

Shi Zhengyi on Accelerated Development Strategies and Disparities in Western China Minority Regions

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Abstract: This paper aims to introduce Professor Shi Zhengyi's theory that the minority regions in western China should develop faster to reduce the regional development disparities within China. Significant accomplishments have been achieved in the economic and social development of China's ethnic minority regions since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. However, there is still a significant gap between the minority regions in western China and the developed regions regarding socio-economic growth. Professor Shi Zhengyi suggested that the "accelerating development" policy needs to be upgraded as an "accelerating strategy" in western minority regions based on a thorough analysis of the actual socio-economic development situation in ethnic minority regions. He suggested elevating the "accelerating approach" to the status of "accelerating policy" in the western minority regions.

Keywords: accelerating strategy; development; minority regions; western China

Introduction

China is a large cohesive multi-ethnic socialist country. There are 55 ethnic minorities, in addition to most Han Chinese. Accordingly, China has five autonomous regions, 30 autonomous prefectures and 120 autonomous counties for ethnic minorities, according to 2020 data. Although China's ethnic minorities have a modest population, they cover 63.72 percent of its land area (Ye, 2005). This fundamental fact demonstrates that ethnic minorities and the economy of ethnic minority regions play a significant role in China's sociopolitical and economic environment (Shi, 1996).

However, most of them live in China's western region due to the imperfect development of natural and socio-historical conditions in the early minority areas. The fact that most western regions belong to remote locations with poor agricultural infrastructure conditions has hampered the development of the minority groups in the west of China (Zhang, 2011). As a result, the economic and social development of the minority groups in western China has been relatively backward for a long time (Hou, 1983). The northwest area has more significant issues than the eastern coastal region, such as unpleasant transportation, insufficient information, a lack of trained people, unsound social functions of regions and cities, lousy infrastructure and economic underdevelopment (Shi & Zhou, 1988). To implement the western development drive and hasten the development of the west and central regions, China suggested a development strategy in the 1980s. One crucial decision taken by the modernization of China for the new century is to vigorously promote economic building in the western ethnic areas (Wang, 1999).

Comprehensively enhancing the quality of life for those who live in ethnically diverse places is challenging. The first generation of ethnic economists, led by Professor Shi Zhengyi, responded to the demands of the reform and opening up era by founding and developing the field of ethnographic economics with Chinese characteristics in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Huang & Yu, 2018). The concept of western minority regions, their natural and ethnic conditions, regional characteristics, and level of economic and social development have all been thoroughly and in-depth researched by Professor Shi Zhengyi. He has also proposed several recommendations for economic and social development decisions, such as the need to elevate the policy of "accelerating development" to the level of "accelerating strategy" in response to the academic community, have given this proposition a lot of attention. Still, the relevant government ministries have also given it a lot of attention (Jing & Lao, 2014).

By summarizing the pertinent theoretical ideas of Professor Shi Zhengyi (2001), this paper seeks to systematically introduce to the international academic community his theories related to accelerating the development strategy of western minority regions and effectively weakening the current situation of regional development imbalance within China (Li, 1989). Professor Shi suggested a phased, step-by-step strategy that uses regional resources in conjunction with the actual situation in the area, focuses on infrastructure development and encourages the advancement of the vast majority of ethnic groups in the western region toward scientific, standardized

and modernized strategies (Shi, 1986). The contents in this article came from the collected works of Shi Zhengyi (2001), and we just edited and sorted them. So, the theoretical contribution of this article is attributed to Professor Shi Zhengyi. We will take the whole responsibility for all mistakes in this article.

