural land's contract and management rights, policies of construction of new socialism; urban residents are very concerned about the pension insurance system, unemployment insurance institution, and medical insurance system.

These policies, rules and regulations cover all aspects of people's production and life, with a strong operability, which fully present the purpose of Communist Party of China wholeheartedly ask for welfare for people, also reflects the spirit of latest theories of Marxism in China. Therefore, promote the spread of Marxism, must treat mass's problems about production and life being urgent to solve as the entry point, treat the latest theoretical achievements of Marxism in China as a guide, base on the existing conditions, introduce policies, regulations and institutions to solve practical problems, in order to stimulate public's interest in theory and eliminate the mass' "sense of distance" of Marxism.

### **3.3 Create a Network Communication Platform With Sound Regulatory Mechanism**

When facing sorts of interference which Marxism suffers in the process of information dissemination, we should take "grasp with both hands" strategy, on one hand resolutely confronting with a variety of adverse social thought, on the other hand strengthening the work of Marxism propaganda. At the moment, we should focus on strengthening supervision and construction of the network of communication channels.

Different countries of the world have developed relative laws and regulations to filter and supervise information. The United States strictly regulate the Internet through developing laws, and even the National Security Agency and communications companies corporate to monitor the public's e-mail, chat, browsing the web and other online activities; Australian government sets up a special department of network early warning, filtrate online information layer by layer, spend hundreds of millions of Australian dollars to set up Internet content filters for free for all Australian households and public libraries, shield unhealthy information and severely punishes the network violations; France introduces the "Feller amendment" which specially stipulates that service providers as a network source providing network channel,

must provide the customer with information blockade means, that is, the user can block harmful information by means provided by service provider, otherwise they will be investigated for criminal responsibility; Canada allows law enforcement agencies review the personal information and electronic documents in the extent permitted by law.

These norms can provide reference for perfecting network behavior norm system, strengthening supervision and filtering undesirable information. Meanwhile, as the latest information platform breaking the barriers of time and space and ethnic boundaries, we should make full use of its real-time, interactive, three-dimensional and convenient features, build a Marxism-dimensional propagation channel with combination of "virtual and real", coordinate the real spread channels of Marxism, use texts, pictures, sound, animation, etc. to increase the attractiveness and effectively reduce the interference of external "noise".

### **3.4 Enrich Ordinary People's Material and Cultural Life**

Contradiction between people's growing needs of material and cultural and under-developed social production is still the main contradiction in contemporary China, and the resolve of this contradiction will directly promote the spread of Marxism in the general population. With a healthy and stable development of economy and society, we need to pay attention on efficiency and equity today, focus on fairness and justice in the field of distribution, to make ordinary people enjoy China in the reform and opening up equally. Meanwhile, we need to focus on enhancing ordinary people's cultural life, and create a favorable environment for the spread of Marxism.

Research shows that some people suffer and confuse in feudal superstition or illegal religion, mainly because of mental emptiness, or suffered illness and personal problems difficult to solve and ask for help. Therefore, we should take "CPC Central Committee on deepening reform cultural system to promote the prosperity of a number of decisions on major issues of socialism cultural development" which is adopted in party's seventh session of the Sixth Plenary as a guide, bring major public cultural products and services, public cultural activities into recurrent expenditure budget of public finance, strengthen cultural infrastructure and public cultural allocation of resources to build and improve public cultural service system, and give priority to the western regions and rural areas, in order to create a good "hard " environment for spread of Marxism.

Meanwhile local governments should seriously look into ordinary people's practical difficulties, provide timely help or guidance relying on the street or village committee, to prevent illegal religious and feudal superstition. In particular, we need to focus on the development of cultural undertakings of public welfare, advocate people combining local characteristics and

cultural traditions, to carry out cultural activities with various forms, healthy content, and close to people's life, to enrich people's spiritual and cultural life, raise people's ability to judge right and wrong and awareness of cultural appreciation, and create a good "soft" environment for spread of Marxism.

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