

The Ethical Connotations of the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan

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Abstract: The political stance of the Communist Party of China in the New Era is embodied in the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan. It is essential for the CPC's development and its noble undertakings on the new journey that we comprehensively summarize the extensive experience of the Party's formulation of principles and policies. Rich in profound ethical connotations and unique characteristics, the Outline covers core ethical categories of goodness, righteousness, beauty and happiness. Meanwhile, it possesses three distinctive traits: forward-looking guidance, dialectical unity, as well as profound and extensive ideological implications.

Keywords: The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan; Ethics; Connotations.

1. Introduction

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan comprises 18 parts and 62 chapters, covering all sectors including the economy, politics, society, culture and the ecological environment. Reflecting the political stances of the Communist Party of China in the New Era, the Outline is imbued with profound ethical connotations. Exploring these ethical connotations of the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan is of great significance for thoroughly grasping the CPC's governance philosophy in the New Era, strengthening the Party spirit of its members, and summarizing successful the governance experience.

2. The Significance of Ethical Connotations Contained in the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan

An exploration of the ethical connotations of the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan facilitates a thorough and in-depth understanding of the Communist Party of China's governance philosophy for the New Era. The Outline fully embodies the Party's original aspiration of governing for the people and elaborates on this people-centered philosophy across multiple dimensions — ranging from national, social and individual development to economic growth and ecological conservation. Such exploration further deepens our understanding of the CPC's fundamental commitment to putting people's interests first, thereby uniting popular support and consolidating the Party's mass foundation.

An Analysis of the ethical connotations of the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan contributes to the continuous reinforcement of CPC members' Party spirit. Such spirit directly determines the Party's nature and capacity for combat. Party cadres serve as the backbone for advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics in the New Era. In this new stage, improving the cultivation of Party spirit ultimately comes down to fostering and adhering to a correct political stance. Studying the Party's principles, lines and policies, as well as clarifying its goals, missions and requirements, constitutes a vital path to strengthening Party spirit. The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan clarifies major policies and development objectives for the Party's future advancement. Only by

thoroughly comprehending its contents can CPC members fully grasp the Party's requirements, strengthen their sense of identity and belonging, and further consolidate their Party spirit.

A Study on the ethical connotations of the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan facilitates the sustained improvement of the Party's governance capacity. The Ten Expositions clarify that the leadership of the Communist Party of China constitutes the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and fulfilling the Chinese Dream cannot be separated from the CPC's leadership; we must unswervingly uphold the Party's overall leadership. The Party has always attached great importance to reviewing its historical experience and drawing wisdom and strength from it. Accordingly, we must attach greater importance to reviewing the Party's history as well as its experience in formulating principles and policies, so as to elevate the Party's governance capacity. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the ethical connotations contained in the Outline is an inevitable requirement for summarizing the Party's governance experience, improving its governance capacity, and realizing the Chinese Dream.

3. Core Ethical Connotations of the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan

3.1. Goodness

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan carries the ethical connotations of goodness. In an ethical sense, goodness stands for welfare and consummation. The document manifests such goodness in three dimensions: the goodness driving social advancement, the goodness safeguarding the well-being of the general public, and the goodness advancing both material and spiritual civilization.

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan epitomizes the virtue of goodness inherent to social advancement. Two core standards are currently adopted to measure social progress: the productive force standard and the people-centered standard. [1] The Outline charts the target of basically realizing socialist modernization across China by 2035. It drives New Era economic and social development by

upgrading agriculture, industry, the service sector and emerging industries, as well as fostering new quality productive forces — this embodies the productive force dimension of goodness for social progress.

Meanwhile, the document also encapsulates the CPC's people-centered virtue of goodness for the New Era, reflected in initiatives to boost residents' physical wellbeing, social literacy and spiritual cultivation. It proposes accelerating the development of a Healthy China initiative, representing goodness for people's physical wellbeing. The advancement of a high-quality education system covering higher education and a modern vocational education system reflects goodness for people's social literacy. Further, improving the social psychological service network, scaling up mental health and psychiatric services, and advancing ethical and civic progress in the New Era demonstrate the Party's commitment to goodness that nurtures people's spiritual cultivation.

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan embodies the goodness that prioritizes the wellbeing of the broad masses of the people.

On one hand, the document rolls out a full set of supporting policies: optimizing fertility support systems, protecting the development rights and interests of all social groups including women, minors, young people and people with disabilities, intensifying care and protection for minors, facilitating youth development, upgrading service guarantees for veterans, strengthening safeguards and development capacity for people with disabilities, and refining institutional mechanisms for the integrated development of elderly care services and related industries. Covering all age groups across Chinese society — from infants, children, adolescents, young and middle-aged adults to senior citizens — these initiatives reflect the goodness that delivers tangible wellbeing to the broad masses.