Disparity Widening and Various Perspectives

In terms of the economy in China's ethnic minority areas, their productivity level is deficient, the development of science and technology is highly backward, and the overall situation is highly unbalanced. There are many reasons for this situation, including historical, social, natural, political, cultural, domestic, and foreign factors, factors within the ethnic groups and factors outside the ethnic groups. After founding the People's Republic of China, the Communist Party of China and the government strongly supported ethnic minority areas. They have introduced policies sincerely aiming to help ethnic minority areas to develop.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the people of all ethnic groups, the economy of the ethnic minority areas has achieved tremendous development and remarkable achievements. However, after we entered the 1980s, the disparities in economic development among ethnic groups formed in the long history still exist. Moreover, after implementing the reform and opening-up policy, these disparities have widened due to the accelerated development of coastal areas. Many scholars are facing this reality and proposed countermeasures below:

- (1) Some advocate concentrated efforts to develop the eastern region. As for widening the disparities, they suggest letting nature take its course and leaving the economies of ethnic minority areas behind for the time being. This view is called the lagging theory.
- (2) Some proposed changing the disparities in development speed so that the development speed in ethnic minority areas could be in line with the average rate of the whole country. This view is called the synchronization theory.
- (3) Some believe that just like technological progress, economic and social development also follow the law of gradients. They think there must also be a gradient between the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas and coastal areas. This view is called the gradient theory. It is the result of objective laws and is irresistible.
- (4) Some hold that with the rich resources and excellent conditions, ethnic minority areas in western China can accelerate their development with the

support of favorable policies similar to those in coastal regions. They believe that these areas have the potential to quickly catch up or even surpass the developed regions in the east. This view is called the anti-gradient theory, or the catching-up and surpassing theory.

- (5) Others believe that, given the reality, China can only implement the coastal development strategy, speed up the development of the east, and let it get rich first. Twenty years later, China can shift its focus to the west and let the east that has got rich first help the development of the west to achieve shared prosperity. This view is called the two-step theory.

These views show correct and positive factors, but they have flaws in different aspects. For example, the lag strategy is unacceptable to the people of all ethnic groups in the west and does not conform to the fundamental principles of our socialist ethnic policy. If a synchronization strategy is adopted, although the development speed has reached the same level, the absolute value of the disparity is still expanding. As for the gradient strategy, although gradient phenomena can be seen in some fields of technological development, the historical facts of economic growth have proven that the gradient theory has no regularity. Instead, it is the law of uneven development that is working.

In terms of the catching-up and surpassing strategy, according to the actual situation of ethnic minority areas in the 1980s, they cannot catch up with the developed eastern regions in a short period (some provinces and cities may be able to do so). Many people hope to achieve this goal, but it is not realistic. The fifth strategy is the two-part strategy. During the 6th and 7th five-year-plan periods, China implemented this strategy. This strategy was determined by various conditions and was China's only choice. From an economic development perspective, it is the right thing to do. However, it may have adverse effects from the standpoint of ethnic issues. The widening gap may lead to conflicts between ethnic groups, which is not conducive to ethnic unity.

The Strategy of Accelerated Development

We analyzed the disparity and its widening in response to the above situation. In 1986, we formally put forward the strategy of accelerated development (Shi, 1987), and in 1988, it was systematically discussed (Shi, 1989). Our strategy of accelerated development has its special meanings. As is known to all, there is a law of acceleration in physics and a principle of acceleration in contemporary Western economics (the

increase in income or consumption can have a chain effect on investment). In short, according to this strategy, ethnic minority areas should speed up their modernization. They should strive to narrow the gap with the advanced regions in the shortest possible time, eliminate the backwardness, and become progressive ethnic groups (Shi, 1987). The main contents of this strategy are as follows:

Firstly, it requires the state and governments to establish the guiding thought of accelerated development when leading the socialist modernization drive in ethnic minority areas. Secondly, accelerated development does not simply pursue high speed, nor is it a repetition of the Great Leap Forward. It requires full use of favorable conditions, seizing promising opportunities and accelerating modernization. Its fundamental task is to promote the accelerated development and improvement of productive social forces in ethnic minority areas. Thirdly, this kind of modernization construction is a systematic project. It is centered on economic construction. At the same time, it requires comprehensively accelerating the development of politics, culture, education, etc., in ethnic minority areas to develop a material civilization and spiritual civilization together. Fourthly, it requires accelerating reform, opening up in minority regions, and improving and perfecting various economic forms and social structures. It pursues the continuous improvement of mechanisms and benefits through the optimized combination of the above formats and systems. Fifthly, in terms of the development speed of ethnic minority areas, this strategy does not pursue a high speed that is divorced from reality. It follows the acceleration that can be achieved. It seeks to gradually accelerate development according to actual conditions and narrow the development level disparity by restricting the development speed gap.

