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# PATH OF CHINESE INSTITUTIONAL MODERNIZATION

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## INTRODUCTION:

The term 'Modernization'<sup>1</sup> is sort of competition for making modern in appearance or behavior. But in more concisely we can describe 'Modernization' is sort of modernity in many ways specially economical, social, scientific, technological, industrial, cultural and even more we can say political progress. As we are discussing the institutional modernization that cover all the above modernity, can be rural development , rationalization and even urbanization to add few. In my opinion, 'Institutional Modernization' is a process of development and a progress of various degrees of institutions in a society.

If we see the progress today that China has developed a treasure of modernity in terms of its World figure both in economic development and its strong military power with countless path of ups and downs in the past. We are more concerned with the historical study of its institutional modernization than a mere philosophical debate over its development and can discuss its various levels of struggle for 'Substitute Modernity'<sup>2</sup> since mid-19<sup>th</sup> century(the two opium wars) to till date.

## FIRST MODERNIZATION: China's Historical Background

After the two opium war from 1840-1860, all high ranking mandarins Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang, Zhang Zhidong and Li Hongzhang during the late Qing Dynasty actively predicated in country's development what was known as *self-strengthening movement*. Since the Chinese culture was based on westernization, so the state leaders were keen interested to modernize its military with western techniques but this effort brought down

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1. The first definition of the term 'modernization' is cited from the word web dictionary.
  2. I used the term '*Substitute Modernity*' instead of '*Alternative Substitute*' used in 'From Westernization to Globalization-a brief history of Chinese modernity' by Chen Lichuan. Though the both terms have same meaning but I prefer the term 'substitute' as China is replacing its old modernity with a new one from time to time instead of finding an alternative. This is my own view and not a contradictory to the old one in any ways.

during the period 1894-1895 war against Japan. In 1898, a reform had been initiated by prominent reformer Kang Youwei and his disciple Liang Qichao to imitate the function of the Meiji Restoration in Japan in keeping an eye to transform the Manchu Dynasty into a constitutional monarchy. This reformist movement and the self-strengthening movement is called as 'defensive modernization' by Luo Rongqu<sup>3</sup>. This reformer suddenly took a new turn when the Empress Dowager Cixi acted against Emperor Guangxu, who was in favour of the reform. Finally, It turned into a radical revolution under the leadership of Zhongshan alongside Huang Xing and Zhang Binglin. After a remarkable process of questioning and uncertainties over the Chinese future, the revolutionaries and Chinese reformists agreed on that radical or gradual reforms that lead to a new modernity to China and consented upon the western concept of revolution that will bring a rapid growth in Chinese society.

## **SECOND MODERNIZATION:**

A new revolution began in 1911 with the leadership of Sun Yat-Sen, the founder and the first president of the republic of china. Though it changed the two thousand old political regime but the political culture remained same as before. As Sun became the provisional president but could not handle the power due to substantial pressure from the imperial army and turn power over to Yuan Shikai, the commander of imperial army and the prime minister of then Qing government. In 1913, Chinese National Party(KMT) headed by Yuan Shikai won the country's first legislative election. Song Jiaoren who was prepared to form the government based on the western democracies model, assassinated and as a successor Yuan formed the government, elected himself as the president of republic of china and dissolved the Chinese National Party(KMT) and the parliament. The president as a military dictator enjoyed unlimited powers and made several changes in Chinese constitution that gave him rights to designate his successor, presidency for life and he himself declared as proclaimed emperor of China on December 2, 1915 and China became a monarchy again. In June 1916, Yuan's death brought China a power vacuum and shattered the republican government and most part of the country was ruled by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders.

In 1919, the May Fourth Movement began in protest to the insult imposed on China by the Treaty of Versailles ending world war I and the transfer of German owned advantages and concessions to Japan. It was a true political and cultural revolution combining both

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3. Luo Rongqu is a Chinese historian, a former professor at Peking University and an expert in Chinese modernization.

sciences and democracy of the western political ideas. This movement gave birth to the Chinese Communist Party(CPC) and was the true progenitor of Chinese modernity. The founder of Chinese Community Party(CPC), Chen Duxiu and the prominent advocate of Chinese liberalism, Hi Shi, were the prominent figures of the may fourth movement. Both were in favour of western modernization and new civilization.

