

# **Comparative Analysis of Contemporary Foreign Socialist Practice and China**

**Ran An**

*The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia*

**Abstract:** This paper conducts a systematic comparison with the model of contemporary foreign socialist practice in terms of the similarities and differences in the economic model, the model of social development, and the model of political governance between the two. The research finds that, while adhering to the basic principles of socialism, socialism with Chinese characteristics has flexibly introduced the market economic mechanisms and realized great economic growth as well as social progress. It has shown strong adaptability and vitality. It is much more difficult for foreign socialist countries to develop their economy and institute social governance, as the balance between central planning and market mechanisms is important. By this approach, China has assured political stability and policy continuity for the country, ensuring centralized and unified leadership of the Party as another major success factor for China's socialist practice. The research findings in this paper show that the socialism with Chinese characteristics has special advantages in both theory and practice; thus, making it useful reference following might be in the global socialist cause development.

**Keywords:** Socialism with Chinese Characteristics; Foreign Socialist Practice; Economic Model; Political Governance; Comparative Analysis

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Research Background and Importance**

Socialism, as an important social system and political concept, has been widely explored and practiced around the world since the 19th century. During the Cold War, socialist countries occupied an important position on the world political stage. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of socialist countries decreased significantly, but this concept did not

die out. Instead, it was re-examined and developed in some countries. Contemporary socialist practice presents diverse characteristics. Different countries show their own uniqueness in development paths, economic models, political structures and social governance. For example, in the context of globalization, countries such as Cuba and Vietnam have tried to promote economic reforms and seek more efficient development models while maintaining the basic principles of socialism[1]. In contrast, China's socialist practice is particularly prominent due to its unique historical conditions and cultural background. Especially since the reform and opening up, China has formed a socialist road with Chinese characteristics by adhering to the basic principles of socialism and combining the flexibility of the market economy. This has not only promoted China's economic rise, but also provided new perspectives and inspirations for the development of global socialist theory and practice[2].

In the backdrop of an intricate global political and economic environment, the comparative study between the socialist practice of contemporary China and foreign countries will not only deepen the understanding of this practical experience of various socialist countries but also provide reference for further development in the socialist course of China. This should be of important theoretical and practical significance to sum up and reflect on the successful experiences and shortcomings in socialist practice, exploring the future direction of development for socialism.

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research paper is to compare and analyze the contemporary foreign socialist practice with that of China, trying to find out the similarities and differences between the two in terms of economic model, political system, social culture, etc., and the reasons behind. It will shed light on the major development paths and achievements of foreign

socialist countries, contrasting them with the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics China has taken since the reform and opening-up, to uncover the advantages and limitations various social systems and governance models have in accomplishing economic development, social stability, and people's well-being. The present research hopes to investigate in great comparative detail not only the uniqueness of China's socialist practice and its global significance but also provide theoretical support and practical inspiration for the future development of socialism. Through in-depth exploration of these issues, the study will provide new perspectives and insights for the academic community, enrich the literature in the field of socialist research, and provide reference for policymakers.

## **2. Overview of Contemporary Foreign Socialist Practice**

### **2.1 Major Foreign Socialist Countries and Their Models**

The practice models of contemporary socialist countries show diverse characteristics. Each country has adopted different socialist development paths based on its own historical background, cultural traditions and socio-economic conditions. Countries such as Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea are typical representatives of current socialist practices. They have unique models in socialist economic construction and political systems. Take Cuba as an example. On the basis of adhering to Marxist principles, the country has adopted a highly centralized planned economic model and achieved a high level of social welfare through a universal medical and education system. However, the long-term economic blockade and resource shortage have had a serious impact on the Cuban economy, forcing it to gradually try to introduce market mechanisms in recent years to stimulate economic vitality[3]. Vietnam launched the reform and opening-up policy in the 1980s. By flexibly introducing market economic elements while adhering to the socialist direction, it has successfully achieved rapid economic growth and stable social development[4]. North Korea adheres to the self-reliance model guided by the "Juche idea" and maintains the country's political and economic operations under a strict centralized system, but long-term international sanctions

and insufficient internal resources have seriously restricted its economic development[5]. The practices of these countries show that the path to achieving socialism is not single, but closely linked to specific national conditions. Different models reflect the diversity and adaptability of socialism under different social and economic conditions.