It does not require ethnic minority areas to catch up with developed areas overnight, nor does it need them to surpass the national average immediately. Its goal is to narrow and eventually eliminate the disparity through gradual development. This goal fundamentally differs from the Great Leap Forward and the Foreign Leap Forward. Acceleration is proposed in response to the discrepancy, which can only be eliminated through acceleration. It is logically necessary and is self-evident. We refer to this strategy as the acceleration strategy or accelerated development strategy. It is not a mere economic measure but a systematic project to realize the overall modernization of society.

How should this strategy of accelerated development be implemented? We must adhere to the primary line of the Communist Party of China of one center and two

essential points. But the key is to enforce policies based on the specific characteristics of minority areas. People of all ethnic groups should be mobilized to emancipate their minds and explore boldly. Their enthusiasm, creativity, and pioneering spirit should be fully mobilized. In this way, the economic development of ethnic areas and the progress of other social undertakings will be accelerated. There are fourteen specific countermeasures and requirements:

- (1) In socialist modernization in ethnic minority areas, we must adhere to the Four Cardinal Principles. But we should add a principle, that is, to uphold the unity of the country and national unity (Shi, 1987).
- (2) Economic reforms in ethnic minority areas should be based on local conditions. We must adjust measures to local needs and ethnic characteristics. Diverse, flexible, and multi-layer economic forms and operating mechanisms with ethnic features should be established.
- (3) Ethnic minority areas should firmly implement the policy of opening to the outside world. Their introduction to the outside world must be bidirectional and multi-level, that is, the overall opening of society. They should be open to other provinces and cities in the east, including developed coastal regions and other ethnic areas within their areas. In the West, they should be available to foreign countries. They should open up to bordering countries and develop border trade. At the same time, they should also be fully open to South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eastern Europe and even Western Europe, North America and other countries, and develop international trade with these areas. They should be based on resource development and focus on border trade development. It is the main feature of the opening up in ethnic minority areas.
- (4) The most significant and crucial advantage of ethnic minority areas lies in the abundant development resources. During the Seventh Five-Year Plan period, our research focused on the economic development of the ethnic minority areas in western China (covering eight provinces and autonomous regions). Researchers proposed and demonstrated various development strategies. However, the center of all these strategies is to rely on resources and build an economic operation mechanism called the International and Domestic Two-way Circulation (that is, a “ mechanism).

- (5) In modernization, ethnic minority areas must transform their natural economy into a commodity economy. Ethnic minority areas are in a natural economy, and their commodity economy is relatively underdeveloped. As we all know, in the modernization process of backward ethnic groups, developing a commodity economy is a necessary historical stage. Therefore, the process can only be accelerated but can not be skipped. The development of the commodity economy in ethnic minority areas should be based on regional characteristics. At the same time, it must also be found in ethnic features and religious and cultural aspects. For example, while attaching importance to the production of unique products produced in ethnic minority areas, we should also pay attention to creating products that are especially needed in ethnic minority areas. At this stage, according to the religious policy of the Communist Party of China, we need to moderately develop the production of consumer goods related to religious activities. We need to vigorously develop township enterprises with ethnic characteristics and the production of commodities for the tertiary industry. The development of the commodity economy naturally requires us to focus on cultivating and developing various markets. Commodities and markets are an inseparable organic unity. For a long time, many people believed that the commodity and market economies were two fundamentally different things. The former can exist in a socialist society, while the latter can only exist in a capitalist society. It is undoubtedly a misunderstanding. In addition to the capitalist commodity economy and capitalist market economy, there can also be a socialist commodity economy and a socialist market economy. It is because commodities and commodity economy and markets and market economies are all economic forms or ways of economic activities. They are two aspects of the same matter.
- (6) When implementing an agriculture-based policy in ethnic minority economies, we must broadly emphasize agriculture's development. In other words, agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry must be developed. In particular, forestry and animal husbandry is essential in the production and life of ethnic minorities. They are the basis for the survival and development of some ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups can even be called forestry ethnic groups or animal husbandry ethnic groups. Therefore, the accelerated development of forestry and animal husbandry in ethnic minority areas is an issue that cannot be ignored in the modernization drive.