In 1920, Sun Yat-sen established his revolutionary base in south china and made efforts to unite the fragmented nation. He entered into an alliance with the Chinese Communist Party(CPC) with the assistance from the Soviet. In 1925, Sun died from cancer and Chiang Kai-shek controlled the nationalist party and secured the south and Central China under his rule in a military campaign known as 'Northern Expedition'. The period 1916-1928 was known as 'Warlord Era'.

In 1931, Japan occupied Manchuria resulted a massive and bloody conflicts between China and Japan in 1937. The Sino-Japanese war between 1937-1945 was part of the world war II. In 1945, Japan defeated. At the end of world war II in 1945, Japanese troops surrendered to republic of China troops and gave consent to Chiang as the controller or ruler of Taiwan. In 1949, Chiang was defeated by the Communist of Party of China(CPC) in mainland China and fled to Taiwan with his government, army, and large supporters. By 1949, the Chinese Communist Party(CPC) occupied almost all parts of China.

### **THIRD MODERNIZATION:**

The third modernization began with the establishment of People's Republic of China, otherwise called as the Socialist Era. Wang Hui<sup>4</sup> believes that "The socialism of Mao Zedong is presented on the one hand as an ideology of modernization, on the other as a criticism of the capitalist modernization of Europe and the United States. The socialist thought of Mao Zedong is to some extent a theory of modernity set against capitalist modernization". This debate was based on the fact that communism and capitalism, as the two rivals in the race for the modernization.

The period 1949-1960 was called the Soviet Model. During this period, the economy was based on public ownership means of production and the democracy was centralized.

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4. Wang Hui is a renowned professor of history based at the Qinghua University of Beijing, China. He is the author of *China's New Order: Society, Politics and Economy in Transition*(Harvard 2003 and 2006), an English translation of his original Chinese book. His researches focus on contemporary Chinese literature and thinking. He was the executive editor (with Huang Ping) of the influential magazine *Dushu* (读书, *Reading*) from May 1996 to July 2007. The US magazine 'Foreign Policy' named him as one of the top 100 public intellectuals in the world in May 2008.

During 1960-1975 there was a struggle for political power among the measure regional organization. After the death of Maozedong in 1976, agricultural reform was taken place in December 1978. Various policy reforms by Deng Xiaoping set openness in the markets, liberalizing the service sector and privatizing the state industries.

In 1979, many developments occurred in the legal system. Law on equity joint ventures, law on people's court and several legal transplants and legal reforms were executed and implemented.

### **ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION:**

Republic of China government with the help of China Aid Act of 1948 and Chinese-American joint commission of rural reconstruction implemented a highly successful Economic reforms on Taiwan during 1950. Lands were redistributed to small farmers from large landowners and larger landowners were compensated in the form of commodities certificates and stock in state-owned industries. These rural reforms were very successful, in turn those landowners were compensated with shares, they started their own enterprise and became very success. Taiwan's phenomenal economic growth earned a spot in Asians four tiger along with Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea.

Privatization of state owned industries and various economic reforms from time to time lead China as one of most powerful economic state in the world.

In 2003, China belonged to the world elementary developed countries and the extent of realization of modernization was 82% where as in 2004 it reached 83%. In 1952, China's exports and imports were \$0.82bn and \$1.12bn respectively and in 2004 the exports and imports significantly increased to \$593.40bn and \$561.40bn respectively. Nevertheless, China's gross domestic product multiplied ten times between 1978 and 2004. In 2008, China's Gross Domestic Product(GDP) reached \$7.8 trillion, the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in terms of Purchasing Power Parity(PPP) after the United States. The Growth of the GDP was 9% in 2008.

### **DIPLOMATIC MODERNIZATION:**

Many development had been made in diplomatic recognition from the Republic of China to People's Republic of China in the 1970s. After world war II, Republic of China had been one of the founding member of the United Nations(UN) and secured the security council

seat. The People's Republic of China refused to maintain diplomatic relation with any government which formally recognized the Republic of China, leading to a complex political status of China. In 2001, China became a member of world trade organization(WTO). Today China maintains a significant intelligence and diplomatic relationship with all leading countries of the world.

## **DEMOCRATIC MODERNIZATION:**

Chiang Kai-shek, the dictator ruler of Taiwan was the first who slowly began democratization progress in Taiwan with the elections of local offices. He also reformed the political party systems. His son Chiang Ching-Kuo brought a rapid liberalization in political system of Taiwan.