### **2.2 Main Achievements and Problems of Socialist Practice Abroad**

Although contemporary socialist countries face many challenges in practice, they have also made remarkable achievements in social construction, education, medical care and social welfare. Take Cuba as an example. The country's achievements in the field of health care are recognized worldwide. Its universal free medical system covers all aspects, and its residents' health indicators are among the best in developing countries.[6] In the decades since its reform and opening up, Vietnam has successfully achieved sustained economic growth, significantly improved people's living standards, and achieved particularly outstanding poverty reduction results, making it one of the successful examples of global poverty reduction.[7] However, while these countries have achieved success, they are also facing many problems. Due to the long-term economic blockade and the single internal economic structure, Cuba's economic growth is weak and the people's living standards are still at a low level.[8] Behind Vietnam's rapid economic growth, it is also facing problems such as environmental pollution and increasing social inequality. These challenges pose a threat to its long-term sustainable development.[9] North Korea's economic development has been in a long-term downturn due to international sanctions and resource shortages, and the level of social security in the field of people's livelihood is relatively limited.[10] Overall, although foreign socialist practices have achieved remarkable achievements in some aspects, they have also exposed the inherent deficiencies and challenges of the system. How to flexibly respond to complex domestic and international situations while adhering to socialist principles is a common issue facing these countries.

## **3. Characteristics of China's Socialist Practice**

### **3.1 Basic Characteristics of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics**

The Socialism with Chinese Characteristics refers to an independent socialist model formed by the Communist Party of China through absorbing and assimilating Marxism's basic tenets into China's actual situation under its leadership. At the core of this model lay that, under the precondition of adherence to the basic socialist system, a flexible introduction of the market economy mechanism would give full play to its role in resource allocation, while strengthening the dominant position of the state at both macroeconomic regulation and key areas [11]. This dual-track development model made it smooth for China to transit from a planned economy to a market economy within just a few decades and maintain the sustainable, rapid growth of its economy. Additionally, socialism with Chinese characteristics is "people-centered" and oriented towards the improvement of living standards and social welfare of all people, focusing on achievement of social fairness and justice with such policies as poverty alleviation and common prosperity [12]. Perhaps most importantly, in political life, China resolutely upholds the basic principle of Party leadership, stresses the width and authenticity of people's democracy, and through institutions like the people's congress system and consultative democracy in other forms, ensures that the people really remain in the dominant position throughout the country's political life [13]. These basic characteristics not only demonstrate the uniqueness of socialism with Chinese characteristics, but also provide new models and experiences for the development of the global socialist cause.

### **3.2 Major Achievements of China's Socialist Practice**

In more than 40 years since reform and opening to the rest of the world, China has witnessed extraordinary achievements in socialist practice: economic development, social progress, and international influence. It had successfully taken the leap from a low-income country to that of a middle-income, and had grown to become the second-largest economy in the world. The high growth is not manifested just in the non-stop increase of GDP; the living standards improved dramatically. In the rank of countries by performance in terms of poverty alleviation criteria, China will definitely be among the

front-runners. More than 800 million people were taken out of poverty since 1978. The United Nations has even dubbed it "the largest action for poverty reduction in human history" [14]. Moreover, in China, some very important infrastructure construction and scientific and technological innovations are also underway. The high-speed rail and 5G technology have been leading in the world, respectively, which further increased the international competitiveness and influence of China [15]. In terms of social development, the educational level of China is continuously elevated; medical and health levels are greatly improved; and the social security systems have gradually perfects. These have significantly improved the overall happiness and security of the people [16]. These achievements of China in socialist practice have fully demonstrated the correctness and superiority of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and have also provided valuable experience and reference for other developing countries.

## **4. Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Foreign Socialist Practices**

### **4.1 Comparison of Economic and Social Development Models**

There are significant differences between China and foreign socialist countries in their economic and social development models, although they are all committed to promoting economic growth and social progress within the socialist framework. China's economic development model has distinct market-oriented characteristics. Through the introduction of market economic mechanisms since the reform and opening up, China has successfully achieved rapid economic growth and significant social progress while maintaining the basic socialist system [17]. The core of this model is to emphasize the decisive role of the market in resource allocation, while the government plays a leading role in macroeconomic regulation and key areas to achieve a balance between economic benefits and social equity. In contrast, the socialist practices of countries such as Cuba and Vietnam show more planned economic characteristics in their economic models. Although they have also gradually introduced market mechanisms, they still maintain strong central planning characteristics as a whole [18]. For example, although Cuba has carried out a

number of economic reforms in recent years, its economic growth has been greatly restricted due to its highly centralized economic system and long-term economic blockade, resulting in a relatively lagging level of social development[19]. In contrast, Vietnam has achieved remarkable economic growth through the gradual introduction of a market economy through the “reform and opening-up” policy, but this growth has also exacerbated social inequality to a certain extent, indicating that how to achieve social equity in the process of marketization remains a challenge [20]. Overall, China’s economic and social development model is more flexible and adaptable, and can maintain stable development in a complex and changing international environment, while other socialist countries face greater challenges and uncertainties in institutional reform.