- (7) Without developed industries, the modernization of ethnic groups can never be realized. Undoubtedly, ethnic minorities also need to speed up the development of large-scale modern sectors. But at this stage, the focus of our work should be the development of ethnic township enterprises according to the specific conditions of ethnic minority areas. These township enterprises must give full play to the resource advantages of ethnic minority areas and reflect ethnic characteristics. In particular, the development of traditional products in the lives of ethnic minorities needs to be accelerated, and competitive products should be created and promoted to the international market.
- (8) Ethnic minorities should also implement the Family Planning Policy and improve the population. Ethnic education must be vigorously developed to cultivate professional talents and fully play the role of science and technology as the primarily productive force. It is the only way for ethnic minorities to realize their modernization. Mao Zedong once pointed out that without many communist cadres from ethnic minorities, we cannot solve ethnic problems completely. Similarly, the modernization of ethnic minorities and the shared prosperity of all ethnic groups can never be achieved without many professionals from ethnic minorities. Ethnic education should also be based on the specific characteristics of ethnic minority areas. We cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all policy. Instead, we must develop diverse ethnic education that combines modernization and nationalization dialectically.
- (9) To accelerate the development of the ethnic economy, we must also formulate scientific strategies for economic development based on a clear understanding of the national and regional conditions. We must look at the strategy for the economic development of ethnic minority areas from a strategic perspective. The development strategies of ethnic minority areas should also be based on the long-term three-step strategy of the whole country. However, different ethnic minority areas should formulate development plans according to their situations, conditions and characteristics. Since the 1980s, ethnic minority areas have developed their development strategies. We have introduced this in *Research of Economic Development in Ethnic Minority Areas in Western China*. It seems that there is a need for constant revisions and improvements. Without development plans, there will be no goals and directions of development. Therefore, formulating development strategies and plans for ethnic minority

areas is a necessary guarantee for accelerating the development of the ethnic economy.

- (10) Science and technology are the primarily productive force. The accelerated development of ethnic areas must rely on advanced science and technology. The development and progress of science and technology can promote the further development of productive social forces in ethnic minority areas and the continuous growth of the economic aggregate. Therefore, in the economic system reform in ethnic minority areas, we must emancipate our minds and make bold strides forward. At the same time, more favorable policies should be introduced. Strengthening technical exchanges and support between ethnic minorities and developed areas is necessary. In addition, technical exchanges with foreign countries and the introduction of advanced science, technology, and equipment are also required. But this introduction must be based on local situations. In particular, we must give full play to the advantages of the original three-line enterprises and use the practical functions of traditional science and technology of the ethnic groups themselves.
- (11) China's coastal development started with the establishment of special zones. The practice has proved that this is a correct approach. The development of border areas should also be achieved by establishing special zones. In ethnic minority areas, some open towns, trading ports, experimental zones, development areas, etc. The practice has fully proved that the policy of opening up border areas has led to rapid economic development in the open areas. In addition, it has also helped to realize the overall revitalization of ethnic minority areas. Hulunbuir in Inner Mongolia and Dehong Prefecture in Yunnan are typical examples. Therefore, speeding up the construction of special zones in ethnic minority areas and opening border areas is the only way to accelerate the development of the ethnic economy.
- (12) The ethnic minority areas in central China are located in the hinterland, and so are the ethnic minority areas in western China. Therefore, the full development of these minority areas is complex. Based on the actual conditions, it is feasible to manage small watersheds and the construction of reservoir areas, thus driving the development of the ethnic economy in some areas. We might even say that this is the only way. The development and governance of some regions in the middle and upper reaches of the

Yellow River, the Wujiang River Basin and some areas of the Jinsha River Basin, and related scientific demonstrations, have also proved this necessity.