The Kaohsiung Incident in 1979 foregrounded need for change in the political system. Various group like Amnensty International called up propaganda against the government and president Chiang Ching-Kuo. Though Chiang Ching-Kuo was from the mainland of republic of China, but he declared himself as Taiwanese, also named some of his top party leaders and Lee Teng-Hui, the vice president of Taiwan and likely successor. In 1986, Chiang Ching-Kuo granted permission to form new political parties and the Democratic Progressive Party(DPP) was born as the first opposition party. In 1987, the government cancelled officially the martial law decree and imposed ban on veterans to visit their relatives who live on mainland of Republic of China. In 1988, government removed the ban on registration of new newspapers.

In 1988, Chiang Ching-Kuo passed away and his successor Lee Teng-hui taken over the administration and continued to democratized the government. In 1991, citizens elected their legislators and full democracy were achieved. In 1994, the president Lee urged and the people of Taiwan had taken part in the presidential election of the People's Republic of China . Under Lee administration, Taiwan went through a significant change in the process of localization in which both local culture and history were promoted. Lee's reforms were able to make Taiwan very independent like printing of banknotes with the Provincial Bank of Taiwan instead of central bank, consolidating the power of Taiwan Provincial government, giving access to media and schools to its citizens.

Though liberalization and localization were developed but democratization had its problems. Political parties were banned during the period of early process. No supports were given to Independent candidates to compete the elections. Democratization process was modernized smoothly without major changes to the constitution or restructuring of the government.

## **MILITARY MODERNIZATION:**

China is continuously making effort to modernize and strengthen its national defense and its armed forces keeping in mind the strategic interests of national security and development. In January 2007, China proved its military strength by destroying its satellite in space with a ground based missile. The whole world is always keeping eyes on its military budget. In 2008, China's military budget was \$58.8 billion, an increase of 17.6 per cent over the year 2007. China is continuously increasing its expenditure on research and development, modernization of strategic and paramilitary forces and foreign arms procurement. Today China is one of the powerful country in the world in terms of its military expansion. China is developing new technologies, building of combat capabilities, improving new weapons, reforming institutional and its defense system by quality training to armed forces, diversification of sources of strong and intelligent military personnel, outsourcing common use goods for maintenance of military organization and developing new war fighting doctrines with high technologies. China is developing a new war theory with its defense R & D system and joint operations of three military services and plan to maintain strategic nuclear deterrence. The increasing responsibilities of China in the today's world in fact urge to modernize its military factor. People's Liberation Army(PLA) of China is a great threat to pentagon in future that the US is considering. However, bearing in mind all measure nuclear weapon countries like India, Russia and the US , China's credible military will remain a crucial factor in future .

## **POLITICAL MODERNIZATION:**

The opposition party came into the power in the 2000 presidential election and ended the Kuomintang's ruling. After the election, Soong formed the People First Party (PFP). On 8 December 2004, the Kuomintang-PFP dominated Pan-Blue alliance gained a narrow majority resulting the resignation of the president of Chen as Democratic progressive Party(DPP) chairman and the cabinet of premier Yu Shyi-Kun. On 25 January 2005, Frank hsieh became premier. The first lady Wu Shu-chen was prosecuted for corruption in charge of illegal use of state fund for personal purpose and the president Chen promised to resign if his wife is found guilty. However, his wife was obtained absence from the court 16 times citing ill health before the completion of President Chen's term.

In December 2006, municipal and mayoral elections took place in Taipei and Kaohsiung, Chinese National Party(KMT) gained majority in the capital, while the Democratic Progressive Party(DPP) and the Chinese National Party(KMT) obtained very close results in the southern city of Kaohsiung and Chen Chu became the first lady mayor of a special municipality of Republic of China. In 2007, Republic of China applied for membership in the United Nations under the name 'Taiwan' and got rejected by the General Assembly.

In the 2008 presidential election Democratic Progressive Party(DPP) candidate Hsieh lost from the Chinese National Party(KMT) Candidate Ma Ying-jeou. Ma Ying-jeou ran on a platform supporting both friendlier relations and economic reforms.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The adventure of modernization for China was not so easy as its history witnessed many seesaw changes and massive revolutions and a constant search for 'Substitute Modernity' between tradition and modernity. Nevertheless, the ancient civilization was always a source of 'Substitute Modernity' for China. Undoubtedly, China will add many treasure of modernization to its history in coming days.

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