On the other hand, the Outline advances targeted policies to realize diversified wellbeing for the people. For example, it calls for strengthening whole-process supervision over food and drug safety to protect public health; it introduces policies for sustained environmental improvement to resolve ecological woes; to ease difficulties in accessing medical care, it advocates perfecting the public health system and building a coordinated governance mechanism for medical services, medical insurance and pharmaceuticals. All these targeted livelihood initiatives reflect the Party's top political priority of improving people's lives.

Accordingly, the Outline fully demonstrates the CPC's consistent commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing of the broad masses in the New Era.

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan embodies the virtue of goodness reflected in the CPC's efforts to advance material and spiritual civilization in the New Era.

As can be seen from the economic and social development targets laid out in the document, the development objectives for the 15th Five-Year Plan period cover the progress of material civilization. To be specific, China will attain notable accomplishments in high-quality development, substantially boost its capacity for high-level self-reliance and strength in science and technology, and achieve new breakthroughs in further deepening reform across the board.

Meanwhile, the Outline also defines targets for boosting spiritual civilization, including marked advances in social, ecological and political civilization. In general, in the dimension of material civilization, China will basically realize socialist modernization and establish a modern

economic system. In the dimension of spiritual civilization, the nation will fulfill the goals of building a powerful country in culture, education, science, technology, human resources and sports.

Therefore, the Outline places equal emphasis on the development of material and spiritual civilization, embodying dual virtues of goodness that drive the progress of both civilizations.

Any practice that facilitates social advancement, delivers wellbeing to the broad masses of the people, and promotes the progress of material and spiritual civilization can be defined as goodness. [2] Centered on social advancement, oriented toward the wellbeing of the broad masses, and covering both material and spiritual civilization, the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan fully illustrates the core connotation of goodness.

3.2. Righteousness

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan embodies the ethical connotations of righteousness, which falls into two dimensions: universal righteousness and social justice.

The Outline is permeated with the CPC's lofty universal righteousness for the New Era, which lies in safeguarding the fundamental interests of the country, the nation and the people. Ancient pre-Qin Confucian scholars defined such universal righteousness as prioritizing the fundamental interests of the country and nation when weighing the trade-off between righteousness and utility. [3]

The political vision of building a powerful country and a strong military runs through the whole document. Composed of 18 chapters, nearly every section of the Outline involves elevating China's comprehensive national power, which embodies the universal righteousness of national rejuvenation. Its policies to optimize the population development strategy and pursue high-quality population growth reflect the universal righteousness of enriching the people and enhancing their wellbeing. Meanwhile, the military centenary goals laid down in the Outline demonstrate the universal righteousness of building a strong military.

The Outline mirrorings social justice built upon equal liberty and fair equality of opportunity. As recorded in Cihai (Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Chinese Language), the Chinese character "Yi" stands for propriety and justice. John Rawls, the distinguished American ethical theorist, proposed two core principles of justice: the principle of equal liberty and the principle of fair equality of opportunity. [4]

The document advocates the development of socialist democracy and comprehensive law-based governance, mirroring its governance philosophy centered on equal liberty. It also rolls out multiple targeted measures: accelerating the modernization of agriculture and rural regions, steadily advancing all-round rural revitalization, refining the spatial layout of regional economies, and boosting coordinated regional growth. All these practices reflect the CPC's New Era economic governance philosophy rooted in fair equality of opportunity.

Furthermore, supportive policies including improving the childcare service system, scaling up care and protection for minors, and optimizing support guarantees and development opportunities for people with disabilities fully embody the principle of fair treatment and equal rights for vulnerable social groups.

3.3. Beauty

The document reflects the ethical connotations of beauty. According to ethical aesthetics, beauty belongs to the realm of ethical research. The document contains two profound aesthetic dimensions: the beauty of nature and the beauty of spirit.

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan places high value on the beauty of nature. As a well-known saying goes, lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. Ecological beauty is the aspiration of all people and the fundamental living foundation for humanity. Only dwelling in a sound natural ecosystem can human beings achieve sustainable survival and long-term development.

The document lays out a full array of supporting measures: steadily advancing the realization of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals, consistently upgrading environmental quality, boosting the diversity, stability and sustainability of ecosystems, and accelerating the formation of eco-friendly production and lifestyles. All these practices serve as indispensable embodiments of natural beauty in the New Era, fully reflecting the CPC's consistent focus on ecological aesthetics and its persistent pursuit of harmonious natural beauty.

The Outline also attaches great importance to spiritual beauty. It advocates the coordinated advancement of material and spiritual civilization. The Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation embraces both ample material prosperity and abundant spiritual wealth. While material civilization underpins social progress, spiritual civilization carries equal weight. Amid thriving material production in the New Era, spiritual civilization advances in tandem.