- (13) Relatively speaking, multi-ethnic areas are vast and sparsely populated. Their social, economic and cultural development is unbalanced, making it impossible to achieve comprehensive and accelerated development in these areas in the short term. In contrast, it is possible to develop by zones, create conditions, and gradually accelerate development. In China's modernization drive, the practice has shown that the accelerated development of the county-level economy is a significant issue. It is the foundation of the regional economy and plays a linking role. Most of the counties (banners) in ethnic minority areas are vast and sparsely populated, with abundant resources and great potential for development. They are the foundation for revitalizing the ethnic economy. We should combine the development of the county-level economy with helping poor counties get rid of poverty. It is of great significance to the economic development of ethnic minority areas, the realization of the strategic goal in the second stage and the gradual narrowing of the development gap.
- (14) During the research, we realized that the accelerated development of the ethnic economy must rely on the guidance of scientific theories, and objective laws must be followed. Therefore, we must strengthen the study of the ethnologic economy and develop the discipline of national economics. We have made extensive exploration to create the concept of ethnological economics since 1979. We had successfully established the discipline of ethnological economics based on our previous studies. We have cultivated many talents in ethnology economics and published many academic writings. The central government and the leaders of ethnic affairs departments attach great importance to this work. They have played an essential role in formulating relevant policies and work decisions and have attracted widespread interest and attention from the academic community. The central government has listed ethnology economics as an essential major and has been approved as a master's degree program. Many graduate students, college students and professional talents have been cultivated.

Implementations of the Accelerated Development Strategy

The strategy of accelerated development was proposed in the mid-1980s. In his southern inspection speech, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that we could regard such development

as a leap from an overall perspective to the accelerated development in those five years. But it was different from the Great Leap Forward because it did not harm the organism and the mechanism of the development as a whole. All in all, those five years of accelerated development made a considerable contribution. In his speech, Deng Xiaoping mentioned accelerated development three times, and the five years noted in his remarks were from 1984 to 1988. From this, it can be seen that accelerated development is a critical issue for the whole country. We believe that Deng Xiaoping's speech's spirit also fully applies to ethnic minority areas. At the same time, it also has a special meaning: generally speaking, the economic disparity in ethnic minority areas is more prominent, so according to the objective economic conditions and needs of these areas, it is necessary to take accelerated development as a guideline. This guideline should be followed for a few years and an extended period. Otherwise, it will be impossible to gradually eliminate the development disparity among ethnic groups and realize the shared prosperity of all ethnic groups. It is a self-explanatory truth.

Let us begin with an introduction to how the accelerated development strategy was created. Most ethnic minority areas in China have been in poverty and backwardness for a long time. The gap in the level of development is enormous and highly uneven, which is a fact known to all. From 1979 to 1984, we investigated this backwardness and analyzed its causes. On that basis, for the first time in history, we raised the issue of the disparity in development and worked hard to find strategic countermeasures. From 1984 to 1986, we further investigated and analyzed the discrepancy in the development of the ethnologic economy and its new widening trend. On that basis, we put forward the strategic concept of accelerated development. From 1986 to 1989, based on the objective reality of the disparity, we systematically demonstrated the strategy of accelerated development.

Based on this strategy, we expounded that ethnic minority areas should accelerate the historical transformation from natural economy to commodity economy and accelerate the realization of their two-way opening and circulation. We can see that these views were basically in line with Deng Xiaoping's thoughts. In his speech, Deng Xiaoping fully affirmed the accelerated development from 1984 to 1988, calling it a leap different from the Great Leap Forward. He believed that the accelerated development in those five years had made an outstanding contribution. At the same time, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that we must seize the opportunity to develop ourselves, and the key was a new round of accelerated economic development. Why did he repeat this? The reason is simple.