#### **4.2 Comparison of Political and Governance Models**

China and foreign socialist countries also show significant differences in their political and governance models. China’s political model is centered on the Communist Party of China, emphasizing that the leadership of the Party is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The leadership of the Party runs through all aspects of the country’s political life, ensuring the country’s political stability and policy continuity [21]. This model realizes wide social participation and democratic consultation through the systems of people’s congresses and political consultation. At the same time, the centralized and unified leadership of the Party can be effective to respond to complex domestic and international challenges and maintain the right direction of national development [22]. In contrast, Cuba’s political model is characterized with having a single party in power. Although it has achieved certain results in terms of national sovereignty and social stability, it also faces problems such as rigid governance and insufficient social participation [23]. Vietnam, while adhering to the leadership of the Communist Party, has attempted to carry out a certain degree of political reform to enhance the transparency and credibility of government governance, but there are still great limitations in actual operation, especially in dealing with social problems brought about by marketization, facing challenges in governance capacity[24]. Overall,

China’s experience in maintaining political stability and effective governance has provided useful reference for other socialist countries, while these countries still have much room for improvement in how to optimize governance models, enhance social participation and cope with governance challenges.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Through a comparative analysis of contemporary foreign socialist practices and Chinese socialist practices, we can draw the following conclusions: While adhering to the basic principles of socialism, China has successfully introduced market economic mechanisms and formed a unique socialist model with Chinese characteristics. This model has not only promoted China’s rapid economic growth and remarkable social progress, but also demonstrated strong adaptability in a complex international environment. In contrast, foreign socialist countries face more challenges in economic and social development, especially in how to balance the relationship between central planning and market mechanisms. In addition, China has ensured national stability and policy continuity through the leadership of the Party and a centralized and unified system in political governance, which is also one of the key factors for the success of China’s socialist practice. These findings suggest that China’s path has unique advantages and provides valuable experience for other socialist countries to learn from.

#### **References**

- [1] Bulat, A., Jackson, A. S., Argyriou, V., Tzimiropoulos, G.: Large pose 3D face reconstruction from a single image via direct volumetric CNN regression. 2017 IEEE International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV), pp.1031-1039(2017).
- [2] Argyriou, V., Bulat, A., Tzimiropoulos, G.: Towards automatic face-to-face translation. IEEE Transactions on Image Processing, 26(5), 2138-2148(2017).
- [3] Domínguez, J. I.: The Cuban economy at the crossroads: Fidel Castro’s legacy. Journal of Latin American Studies, 39(2), 331-344(2007).
- [4] Beresford, M.: Doi Moi in review: The challenges of building market socialism in Vietnam. Journal of Contemporary Asia, 38(2), 221-243(2008).

- [5] French, P.: North Korea: The paranoid peninsula—a modern history. Zed Books, 2007.
- [6] Keck, C. W.: Cuba's system of universal health care: what can we learn? *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(1), 92-95(2004).
- [7] Hansen, A., & Wethal, U.: Revisiting the Vietnamese model of growth and development: the role of capitalism and institutional factors. *Asia Europe Journal*, 17, 211-231(2019).
- [8] Hoffmann, B., & Whitehead, L.: Cuban exceptionalism revisited: what next? *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11, 9-38(2008).
- [9] McCaig, B., & Pavcnik, N.: Export markets and labor allocation in a low-income country. *American Economic Review*, 108(7), 1899-1941(2018).
- [10] Frank, R. M.: North Korea: Understanding Economic Crisis. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(2), 18-45(2016).
- [11] Naughton, B.: *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*. MIT Press, 2007.
- [12] Lin, J. Y., & Wang, Y.: China's Economic Development and Cultural Renaissance in the Multipolar Growth World of the 21st Century. *China Economic Journal*, 5(1), 29-47(2012).
- [13] Fewsmith, J.: *Rethinking Chinese Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- [14] Ravallion, M.: A Comparative Perspective on Poverty Reduction in Brazil, China, and India. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 23(2), 167-193(2008).
- [15] Huang, Y.: *China's 40 Years of Reform and Development: 1978–2018*. ANU Press, 2018.
- [16] Lu, M., & Gao, H.: China's social transformation in the 21st century: A study of new sources of growth. *China Economic Review*, 44, 1-10(2017).
- [17] Liu, G., & Li, Y.: The dual-track approach in China's market reform: economic growth and social equality. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*, 16(1), 1-18(2018).
- [18] Feinberg, R. E.: *Cuba's Economic Reform: Status and Prospects*. Brookings Institution, 2016.
- [19] Mesa-Lago, C.: The Cuban economy in 2018-2019: Internal and external challenges. *Cuban Affairs*, 14(1), 22-44(2019).
- [20] McCargo, D., & Vu, T. N.: Vietnam: Managing the crisis of success. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(4), 145-158(2018).
- [21] Holbig, H.: China's Socialist Rule of Law: A Revival of Modern Legal Ideology? *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 48(2), 3-18(2019).
- [22] Saich, T.: *Governance and Politics of China*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- [23] Whitehead, L.: The Havana Consensus: Cuba's post-Fidel transition and the institutionalization of public consultation. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 60(4), 1-28(2018).
- [24] Thayer, C. A.: Vietnam's one-party state and the challenge of political renewal. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2014, 390-405(2014).