The document clarifies requirements for fostering and developing socialist culture. It urges efforts to promote and practice the core socialist values, vigorously advance cultural programs, accelerate the growth of cultural industries, and strengthen the international communication capacity and influence of Chinese civilization. Spanning cultural development to civilizational inheritance, all these initiatives embody the CPC's consistent pursuit of spiritual beauty in the New Era.

The document integrates natural beauty and spiritual beauty. Zhu Xi argued that beauty can be divided into two dimensions: beauty inherent in nature and beauty embodied in spirit. [5] In this sense, the Outline inherently carries the ethical connotations of beauty.

3.4. Happiness

The Outline embodies the ethical connotations of happiness. As an overarching ethical category, happiness refers to people leading a complete and wholesome life in all aspects. It consists of four core elements: harmonious family relations, fulfilling careers, virtuous conduct and sound personal character. [6]

In essence, happiness stands for the spiritual fulfillment people attain through material and spiritual enrichment, harmonious family life and all-round personal growth.

The Outline prioritizes people's happiness rooted in both material abundance and spiritual enrichment. Striking a balance between residents' material and spiritual wellbeing, the document endeavors to help people live better lives. What defines a better life? It comprises a substantial material existence and a fulfilling spiritual life, two dimensions that are intrinsically interconnected and mutually reinforcing. [7]

The document centers on the pursuit of a better life for all

people. Its guiding ideology regards satisfying the people's ever-growing aspirations for a better life as its fundamental objective, while adhering to the people-centered philosophy. Constantly elevating people's quality of life stands as one of the Outline's core targets. Evidently, the document is dedicated to delivering the happiness stemming from an improved life, fully embodying its core mission of safeguarding the people's happiness and wellbeing.

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan demonstrates profound care for people's all-round personal development and domestic happiness. It rolls out comprehensive arrangements concerning family ethics, fertility support policies, childcare services, household elderly care, family education, and the full coverage of family doctor services, which fully mirrors its focus on family wellbeing.

The document also places high emphasis on individual growth, covering an extensive array of sectors: public health, education, employment, income growth, protection of legitimate rights and interests, and social security.

Furthermore, as the ethical argument goes: "I have previously expounded on the correlation between morality and happiness. Here I will further elaborate on this logic and analyze it from two dimensions: first, how morality shapes happiness; second, how happiness cultivates personal temperament. [8]

The Communist Party of China in the New Era fully acknowledges that morality lays the foundation for people's happiness and personal advancement. The Outline advocates vigorous cultivation of personal morality and sets goals for elevating the level of social civility, embedding the nurturing of sound personal moral character into its overall deployment.

In conclusion, the Outline attaches equal importance to happiness stemming from material abundance and spiritual enrichment, with top priority given to family wellbeing and individual development. Therefore, it inherently carries the ethical connotations of happiness.

4. Core Features of the Ethical Implications Contained in the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan

The Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan crystallizes the CPC's political propositions for the New Era, and its intrinsic ethical implications present three prominent attributes: forward-looking guidance, dialectical unity, and far-reaching, all-embracing substance.

First, Forward-looking Guidance

The ethical connotations embedded in the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan boast distinct forward-looking and guiding attributes. Grounded in real national conditions, the document integrates scientific judgments with tangible, implementable goals. While responding to prominent practical challenges of the present era, it lays out forward visions for long-term socioeconomic advancement. This fully reflects the CPC's scientific assessment of China's current development phase, alongside its farsighted blueprint for the country's social progress in the long run.

Second, Dialectical Unity

The ethical connotations contained in the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan are marked by dialectical unity, embodied in three sets of interrelated dialectical relations: the integration of material and spiritual advancement, the balance between national growth and global progress, and the connection between historical heritage and future prospects.

The document places equal emphasis on material advancement and the fostering of spiritual beauty. While prioritizing China's domestic development, it advocates coordinated progress with all nations worldwide. Drawing on historical experience and grounded in national realities, it conducts an objective analysis of China's current development landscape and accurately identifies the core demands and general direction of the country's long-term growth.

Third, Profound and Extensive Connotations

The ethical connotations embedded in the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan are profound and expansive in scope. It encompasses core ethical categories including goodness, righteousness, beauty, and happiness, and integrates the profound heritage of fine traditional Chinese culture with the essence of modern political ethics. In formulating all-round development arrangements for national progress, the Outline fully demonstrates the depth and extensiveness of fine traditional Chinese cultural ethics.

5. Conclusion

An exploration of the ethical logic embodied in the Outline carries both theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, this research broadens the research horizon regarding the ethical dimensions of national medium- and long-term development plans, and enriches the theoretical system of socialist ethics with Chinese characteristics. Practically, it delivers clear value benchmarks and moral guidance for all sectors to fully implement the arrangements laid out in the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan. Furthermore, it showcases China's ethical wisdom to address worldwide predicaments in ecology, culture and people's livelihood, thereby advancing the

universal values of humanity and fostering the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

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