There is a big gap between China and developed countries. Moreover, the economic development of neighboring countries and regions has also accelerated. If we do not develop or develop too slowly, the people will see problems once they compare China with other areas. Therefore, we must vigorously pursue development, and where conditions permit, we should develop as quickly as possible. There is nothing to worry about as long as we seek efficiency, quality, and development of an export-oriented economy. Slow speed equals stagnation or even falling back.

Given that, Deng Xiaoping reminded people to seize their opportunities. He said now is an excellent option, and he is worried that we might lose it because if we do not take it, the opportunity will be lost, and time will pass relatively soon. This idea is also fully applicable to ethnic minority areas. The internal society of ethnic minority areas is stable. After more than a decade of development, they already have a particular foundation. The central government has introduced a series of preferential policies for them. In addition, external conditions have fundamentally changed. In particular, neighboring countries and regions urgently demand mutual openness and exchanges, which has created highly favorable conditions for border trade development. In the face of new opportunities, we must start a new round of expansion. A golden opportunity must not be missed!

Fifth, in the tremendous three-step strategy proposed by Deng Xiaoping, we have completed the first step and are now taking the second. The transition from the 1980s to the 1990s is from the first step to the second. The new stage, new situations, new contradictions and new tasks require us to earnestly study and implement the spirit of the National Conference for Ethnic Work. In particular, we must conduct in-depth research based on the reports of the general secretary and the premier. We must strive to explore new subjects and new characteristics of China's ethnic work and scientifically reveal the recent trends and new laws regarding China's ethnic issues. For the research on ethnologic economy, the most critical task at this stage is to earnestly study, publicize and implement the requirements put forward by the two reports in the National Conference for Ethnic Work.

Deng Xiaoping's speech on his southern inspection in 1992 was necessary and correct. At the same time, it was very timely, critical, and a great decision. As pointed out by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in the crucial period of China's socialist modernization drive, Comrade Deng Xiaoping unswervingly implemented the party's primary line of "one center and two cardinal points." He adhered to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, seized

favorable opportunities, and accelerated reform and opening up. He delivered essential speeches on significant issues, such as concentrating on economic development. Comrade Deng Xiaoping's important speeches have a vital guiding role in China's reform and construction and the 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. It is with far-reaching significance for the entire socialist modernization drive. Therefore, it has a significant guiding role for ethnic work and the economic construction of ethnic minority areas.

First, Deng Xiaoping emphasized that if we do not adhere to socialism, reform and open up, develop the economy, and improve people's lives, we will have no future. The primary line must be unswervingly adhered to for a hundred years. The people will believe in and support us by sticking to this line. Since the Third Plenary Session, they will be defeated if anyone goes against the people's will and intends to change the path and policy. Ethnic work is no exception. We must keep in mind "one center and two cardinal points." We cannot hesitate, doubt, or try to change this. Only by insisting on economic construction as the center can we help the ethnic minority areas get rid of poverty and realize the shared prosperity of all ethnic groups. Only by adhering to reform and opening up can the development of productive social forces in minority areas be accelerated, thus realizing the development of the ethnologic economy. Only when the four cardinal principles are adhered to can the unity and stability of the country and the equality and unity of ethnic groups be guaranteed. It can ensure the smooth progress of the reform and opening up in ethnic minority areas and the modernization of the ethnologic economy along the correct path of socialism. Economic development is the core and the foundation, while stability and unity are the prerequisites and the guarantee. If we pit and divide them against each other, we will surely make mistakes. For non-economic sectors, focusing on economic construction means making plans and working based on this center.

We should serve the center, but that does not mean that non-center work is unimportant. Because without non-central work, there will be no foundation for the central position. Without non-central work, major tasks can never be achieved. Ethnic work, focusing on economic construction by no means directly carrying out specific economic work in ethnic minority areas for the economic sector. Participation cannot be construed as replacing and monopolizing everything. In a sense, participation means service. The center of economic development and guaranteeing national unity should be combined rationally through participation. Ethnic affairs departments

should play an active role in the process of participation. Second, Deng Xiaoping emphasized that in the process of reform and opening up, we must be bold and take risks.

We cannot be like women with bound feet. Once we see a direction, we must try boldly. Without the spirit of adventure and the courage to take risks, we will have no vitality, not find a good and new path, and not be able to make recent achievements. In ethnic work and the research on ethnologic economy, we must also have the spirit of adventure and the courage to take risks. We have cultivated many talents, published some academic works, and made remarkable achievements. However, while some of the subjects and viewpoints we raised in our research contained originality, we are still at an early stage on the whole. We haven't completely gotten rid of the traditional frameworks.

Many issues remain to be further studied: what are the status and role of economic factors in ethnic issues? What are the status and position of ethnic elements in economic development? How should ethnic characteristics and the nature of socialism be linked and combined? What is the specific path for ethnic minorities to move towards socialist modernization? Do ethnic minority areas need to seize the opportunity to accelerate their development? Do they need to establish an accelerated development strategy in the guideline? This research must be based on Deng Xiaoping's important speech. To do this, we must further develop our spirit of adventure and risk-taking and eliminate the shackles of some traditional views. These views include believing that socialism equals a planned economy and that capitalist market economy, securities, stock market, and shareholding systems belong to capitalism rather than socialism. That ethnic interests are opposed to socialism, etc. We must boldly carry out theoretical exploration and push the research on the ethnologic economy to a new stage.

Third, Deng Xiaoping once pointed out that the essence of socialism is to liberate and develop productive forces, eradicate exploitation, eliminate polarization, and achieve shared prosperity. He once said that taking the socialist path means gradually realizing shared prosperity. He explained that shared prosperity means allowing some areas with conditions to develop first while others develop relatively slowly. Then, the developed regions help other sites achieve shared prosperity. Some people mentioned that, according to Deng Xiaoping's speech, by the end of this century, when China reaches a moderately prosperous level, we can make the areas that have got rich first pay more taxes to support the development of less developed

regions. They believe that this is not good for ethnic minority areas. It is a misunderstanding. First, development gaps exist between different parts and relative wealth and poverty issues in any developed country. Second, Deng Xiaoping's speech encourages areas with conditions to seize the opportunity to speed up their development and become rich first. It does not enable us to mess together. Third, the regions that get the rich first need to drive the growth of other areas, and they also need to pay more taxes to support the underdeveloped regions. In this way, the wealth gap between the coastal and the inland areas is expected to be gradually eliminated. Fourth, Deng Xiaoping's speech pointed out that most underdeveloped regions are rich in resources and have great potential for development. Therefore, the strategy of allowing some places to get rich first and then driving the development of other areas in Deng Xiaoping's speech is based on China's actual situation. It is entirely scientific and, therefore, completely correct.

Sixth, to do an excellent job in ethnic work and accelerate the economic development of ethnic minority areas, our most important task is to deeply understand the spirit of Deng Xiaoping's speech during his southern inspection. The ideological theory reflected in this speech is an essential part of Deng Xiaoping's ideological and theoretical system. It is a new ideological and theoretical development on building socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Deng Xiaoping was the chief designer of China's socialist modernization drive. Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, Comrade Deng Xiaoping has put forward a series of views. People's consensus is that they are the theoretical basis for the Chinese Communist Party to formulate the new era's primary lines and significant policies. Deng Xiaoping's important thoughts and propositions are essential to Mao Zedong's ideological and theoretical system. They are the further development of Mao Zedong Thought in the new era. The ideas and propositions he has expounded on the new generation contain many aspects, covering politics, economy, culture, education, military, foreign, and ethnic affairs. Among them, the following three propositions are the most important ones. The first is the theoretical view on building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The second is the theoretical perspective on the primary stage of socialism. The third is the theoretical perspective that the fundamental task of socialism is to develop productive social forces. His other critical theoretical views can be grouped into those mentioned above. Here are some of them: the idea that science and technology are primary productive forces; the view about getting rich first and getting rich together; the perspective on advancing

the construction of the two civilizations at the same time; the opinion about political restructuring; the view on one country, two systems; the idea that both planning and market are economic instruments; the view about enterprises with three kinds of investments; the argument about the criteria for judging capitalism and socialism; the idea about the nature of socialism; the statement about preventing the right-deviationist thinking and opposing the left-deviationist thought; the view about seizing the opportunity for accelerated development; the idea about establishing special economic zones; the view about insisting on working along both lines; the view about cultivating successors to the cause of socialist construction; the belief that peace and development are the two major themes in today's world; and the idea about the guiding principle of "observing with a sober mind, remaining steady, reacting calmly, biding our time, never trying to be ahead."

The theoretical viewpoints that Deng Xiaoping expounded since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee have gone through three significant steps. In the first step, he proposed to build socialism with Chinese characteristics in 1982. It completely broke the shackles of the traditional socialist model. In the second step in 1984, he pointed out that the planned commodity economy was a socialist political economy. It also wholly eradicated the theoretical basis for the ultra-leftist idea of cutting the tail of capitalism. The third step was his speech during his southern inspection in 1992. He expressed that planning and the market were economic instruments in that speech. It opened up new horizons for further revealing the essence of socialism. Moreover, these viewpoints have important theoretical guiding significance for our research on the ethnologic economy. We can accurately find a new approach to realize the socialist modernization of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas by exploring this scientific visionary path. Only by doing so can we accelerate the development of productive social forces in ethnic minority areas and ultimately achieve the shared prosperity of all ethnic groups.

Seventh, we must hold high the great banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory. Our mission is to adhere to the theory of the primary stage of socialism and the national strategy of reform and opening up. We must continue to develop productive social forces, make ongoing efforts to eliminate the gap and turn underdeveloped areas into developed ones. These tasks are perfectly possible to realize. They can be recognized by an ethnic group, a country and even a large country. At the end of the 19th century, the economic and social development of the United States overtook that of the United Kingdom, becoming a typical case of a large country overtaking

a small one. At the end of the 20th century, Japan moved up with the United States and was on its way to surpassing it. Its economic growth rate greatly exceeds several other developed countries globally. It is a typical case of a small country overtaking a big one. China's ethnic minority areas are well-positioned to accelerate their development. After the ongoing efforts of several generations, they will surely reach the average level of the whole country. Some regions and ethnic groups will inevitably become advanced and developed ones. Similarly, we must adhere to the road of one center and two cardinal points and move forward along the path of building socialism with Chinese characteristics advocated by Deng Xiaoping. On this basis, our mission is to create conditions to seize opportunities and accelerate our development. As long as we do this, we will surely be able to narrow the gap between our entire country and the developed ones. We have every hope of gradually becoming a developed country, which is historically inevitable. As humanity enters the 21st century, the era of comprehensive rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is bound to come. A unified, free, democratic, prosperous and highly civilized China will surely stand in the east of the earth forever.

Conclusion

Professor Shi Zhengyi's accelerating strategy is a significant theoretical proposal for furthering the development of western minority regions, transforming the socio-economic backwardness of minority regions and reducing the economic disparity between regions. This approach follows the achievable acceleration, abides by local conditions, progressively accelerates development by limiting the development speed gap, and gradually closes the development gap rather than pursuing the high speed out of reality. The accelerating strategy is a systematic project that combines with the current, fully uses favorable conditions, seizes chances and accelerates the organic and complete modernization acceleration.

The strategy calls for accelerating the transformation of the highly backward education structure, methods and conditions in western minority regions while focusing on economic construction and accelerating the comprehensive development of political, cultural and educational endeavors in minority regions. The rapid training of diverse experts urgently required for modernization is necessary for reforming and opening up China's ethnic areas. Professional households and model families must also be energetically developed. To construct material and spiritual civilization together, it is also essential to enhance different economic forms and social structures,

as well as the family life and social activities of the numerous ethnic groups in the vast agricultural and pastoral lands of the west.

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